

Woodlands survivors deserve recognition

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The stories that have come out from survivors of Woodlands sound like something from a horror movie, or a historical news reel about a far-flung prisoner-of-war camp: Beatings, children kept in straitjackets, teeth removed without anaesthesia, punishments meted out in the form of long showers under very hot or very cold water, sexual abuse. The list goes on.

But perhaps the worst crime perpetrated against any former patient of this institution - which was originally opened as a psychiatric hospital in the late 1800s and later served as a facility for children with developmental disabilities - was the simple act of removing, for all its intents and purposes, their voices.

For many, many years, these were people with no words to tell their story, no platform to tell it from, and no belief that anyone would listen to them anyway.

In recent years, some survivors have banded together, seeking compensation.

Their efforts have been successful, to a degree: As of right now, some former patients - those who were there after a particular date - qualify for compensation. The rest do not.

Yesterday, as this paper was going to print, the Block tower - the last remaining part of the Woodlands building - was demolished.

It would be wonderful if, as the tower is destroyed, so too are some of the memories that survivors still struggle with. But that's unlikely. Most, if not all, will face the struggle for the rest of their lives.

We applaud the decision to move ahead with the tower demolition, but we can't help but continue to wonder why the suffering of some deserves recognition, while the suffering of others does not? The symbol of the horror may be gone, but its impact continues. It's time to give back the voices of all Woodlands victims and ensure compensation for all who suffered silently.

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