

## To Whom It May Concern.

Recent events with the states ruling that it is unconstitutional to forcibly send people to 12 Step Recovery programs, due to the religious nature embedded in its doctrine has resulted in I, and countless others unfortunate enough to have been on the receiving end of mandatory treatment sentencing to action.

While a lot of the Supreme Court rulings and cases that have found their way into the press are generally humanist groups fighting for the rights of Atheists and Agnostics not to face this type of religious coercion. From my personal experience, as a religious individual, I found the dogma of AA during my time in its rooms (for nearly 12 years) to be in contrast to every moral and spiritual principle of responsibility and ethics ever taught to me. This is more than just a simple displeasure for the experiences that I encountered during my time there and anecdotal observation that 12 Step approaches often bring more harm than good to the people forcibly placed into them.

I attended my first AA meeting on July 23, 2003. At the time, I was drinking quite heavily and hoping for some sort of answers to my issues at hand (Issues that were not resolved until 12 years later when I finally received Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and proper medications for my anxiety disorders).

I feel it necessary to reiterate in my local area, the only help that was available via the treatment centers (to which I later attended five times, along with a sentence into the Drug Court Program in February 2010) only offered AA as the solution for resolving my addiction to Alcohol. When I first entered into AA I was told that my religious background and personal belief system was likely the cause of my problems and in the words of one self-proclaimed expert, "*To fire the god I believed in and simply work the AA 12 step program*". Instead of receiving professional help, I was told that I was "*sick, self-absorbed, driven by fear, lack of faith, too much intellect*" and dozens of other clichés that did nothing to address any of the real concerns in my life. Repeatedly, I was told my problem stemmed from the fact that I "*had not drunk enough alcohol to surrender*". As my drinking problems increased in severity, along with my personal life falling apart, I was informed that I was one of the unfortunate few that could not make it. A prognosis I found to be comical, considering the massive turnover rate in AA, along with

esteemed members abusing prescription and street drugs while proclaiming to be sober.

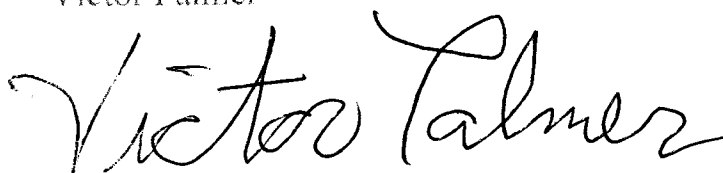
Imagine my surprise (and vindication) some years later when I began to read about other people with experiences identical to mine and began to do some research into the absolute insanity of the religious cult known as AA.

I felt cheated, as though I had wasted a lot of valuable time that could have been put to use finding a real solution and answer to my problem. I felt angered that this was the only program pushed in my way for so long. I felt motivated by a strong desire to see something done about the monopoly stranglehold this 12 Step movement that has managed to embed- itself as the only solution to real world drinking problems, while sweeping its abysmal failure rate, along with real evidenced based alternatives are suppressed from the public.

I write on behalf of all those out there with stories similar to mine in the hope they be spared the harrowing nightmare of AA. I and concerned voters like me shall be following our elected officials and laws with utmost scrutiny to make sure this travesty must end.

Sincerely,

Victor Palmer

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victor Palmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent initial "V".