

From: **Melissa Rowland** <melissa.rowland@gmail.com>

Date: Sun, Apr 28, 2013 at 5:41 PM

Subject: Church of wells

To: RVHatch@yahoo.com

The following is of my cousins experience last year with "the church of wells". It was written on October 17, 2012.

I wrote this message to explain my behavior the past year and my mental illness.

From January through March, I spent some time visiting a friend at a church in Texas. It seemed like a great place with a bunch of 20-year-olds living together and sharing everything.

Upon my arrival, the church did not accept me. They did not believe I was a true Christian and they would make me go into a bedroom during church services as well as prayer meetings. I spent most of my time, including spending the night, in a shed in the back yard during the winter. I didn't eat or drink very much and I lost 40 pounds. They would come and preach to me, saying, "God desires to put your bones in boiling water and smell you burn" and always saying I'm going to hell. They essentially brainwashed me for three months.

I tried to leave in February but they refused to let me, saying things like, "God is offended and angry that you tried to leave." They also did not let me speak with my family. Eventually they asked me to leave, believing that I was not taking what they said seriously.

I haven't talked about this traumatic experience because they told me God would hate me for talking bad about the church. They told me that God hated me for wanting to leave and that he would kill me upon my return home.

When I came home, I suffered from extreme paranoia, believing God hated me and desired to kill me. I would spend all day and night praying in my closet, not eating or sleeping. I wouldn't go outside or in cars in fear that I would die. I would also beat myself up and my legs were covered with bruises. My parents involuntarily admitted into the hospital where I spent two weeks and the doctors diagnosed me with bipolar disorder.


My two recent hospitalizations were due to suicide attempts because the paranoia is too much for me to handle sometimes. Because of this experience, I no longer practice any religion nor do I promote one over another.

My friend ended up leaving because they wanted her to marry someone but she refused and they told her she is going to hell for not marrying him.

I am glad to be home and safe. Due to a recent diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and alcoholism, I must go into intensive outpatient therapy and work through the process of recovering from this unfortunate event.

I'm sorry for what I have put you guys through and I hope you understand.

Moving forward,
~Kelly

p.s. i plan on attending West Chester University in the Spring for Spanish and French with a desire to work for immigration someday. Right now I am focusing on recovering and many poems have come out of this process! maybe a book someday? love you all 

Melissa