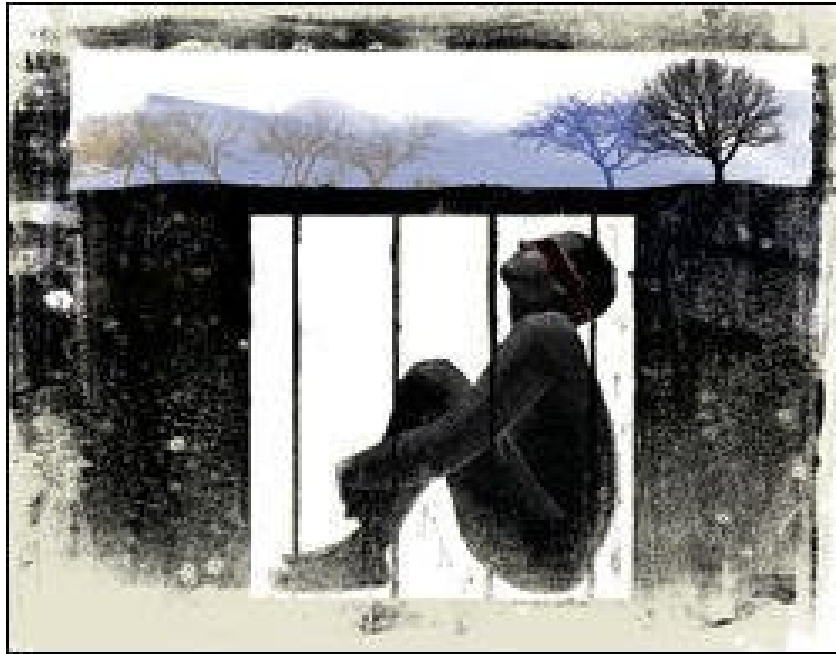


Aspen Education Group: A Guide to Stealing Money and Ruining Lives



By Daniel Savoy

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We've all heard of them before. You might even have a neighbor that has sent their kid to one, know a friend that went to one, heard about it on Dr. Phil, or know someone enrolled in one. "Troubled Teen" relief is the new big industry, and with all industries taking hard blows by the current economic situation this country is facing now, the only businesses that are doing all right are prisons, schools, and fucking Apple. That's right, people are profiting off of your child's drug addictions! And get this; they've been doing it for years! There are enough of them that have been around long enough for programs like these to be household names, with movies in theatres, documentaries, TV series and all. The propaganda seems relentless, "99% success rate, Get your child back" with our "Safe, nurturing environment". Yeah, okay. With blatant violations of the **Geneva Conventions**, constant lying, federal prosecutions and **HOMICIDE** investigations becoming an annual event; how far are we (the American people) going to continue to let this slide? (*1)

The big player in the "Troubled Teens Industry"(TTI) is the **Aspen Education Group (AEG)**. They're this mythical force of America, owning almost all the TTI schools and programs in the country. I call them mystical because they're sort of this shadowy

haze surrounding the industry. You never deal with them directly, but they have a hand in anything and everything that has to do with the industry. Being that I myself went to an Aspen Education owned school and wilderness program, it wasn't until over a year of being enrolled in their programs that I found out who they were and what they did. Much to my surprise, not only were there more schools like the one I was at all over the country, but they were all owned (for the most part) by the same tyrannical, monopolizing, company. Not only do they basically own the entire industry, but they also receive federal funding! But hey, I guess it's no big shocker that our tax dollars have been used to support the misfortune of other humans.

Drug addiction is a rampant problem in our country. Fuck that, the world. That is a fact that not even I would disagree with. The suicide rate is higher among teens than any other age group. These are global issues. It's not like these issues are isolated to the United States and things like this can't happen elsewhere. Yet America is the only place you find these programs (for the most part, at least). Odd right; must have something to do with how rich and awesome we are or something like that. The real reason is so unfortunate that I wish this were the case. The real reason we are the only ones **capitalizing** off the misfortune of "troubled" teens is because we're the only ones who don't deem the treatment of these children as an infringement on basic human rights. Not the first time we've broken the same rules that we've helped to create, but that's what makes us "the Trailblazers of the world".

I want to take this time to focus on the school I was enrolled in, "**The Academy at Swift River**" (**ASR** for short). "To help teens get back on track by restoring relationships, rediscovering academic success, and preparing them to meet the challenges of adolescence and young adulthood" their mission statement reads. The only thing they left out was "while raping your bank account and reducing your children to a degraded life of deceit, misfortune and child labor". If you continue to the application form, the first thing you see is "a Limited-Liability Corp. out of Delaware". Reminds me of my bank statements. Why would an entity whose mission is getting "troubled" teens back "on track" base itself out of Delaware even though the school itself is located in Massachusetts? Tax relief; pure and simple. Less taxes = \$more profit\$. So let's recap, federal tax exemptions, federal funding, state tax exemptions, and tuition rate of \$2,600 a month(at this moment) all for a school whose main focus is "to help teens get back on track".

“ WE ONLY ACCEPT THESE CREDIT CARDS: MASTERCARD, VISA, OR AMERICAN EXPRESS

I understand and agree to the above schedule of tuition and fees. I understand that billing will be mailed on the 15th of each month and is due the 1st of each month. Students who enroll on days other than the first of the month will be billed at a rate of \$216 per day for each day remaining in the month, not to exceed \$6,560. There is a one-time enrollment fee of \$2,500. Therefore, the first full month you will be billed \$6,560. The current tuition fee is subject to an annual increase effective January 1st of each year. The program shall provide a 60-day notice detailing the amount of the increase. Sponsor acknowledges that an additional deposit of \$13,120 is due upon enrollment for all entering seniors and students reaching their 18th birthday during their program. This deposit shall be forfeited if the student is withdrawn before program completion without the Director's consent."

(Taken from the ASR enrollment application: Page 1) (*2)

Also in the "About Us" section they mention the fact that most of the students at ASR are on or have been prescribed drugs and medication. I am actually pretty surprised that they list this information on their website as an "appealing" aspect of the academy. I do want to give them some props for being honest about at least *something* on their website. This is very true; when I was a student there I didn't know one person that wasn't on medication. Granted some of the people were on them when they got there, but there were a ton of people like myself who showed up there and the closest thing they had been to being on any meds was smoking weed. But with a curriculum based on a self help book no one has ever heard of or read, a book on mind-control techniques, and the ideology that there is a pill for everything, no one escaped the wrath of the school psychiatrist and everyone got put on something at one point of their stay.

I entered there with a weak psychiatric resume' so to speak, I had been prescribed Prozac in the past but never took it, smoked a lot of weed, and had been diagnosed with a few "conditions", most notably "Chronic Depression". Upon arrival at ASR after my initial "evaluation", I was diagnosed with chronic manic-depression (otherwise known as bi-polar), depression, insomnia, ADHD, mild schizophrenia (for my "paranoid" behaviors), and mild anxiety. Boy was I condemned! After that is when they started pumping in the drugs. Prozac, Wellbutrin (or some other anti-depressant of the like, I just can't remember the name), Lithium (which I adamantly refused), Abilify, a melatonin supplement, Seroquel, Concerta, Adderall, and Vyvanse. Holy shit and I thought I was sent here to get *off* of drugs! Most of them were failed attempts, but the ones they kept making me take because they believed it was helping me (because it made me drowsy 24 hours a day, resulting in me having less energy, which to them equated to getting into less trouble) were Abilify and Seroquel. I never once expressed an interest in pharmaceutical drugs, and spoke out vehemently against them. I cannot recall the dosage of the abilify, but for the time-span of about 3 months I

was on a 1,000 mg dosage of seroquel, split into two dosages taken twice a day, on top of whatever my abilify dosage was.

I was always bothered to get monthly blood work done, and since there reason was “we like to monitor the blood of everyone that is enrolled and on medications” and I’ve always been petrified by the sight of a hypodermic needle, I always refused. I refused to the point where I had to get a special form filled out by my mother! They made it seem like it was just some sort of protocol or legal issue that they had to abide by. I now know the real reason. By no surprise AstraZeneca has been in the headlines a lot, but lately it’s about the money they been paying out to civil lawsuits from individuals that have been on their drug “Seroquel”. Actually, their drug “Seroquel” is in the lime-light for two reasons. They are just now being busted for selling the drug as a relief for symptoms it provides no relief for, and for causing the onset of **diabetes** to many of the patients on the drug.(*3) This is extremely troubling to me for a whole range of reasons:

1. First and foremost, **I never wanted to be on the drug in the first place.** I declined the drug initially, but was pressured into it by the school and by my misinformed parents.
2. I was on an extremely high dosage of the drug, a dosage much higher than the average patient, and taking it multiple times a day.
3. I was prescribed the drug for symptoms that the drug was not intended to relieve.
4. I was prescribed this drug **on top** of another drug (abilify) that is known to aid in the onset of diabetes.(*4)
5. I was prescribed this drug with the knowledge that diabetes is known in my bloodline, without any of this information brought to my attention or made aware to me.

Teens are sent to these programs every day, against their own will and left stuck there without a voice. Once admitted into the program, they are stuck with no credibility left to their name. They have been deemed “crazy” and no one believes a “crazy” person. Let me try to explain the situation of distress that the teenager that is enrolled is left with.

1. The teen is deemed “flawed” or in need of fixing by Aspen
2. Aspen agrees to “fix” your child for a monthly premium
3. Your child is not “fixed” until Aspen tells you they are (are you beginning to see the conflict of interests?)

Now your child is at the school. You have signed away 51% of your custody to Aspen and they are now in charge of your children. You get to talk to them on the phone once a week for 15 minutes, get a monthly news letter that might have a few pictures attached if you're lucky, and see them once every few months. Now your kid is left in a situation of our word versus theirs. You have bestowed all of your faith in Aspen Education, so therefore anything they say must be the truth. I mean we are paying them a **shit load** of money; the least they could do is be honest. In your head anything that your kid says that is bad about the program or school is just another one of his attempts at getting the hell out of the place. Where the problem lies is when something bad actually does happen. Aspen is just going to cover their ass at any cost, and what pissed off teen isn't going to take any chance to expose the wrong doings imposed upon him. They have a fail proof safety net. They set up the power play and are exploiting it to its fullest.

I got to know at least 140 teenagers on my Aspen Education stint, and I was only at two of their many programs. There must be hundreds of thousands of kids who have been through a similar experience at their Aspen programs. We have all been affected by the atrocious crimes committed by AEG, some more than others. I am just in awe about the lack of active protest against Aspen Education Group. Not to say there isn't any, it just shouldn't take 30 minutes of online searching to find relevant information. I encourage anyone reading this, whether you've been enrolled in an Aspen program or heard of one, believe in the human rights of everyone, or if you're just bored enough that you'll speak out against anything, to get up and out and make a noise about this. Most people have never even heard about Aspen Education. The majority of the people that have don't really even know what it's about. The extent of most people's knowledge of Aspen Education Group is "Isn't that the place Dr. Phil was talking about?". They are pissing people off in many departments of life, and we can make a change. If they want to reap financial benefits of federal funding, they should also be required to be closely monitored by federal regulators as well. As of now they have no rules to play by, and this is a problem. If you play loud enough, everyone will be able to hear. Get loud, get pissed, and get your fucking voice out there!

Citations

*1: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/27/AR2010092704652.html>

*2: <http://www.swiftriver.com/admissions/EnrollmentPacket.pdf>

*3: <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-02-17/astrazeneca-said-to-settle-more-seroquel-lawsuits.html>

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/astra-agrees-to-marketing-settlement-2011-03-10>

*4: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abilify>