

**DECLARATION UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY**  
**PURSUANT TO 28 USCA 1746**

I, Jessica Lauren Charnov declare and state as follows:

1. The Elan school located in Poland, Maine, Emotionally abuses its students and forces other students to emotionally abuse other students. When I was in the Elan School from the March 2004-Jun 2007. We were told we had to partake in an act called "Getting our feelings off". Which consisted of us yelling at, swearing and degrading our fellow students. We would do this twice a week for an hour each day. When another student got his/her feelings off for you. You had to just sit still and not move a muscle because any slight moment would suggest you are "reacting". I remember being called such names as "psycho", "bitch", "asshole", "a hospital case", "freak", "Disgusting", "stupid", "Crazy", etc. I was told things like "I fucking hate your guts", "I hope you fucking die", "Stay the fuck away from me", "I don't fucking like you", "Fuck off", etc. I was called a lot more derogatory things but this is just to give you an idea of what would be said. I was told that I was a "Lazy piece of shit", there were many more names and phrases, I could go on for days. If we did not "get your feelings off" we were told that we were never going to change and we were just being the same person that got us sent there. If we retorted back with anything, we were sent to scrub floors, toilets, sink, showers, or even sometimes whole rooms as a form of discipline for hours on end. We were taught that not "getting our feelings off" was wrong and a punishable offence. I still hear the screams of my fellow students through out the day at times. I don't hate them for it, it was what we had to do to "move up in the program" and "better yourself".

2. The Elan School forces its students that are in certain positions of higher power (In Elan lingo this is known as strength and high strength positions) were given responsibilities that should have been considered solely staff responsibilities. Responsibilities included but were not limited to; assisting staff with restraining fellow students, watching students who were at risk of running away, chasing after run away students and standing in front of doors and being a security guard through out the day. In my house/unit in Elan (Elan 8) I was considered to be of strength status for about half of my stay (so about a year and a half on and off). On My 17th birthday, we went to Boston, MA as a house trip. I was celebrating my birthday and having a good time when another fellow student decided to take this opportunity to run away. Once we saw that she had run away, myself and the other strength in our group were told to run after her. So we did, but we couldn't catch up to her. So the police then caught her later on that evening and brought her to the Cambridge police station. So our group took a separate van to go pick her up from the police station. Also two students...Kara and Lisa (two students) and Missy were sent in to escort her into the van and to take her back to Maine immediately. But, she tried to attack them and she said that she was going to kill herself so she was discharged and put into a psychiatric ward instead. But, we were all told it was our fault that she ran away, some girls (Lisa being one of them) even lost their "strength" status because of it. It was all of our faults (according to the staff) and we were lectured about how she is now unable to get the opportunity to change like we all have. I was forced to aid in restraining one of my best friends at the time, Gillian. Myself and about four other girls held her down as she spit at us and tried to bite us. She screamed "fuck you" and "get the fuck away from me" over and over and over again. It hurt me so much,

I didn't want to restrain her...but I had to because it was my "job", "duty" or what ever you want to call it. If I had refused to do so...I would be "compromising the security of others" and not "doing my job" and I would have lost my strength position and been reduced to scrubbing floors for hours a day and had fellow students "get there feelings off for me" in groups and being told by staff that "I was a failure and a coward for not "stepping up to the plate".

In order to become a strength position you just have to do what the staff told you, what-ever the staff told you, there was no questions asked. What students were instructed to do from there first day of arrival is "Put blind faith in staff". This principle was drilled into our heads to the point staff members were like "saviors" to us. So being a "strength" made you feel as though you were closer to god. and the higher up on the ladder you were the closer you were to "getting better" and changing. Even if you had to lie, manipulate or look good at the expense of others to do so. It was all about the label.

3.The Elan school fits your websites description of a cult almost perfectly:

**-"Limitation of communication with those outside the group. Books, magazines, letters and visits with friends and family are discouraged or even banned."**

When you first come in you are stripped of anything that you used to wear clothing wise and told it is wrong that you dress that way. You are given, plain tee shirts and a pair of jeans that they ask you parents to send up for you. but girls shirts have to be shirts that don't show any skin otherwise you are wearing it to "seek attention" and bring your sexual appeal into the program, that is what the staff told us. There were more

guidelines as to what you could or couldn't wear, but to be honest there were so many I can't remember them all. When you also come in you are not allowed to talk to parents until you write a letter telling them all the things you have done wrong and have them accept them. You also were not allowed to have visits for more than 6 hours unless you were in a "strength" position. You were also not allowed to go back home unless you were a high strength position. The only contact that you were allowed to have was with your immediate family at first, but if you became strength and "changed" you could talk to non extended family depending on the circumstances of your family. The message conveyed to me by Missy Esty was, "You miss your parents don't you? Well the only way you can see them for more than a few hours, is to listen to us and get a strength position". But even strength positions didn't guarantee you visits. In my three years and a third month of being there I only saw my father twice (not including when he was there for my high school graduation). Staff member, Tania told me, "if you love your father as much as you say you do you would be higher than a nonstrength now wouldn't you?" We weren't allowed to read magazines, books, or the entertainment part of the newspaper unless we had privileges which were obtained by continuing to follow the rules. Phonecalls with parents were very restricted. Students received one phonecall a week, for fifteen minutes. These phonecalls were also monitored by other students or the staff in case you had anything bad to say about your experiences at the school or with the staff members. Although family visits aren't banned, they are very limited and you are told what you can and can't tell your parents. So they are more or less very restricted as well as censored.

**-"New members become convinced of the higher purpose and special calling**

**of the group through a profound encounter, i.e. an alleged miracle or the prophetic word of the group."**

There was a staff member by the name of Marc Rosenberg. He was feared so much by students...he was like the back bone of the school. He harbored alot of the old school teaching of Elan. Seeing that he was one of the first batch of graduates to leave the school, when he came to the school, he would run general meetings, even stopping meals to do so. A general meeting called for myself, because I had not make my bed consistantly, and in the manner of perfection required... Marc Rosenberg, raised his voice at me, making a joke, saying, "Why don't we just have you scrub out the dumpsters wearing a pink polka-dotted dress with a atoothbrush. All you are living in is filth, it would suit you very well." Afterward, everyone proceeded to laugh. Then, bringing out my bed before the entire student body and telling me I was not allowed food until I had made my bed ten times, in the manner he would accept. I made my bed, asking him to accept it. He picked up all of my bedding and threw it on the floor, saying that it was not acceptable and to do it again. Along with some swearing, and the words, "When are you oing to get it? This isn't acceptable, and this isn't going to work. You will not get over on me (be lazy)". I was denied lunch that day, and almost dinner until Tim Mishu accepted it and allowed me to eat dinner. He came only twice my whole stay for a period of a few months. It was advised to us by the staff members, to scream at people during a general meeting, regardless of whether or not it was how we actually felt. For, this would gain us praise in the eyes of Marc Rosenberg. His word was considered to be much more meaningful, much more important that any of the other members or staff there.

**-"An explicit goal of the group is to bring about some kind of change, be it**

**global, social or personal."**

Every night a student was required to read the Elan Philosophy to the entire student body right before dorm time. We were told to live by it and we would do well. It was a nightly ritual. Every student was convinced that it was solely their life goal to graduate the program. For failure to do so meant, meant that you were now worthless and would never get along in the world. A hopeless case, unable to change, unwilling to change and unwanting to change, or so labeled by the staff.

**-"The group's perspective is absolutely true and completely adequate to explain everything. The doctrine is not subject to amendments or question. Absolute conformity is required."**

The rules were very cut and dry. And people who disobeyed them...were treated poorly. A girl who was in my dorm decided to kiss another guy...no sexual relationship, nothing more than a kiss. She was told she was going to end up just like her mother because of it...her mother was found dead on the road side in Georgia a few months prior. The girl Lydia was considered a whore by the whole house. The staff had convinced us of this, or, had told us that was what she was due to this. She was then made to clean trashcans, toilets, bathrooms... Just about everything, while the rest were enabled to relax. If you were considered, "shotdown", or, moved to the lowest position in the program, you had no privileges period.

**-"A new vocabulary emerges within the context of the group. Group members "think" within the very abstract and narrow parameters of the group's doctrine. Loaded terms and cliches prejudice thinking."**

Certain terms that we were in the habit of using in the outside world we were not

allowed to speak of in Elan. We were only allowed to call a person by their first name. Nicknames were not permitted and would result in disciplinary actions. Also words like "yo" "dude" "bro" or "son"- words that teens would normally use to socialize, you were not allowed to speak. Also Any foreign languages were strictly forbidden. If you spoke a foreign language with another student, you were immediately interrogated and accused of planning a run away escape. Even if you were just trying to practice a language so that you could just keep it. I lost a lot of my French that I knew because of this.

**-"Pre-group experience and group experience are narrowly interpreted through the absolute doctrine."**

Everything that happened before Elan was classified into doing it because you felt one of five sub categories of feelings: Anger, Hurt, Concern, Intimidation, and Jealousy. All of those feelings came from two primary feelings: Pain or Fear. Every action you had ever done was categorized into something you did because you felt Pain(Anger hurt, Jealousy) Or Fear (Concern, Intimidation) . If you claimed to not feel either one of the two. You were considered lying to yourself, no questions asked. So, we lived in a world where the sum of our choices boiled down to being in pain or being in fear. Happiness was something that we never really expressed because we were so engrossed in feelings of pain and fear that happiness seemed like such a surreal and false feeling. The only thing that was ever validated was the pain and fear we felt or the pain and fear we had caused others in our pasts/present.

**-"Salvation is possible only in the group. Those who leave the group are doomed."**

When you turn 18 you are given the option to do what's called in lingo terms

"Sign out". Which basically means, since you legally are under your own custody at the age of 18 in the state of Maine, you may choose to leave Elan at your own free will. But, the staff would call people who signed out "cowards" and people who were just too "scared of change". When a student wanted to sign out...They had to go through alot of emotional guilt tripping just to do it. There was no just handing the papers to you and leaveing. Sometimes you would be removed if you were over demanding for your papers and "being negative" and you had other younger students (like myself) who were brain washed into crying because one of our "family" was leaving prematurely and that they would resort to a world of drugs and the staff would bring up there pasts and throw it in there faces saying that they would resort back to being the same person if they left. They would also tell them that "they were abandoning there fellow students." and if the student endures the emotional torture and decided to leave. While they are gone they are talked down upon and we are warned not to turn out like them. Also anyone who was pulled out of the program by there parents were considered to be in this catagory as well. Basically anyone who did not complete the program was made out to be "a failure", even if they had managed to obtain a high school diploma. When I had received my high school diploma; Pete Rowe told my mother (according to my mother); "You should start looking into a new group home or placement to place her in, and don't bother putting her in college. She's not going to make it.". He told her this just because I had not graduated the program and I had only graduated high school. As if that wasn't enough...

There are many issues with the way that Elan School staff members conduct themselves, as well as their treatment of students. There has always been issues. There were issues in



the past before my attending, and there are issues to this day. This school needs a review for accreditation, as well as a review of their staff. I can understand, a punishment being perhaps cleaning. However, the amount of time being exposed to chemicals as well as forced to do physical labor with the threats of general meetings or something else, are not ethical. Nor is dragging someones bed out in front of the student body and forcing them to make it over and over. Degrading them because it is not to the liking of the staff. Had I not agreed to make the bed, I would have been put in the dumpster and made to clean it with a toothbrush.

On their site, there are interview videos, claiming how the school creates a change in people for the better. These things are not true. Horrible things happened to myself and many others there. There are enough usergroups and discussions to prove that. With people telling their recollections of what had happened during their stay there. This is not a correctional facility. If it is a school, all of the instructors need a license to teach. I have heard that many of them are lacking this. I still have nightmares about some things that happened there. As well as about what I was made to do to my friends and others. This has been taken lightly for far too long.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on November 15th, 2009.

Jessica Lauren Charnov  
[NAME OF DECLARANT]  
SPECIAL NOTE: STATUTE DOES

NOT REQUIRE NOTARY]