

Adventists settle sex-abuse suits for \$3.5 million

Why am I posting this? For one big reason --I know from bitter personal experience that Adventists are just way too trusting and gullible when it comes to the people they give free access to their children!! People please wake up!! Sexual abuse is as RAMPANT among sdas as it is everywhere else. If your child tries to tell you something like this-- LISTEN to him and don't just dismiss it without careful investigation--lives are being wrecked and souls lost because of these predators that satisfy their lusts on children. Don't leave your child in circumstances that may make them the next victim.

Some of the most 'godly' appearing people can be totally putting on a front. Pray also for your children's protection--the danger MUST be taken seriously. Wake up! These things DO happen, and OFTEN! I have MUCH MORE of this information but I am just posting this one report with names removed--I just want you to see it is real.

One of the most helpful things a parent can do besides earnest prayer is to have and maintain a good relationship with your children. Encourage the child to feel he can safely confide in you and that he is important to you--not just sometimes--but always. tc.

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News

Court documents outline accusations against two former ____ Academy teachers The Seventh-day Adventist Church has agreed to pay \$3.5 million to settle lawsuits brought by five men who say they were molested by teachers at the church's _____ Academy near _____ during the 1980s.

The church has also agreed to alter school policies to become more responsive to reports of sexual abuse. "I refused to discuss money with them," said victim ----, "until they could prove to me that radical changes in policy have been made, and that they would provide free counseling to victims of sexual abuse in their churches and schools."

----, the church's ---- attorney, confirms that has happened. "What you had here," said ---, "was something that went back 20 years. The circumstances of screening of teachers and supervision are not up to current-day standards."

"Well, I sure hope so," said ----, the father of one of the victims and himself an Adventist pastor, after hearing a new set of standards had been put in place. "Sometimes something like this needs to happen in order to wake up individuals and see what's really going on. "As a denomination," he said, "we are just beginning to develop a policy as to how to deal with pedophiles in the church.... It's something we have never really dealt with."

Four lawsuits were brought in ---- County and one in ---- County, where the exclusive school is located. Under the settlement, all five will be dismissed, with no admission of liability on the part of the church.

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"We feel like justice was done," said ----, attorney for the five victims. "They weren't looking forward to a trial," which would have been "difficult and painful." ----, a spokesman for the --- Conference of the Adventist Church, said in a prepared statement that the church was "deeply saddened since we learned of these allegations" and expressed the hope that "these settlements will help bring closure for those involved."

Negotiations were concluded Thursday under the aegis of a professional mediator in Los Angeles. The defendants' side included a lawyer who worked with the Catholic archdiocese of Boston, "assisting with knowledge of case values." Boston paid \$84 million to 552 victims of clerical abuse in 2003.

The Adventist lawsuits involved teachers and staff at the boarding school, which is part of a church-wide educational system, kindergarten through college, aimed at giving Adventist children a sound education in a protected environment. The accusations outlined in court documents were lurid -- groping in cars off-campus, rape, liquor and drugs in the dormitories, and more.

They accused two teachers: LN, 72, who taught biology; and RW, who taught music. Nelson is retired. W left the school in 1989 and worked in the Antelope Valley Unified School District in Los Angeles County.

When the accusations became public in January 2003, W shot himself to death in his Lancaster home. N continues to deny the accusations. "Absolutely not true," he said Friday.

---, also the son of an Adventist pastor and like the other plaintiffs in his mid-30s, estimates he has had 42 jobs in his life as well as a brief marriage. "I was good at whatever I've chosen to do," he said -- construction, property management, marketing, the film business, lifeguarding -- "but as I get near success, that's when the fear has come in. Whenever I was happy and successful, I was afraid that something terrible was going to happen to me again.

"What happened to me and others was a tragedy that could easily have been prevented," --- said. "It wasn't prevented because the educational system wasn't prepared to deal with this problem."

Documents show those circumstances are changing. Every teacher at ____ Academy must sign a child abuse reporting policy. There are warnings about sexual abuse and harassment in the school bulletin. And incident-report forms are available. The school now limits faculty and staff access to dormitories and forbids school employees from driving students off-campus alone. It includes "display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures" as well as jokes and comments in its definitions of proscribed conduct. ____ said he believes such changes are "a result of this litigation. And my clients are pleased about that. A positive thing happened out of his negative thing in their lives."

Commentators:

I hope those who read this article will remember to talk and listen to the children in their charge. Parents, caretakers, and teachers need to communicate with young people about their rights, and what is appropriate for an adult to ask and do, and what is not. Silence and denial does not make things go away, instead it makes a safe breeding ground for perpetrators.

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I too went to ___ during the years of the abuse. I understand the amount of power, the teachers, staff members, and the doctrine held over us. I understand the need for those in the Church to want to protect their church, their school, and their memories. But these voices, of these very precious human beings, need to be heard and believed. The Conference needs to make amends, both with apology and with money. They have the chance to put their people and their children before their pride.

I attended ___ Academy in 1984-1985 (my freshman and half of my sophomore year). I became suspicious of Mr N___ my sophomore year. The suspicion started when he brought all the sophomore boys in his biology class into his office and had us all hold a dried bulls penis as part of what he called a "manhood ritual" - he told us all what we were holding at the end after we passed it around and let out a disturbing gleeful giggle. Thinking back on it, I am guessing he was watching our reactions and eyeballing for potential victims.

I knew guys who had sunbathed at his house in the nude. He also had a very intense sexual energy, and was always cracking inappropriate sexual jokes. He hung around the boys dorm a lot, like really way to much where it was noticeable.

Finally, a good friend of mine told me a story of his close personal friend who had been groped by Mr N_____ while alone in his dorm room. That was enough for me to start telling anyone that would listen that N___ was a perverted sicko. I told all of my friends and anyone else who would listen. When I went home for break I told my mom. She remembers coming to the campus and talking to some faculty about it (unfortunately she cannot remember who anymore as this was 20 years ago). They completely blew her off.

Over the years, I had totally forgotten about the whole thing until I got a call from J S about a year ago while he was investigating. He mentioned he was an attorney investing alleged sexual misconduct at ___ Academy, the first thing out of my mouth was "Mr N__!". I offered to testify to whatever I knew and gave him the names and contact info of some other students at the time.

I am so enraged and angry that NO ONE WOULD EVER LISTEN TO ANY OF US! I had the same thing happen with another teacher there and no one listened to me. Of course one of the teachers I told was N----...that was before I knew about him. I haven't heard anyone else complain about this other teacher that abused me which makes me hesitant still to talk about it. He did admit to what he did and quietly disappeared only to go teach in a public school. He didn't think there was anything wrong with what he did, that's what was so disturbing. Quite honestly my life has been destroyed by it. I can't have relationships without always having flashbacks of him. I've been in therapy ever since and just now I am starting to gain some perspective on it all and stop beating myself up for what happened. The conference said I was responsible, that I had an affair with him. I WAS ONLY 17!

"No religion has escaped allegations of sexual abuse....Whenever children are entrusted to adults, be they teachers, daycare workers, babysitters, family members or church leaders, child abuse can happen. Such cases are rare and usually isolated" -- Such cases are **not** rare & isolated. Research shows that between 25% & 33% of adults were molested or raped by someone they knew before they were 18.

"Family Violence" My (a victim) comments are in parentheses

"There is no room among Christ's followers for tyrannical control and the abuse of power or authority." (that our lawyers can't weasel us out of for a reasonable price)

"It is our belief that the Church has a responsibility—

1. To care for those involved in family violence and to respond to their needs by:

a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth. (**...equal to the price resulting from a negotiated settlement in which the abuser is fully acquitted**)

b. Highlighting the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defense of victims both within the community of faith and in society. (**...uh nope, we fight to protect the abusers**)

c. Providing a caring, supportive ministry to families affected by violence and abuse, seeking to enable both victims and perpetrators to access counseling with Seventh-day Adventist professionals where available or other professional resources in the community. (**no thanks, no more SDA professionals thank you**)

d. Encouraging the training and placement of licensed Seventh-day Adventist professional services for both church members and the surrounding communities. (**licensed to molest SDA youth**)

e. Offering a ministry of reconciliation when the perpetrator's repentance makes possible the contemplation of forgiveness and restoration in relationships. Repentance always includes acceptance of full responsibility for the wrongs committed, willingness to make restitution in every way possible, and changes in behavior to eliminate the abuse. (**...h__, we'll get you a full acquittal and a new job in massage!**)

f. Focusing the light of the gospel on the nature of husband-wife, parent-child, and other close relationships, and empowering individuals and families to grow toward God's ideals in their lives together. (**I hope that doesn't mean the same "light" as the light on N---s sundeck?**)

g. Guarding against the ostracism of either victims or perpetrators within the family or church community, while firmly holding perpetrators responsible for their actions. (**ok this is a blatant lie**) PE