

Virgil Miller Newton

Curriculum Vitae

“The truth was that Miller Newton was a failed politician, an amateur and a con artist who shamelessly traded on his son’s use of drugs, to give himself a career and attract the followers he desperately craved. He hurt many people—some of them horribly. Even those he claimed to have helped ultimately faced the choice of bad standing or servitude.”

1969-1973

- Associate Professor of Education in Florida

1976

- Chairman of the Board for a private boys prison
- Second unsuccessful bid for Congress
- His father, noted editor of the Tampa Tribune dies
- His former partner becomes chief-of-staff to Governor of FL (later US Senator) Bob Graham

1977

- Earned a BA in history (from FL) and Masters in Theology (from Princeton) and goes on to become an ordained United Methodist and Congregational Church minister
- Begins PhD in Public Administration from Union Graduate School. This is a non-accredited correspondence school in which there are neither classes nor tests. However he did attend 36 seminars including 2 on black history, which he used later to say his PhD was also in anthropology

1979

- Attended a workshop on alcoholism at the Johnson Institute in Minneapolis (only addictions training he received)
- 15 yr old son Mark was using drugs and Newton entered him into the STRAIGHT program

1980

- Appointed assistant director of STRAIGHT, a dubious organization known for it's brainwashing, abuse and imprisonment
- Newton personally develops his mandatory "Six New Parent Raps"
- Michael Calabrese goes to visit brother and is illegally detained and shouted at by Newton for 9 hours
- Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services establish that an Orlando boy is being held against his will. His mother had filed a writ of *Habeas Corpus* previously trying to get her son back.

1981

- State officials find that locks on the children's doors had been reversed to lock them in. (This was a violation of Florida Statue Chapter 397.041)
- In front of State Officials Newton verbally threatens two female children with incarceration in a mental facility for trying to escape his facility.
- A Florida Department Health and Rehabilitation Services report found prospective children were being threatened that they would be court-ordered into a mental institution unless the "voluntarily" entered the facility.

1982

- Appointed STRAIGHT's National Director
- ACLU represents 3 children from the STRAIGHT Atlanta facility and settles for their suffering "inhumane treatment".

- Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services sends a letter to Newton confirming allegations of “Marathoning”, “The spanking machine”, “Confrontations”, “The peanut butter diet”, and his policy of preventing legal adults from leaving the warehouse.
- A detective had to file a *Habeas Corpus* to get a girl released who was imprisoned against her will.
- Newton admits to authorities that he had kept the teens awake for 72-hour periods, put them on peanut butter only diets, and forced them to crawl through each other’s legs to be hit in a “spanking machine”

1983

- St Petersburg Times reports that STRAIGHT victim, Marcie Sizemore was beaten and thrown against a wall.
- Newton and STRAIGHT settle out of court for an unspecified amount regarding the Orlando boy
- Fred Collins is awarded 220 000 for kidnapping and false imprisonment. He was an engineering student at Virginia Polytechnic (now a PhD in mathematics) when he went to go visit his brother at Newton’s STRAIGHT program.
- Michael Daniels sued Newton and STRAIGHT for driving him insane
- Newton settles with Arletha Schauteet for false imprisonment
- Newton settles with Hope Hyrons for false imprisonment
- Larry Williams sues STRAIGHT
- Benson Williams sues for beatings, pulling him by hair, hanging him by his underpants to a bedpost and for torture
- Martin Badshears sued for as an adult for false imprisonment.
- A FL judge orders the release of a boy kidnapped and brought the treatment facility in leg irons. There was no evidence of drug addiction or abuse.
- Michael Keen sues for false imprisonment
- Jacqueline Stallings sued for physical assaults and false imprisonment. The judge cites “malicious acts” against her.
- Florida state’s attorney office for Sarasota County released a damning 600 page criminal investigation including statements from current/former counselors of kidnappings, false imprisonment, threats of being court ordered unless client voluntarily enrolls, rolling clients who are not drug dependent, hair pulling , neck grabbing, throwing against walls.
- A boy named Charles was brought to STRIGHT in leg irons. Charles had been kidnapped in Albuquerque, New Mexico by two private detectives hired by his mother. A Florida judge later ordered his release because proper commitment procedures had not been followed, and because the judge found no evidence of drug addiction or abuse.
- Newton is asked to resign from STRAIGHT due to allegations of abuse and insurance fraud

1984

- 60 Minutes exposes abuses at Newton’s program
- Newton flees Florida after state and criminal investigations close in.
- Begins new addictions cult “Kids of Bergen County” in New Jersey. Also opens up centers in TX, CA and UT

1985

- County prosecutors receiving complaints of abuse
- Newton loses a lawsuit for \$37 500 for false imprisonment in the St Pete, STRAIGHT program [need to verify]

1988

- The Michael Daniels trial
- Larry Clay, a legal adult, was led out of Kids over Bergen County by FBI agents who were able to obtain a subpoena for his release.
- Alexis Zdanow, former staff said two brothers were in the intake room and he and others “threw ‘em around, flung ‘em around, but I was told by higher staff, ‘You have to do that you know, Doc’ Newton says it has to be done.”

1989

- Newton’s El Paso license is yanked due to brutality. Officials found kids being hit, pushed, assaulted, deprived of sleep, soiling their pants and denied bathroom privileges.
- After being kidnapped Jennifer Woolston (an adult) jumps from a window breaking bones in her feet and arms, dislocating her shoulder and damaging cartilage and ligaments in both knees in an effort to get away from the Utah STRAIGHT program. She was denied medical attention by staff for an hour. She was finally released after obtaining a Writ of Habeas Corpus
- CA also closes Newton’s facility. “Documentation on file indicates there have been incidents where children have been subjected to unusual punishment, infliction of pain, humiliation, intimidation, ridicule, coercion, threat, mental abuse or other actions of punitive nature including...interference with daily living functions such as eating, sleeping or toileting or withholding medication [from letter dated June 27, 1990 from Fred Durmont Santa Ana, CA District Manager for Depart. Of Social Services]
- Canadian Government yanks it’s support of Newton’s New Jersey program and halts development of Kids of the Canadian West (a Newton Expansion)
- CBS show 57th St exposes abuses at “Kids of Bergen County”
- Bergen County prosecutors find evidence of black eyes, strip searches, sleep deprivation, solitary confinement and imprisonment of adults.
- Twice children are escorted out of Kids of Bergen county by County Prosecutors
- Tony Mitchele’s hospital records show he was bleeding from the scalp and having blurred vision after being dropped on his head during a group therapy session. When he became an adult Mitchele left Kids of Bergen County, but later staff member Tony Kozakiewicz was arrested for trying to kidnap Mitchele back into the program. According to former staff member Christy Johnston, charges were dropped after Kids of Bergen County promised Tony Mitchele that it would nevertake him back if he promised not to press charges.
- Administrative Law Judge Edith Klilnger released a 53 page study on Newon’s treatment practices and **concluded Newton lacked the statutorily required good moral character to get the program certified, urging further investigation.**

1990

- Bergen County prosecutors building a caseload against Newton, with 20 County Officials descending on KIDS of Bergen County to investigate Newton’s abuse practices.
- To avoid prosecution Newton closes KIDS and opens Kids of North Jersey in Hudson County
- Newton settles the Karen Norton case for \$721 000

1991

- Newton’s Dallas center is closed due to child abuse.

1993

- Secaucus Municipal judge Emil DelBaglivo convicted 3 peer counselors (all 23 years) of viciously beating 17 yr old Channery Soto for half an hour. One of the defendants,

- Michael O'Connor, said that beatings were routine at the facility and that he had even been beaten himself. DelBaglivo is quoted in the Record as saying KIDS is a "highly questionable place" and something is "**radically wrong**" if the director would condone this "**almost unbelievable conduct**". He said someone should look into it
- Newton gets another PhD from the same correspondence school as before

1996

- Federal Government sues Newton with 245 claims of Medicare fraud. Newton settles for \$45 000
- Marilyn Kearns (age 23) charges Miller Newton with holding her against her will
- Judge Thomas Zampino secures release of John Shaw after talking to him
- Numerous assault charges against Newton's counselors are filed
- 2 local television stations air damaging exposes on Newton and his treatment
- Losses a case with Roger Rossano for fraudulent insurance charges.

1997

- Transfers his beach property to Christ at the Sea Foundation for \$1

1998

- KIDS of North Jersey is finally shut down
- Newton returns full time to Madeira Beach

1999

- He applies to Pinellas County's Juvenile Assessment to have children court ordered to him for treatment. The state responds by ordering him to stop operating.
- Converts to Orthodoxy and is welcomed into St Nicholas Antiochian Church as a priest

2000

- Newton settles for 4.5 million dollars for abuse his "clients", Ehrlich endured. The suit claimed the treatment center operated as a destructive cult for the benefit of its founder Miller Newton. Records show she was restrained more than 200 times for offenses such as having a penny or a hair barrette in her possession.
- Four of Newton's previous "counselors" are sent to jail for abuse.
- Newton is fired from St Petersburg Junior college when they learn of his background

2001

- Newton FINALLY closes his facility
- Files for bankruptcy for a 1.55 million debt, including 1.2 million owed to New Jersey Medicare
- It is believed that this is when he changed his name and became Father Cassian

2003

- Transfers "Christ at the Sea" property again to the foundation due to an error in the original transfer
- Settles for 6.5 million in the Lulu Corter case. Lulu was imprisoned by Newton for 13 years, from the time she was 13 to 26 years old. None of the money was for punitive damages.
- Canadian play writes Leanne Padmos and Anne-Marie Leigh write a play about the 7.5 years Ms Padmos' niece Grace spend in Miller Newton's KIDS of North Jersey. Miller is portrayed as a character named Dr Mallard (i.e. as in quack).

2005

- Is sued for bankruptcy fraud

2007

- Is labeled by the Protection of the Theotokos, an Orthodox Abuse Watchdog Group, as an abusive priest

2008

- A movie titled "Over the GW" is released based on Miller Newton and his KIDS program

2009

- Miller Newton loses a 3.75 million settlement in the Antonio Carrera case
- CBC broadcasts nationally a documentary that likens Miller Newton and his addictions cults to Jim Jones and David Karesh.
- CNN is producing a segment on Miller Newton
- Director Nick Gaglia is filming a documentary on Miller Newton.

Notable Statements

- New Jersey Law Journal labels his implementation of Straight quackery. Article by Tim O'Brien (1993)
- In 1989 Bergen County Prosecutor stated Newton the children were subjected to "excessive use of force," strip searches and solitary confinement.
- In 1989 Assistant Bergen County Prosecutor, Fred Schwandee (Chief of Sex Crimes and Child Abuse Section) stated children had complained of "black eyes, and bloody lips, strip searches, sleep deprivation and solitary confinement."
- Newton testified in the Collins trial "it's not medically harmful" to deprive people of sleep.
- Dave Levin, former assistant state attorney for Sarasota "So we were very concerned about a program which we looked at as being something of a private jail, utilizing techniques of torture and punishment which even a convicted criminal wouldn't be subject to...and I use their terminology—restraint techniques, it would be our terminology it was child abuse and torture—was directed by Miller Newton."
- In page 61 Miller Newton declares that "blunt communication" was effective in dealing with teens.
- Lawyer Philip Elberg strongly argued "that "Dr Newton" was a cult leader, charlatan and insurance fraud artist."
- Psychiatrist Edelman stated in a deposition for the Ehrlich case that he tried to get Newton to change his methods, but Newton would not take the advice of a doctor.
- Former staffer during the Ehrlich case stated Newton doctored and withheld records. Other staff and former patients testified Newton instructed them to toss requests by the children to leave or speak to someone.
- Newton on 20/20 "I don't like the word imprison. Imprison implies punishment. Call it "an isolation ward" if you like."
- Karen Barnett, plaintiff lawyer for Karen Norton told the Record o Hakensack "Every case we had involved assault and at least 2 of them involved assault directed by Newton"
- Newton: "I used only recognized restraint techniques, including a grip on the hair, which causes a person to release anything she is holding or biting."
- Christy Johnson, former staffer stated Newton told her "Bring her in and scare her and if she hits you, hit her back." She says they wound up rolling around on the ground with Newton saying "I'll turn my back"

Cult Abuse

- Numerous psychiatrists at the Ehrlich trial testified to Newton's cult-like mind control. All patients and parents, in or out, were designated as in good or bad standing; no contact was permitted with those in bad standing.
- The number of children abused by Newton is in the thousands (by his own account >3000).
- Newton mandates that confession is necessary for recover from addiction [get control over people's most inner being]
- Frequently Newton refused to let the kids use the bathroom, sometimes forcing them to soil themselves. When they were allowed to go to the bathroom they were escorted at all times, with a person holding onto their belt loop.
- He repeatedly lied or exaggerated (in resumes, in interviews and court cases: see notes for documented detail) regarding his qualifications
- Former Staff member Christy Johnston said regarding one child Newton told staff "Bring her in and scare her and if she hits you hit her back."
- Newcomers had no privacy and were constantly followed around and held onto by the beltloop. There was no privacy.

- The children were not allowed to speak unless spoken to
- The children had to ask permission for every action
- None of the children were allowed to attend school
- When deemed uncooperative the child would be pinned to the ground, sometimes for several hours
- Strict regimentation
- Newton's guidelines, as he wrote them was that when a youngster has a troubling thought he should ask himself 5 specific questions about whether it helps him achieve his goals and whether it is in his best interest. **But** the first question is, "Is it based in objective reality?" [Thus questioning both objective and subjective thoughts and controlling a sense of reality].
- Newton claims family therapy is essential because "chemical dependency is a family disease." **I've heard him say this just 2 months ago**
- Newton's description of the kids in his treatment "At this point the kids are burnouts, zombies: They are walking dead."
- St Petersburg officials investigated complaints of unlawful restraint and physical intimidation, such as pushing and striking the kids.
- Newton contended peer counselors were more skilled at counseling than counseling psychologists with Masters and PhDs.[setting up peer structure that is isolated from other authority]
- Treatment relied upon marathon group-counseling sessions lead by "peer counselors", other teenagers and young adults who are recovering addicts and graduates of Newton's treatment. Teens with authority also include lower ranking former "druggies" who have not yet completed the program and counselors who are in training internships with Newton. [establishing a hierarchy]
- Florida officials said Newton's policies violated state law—particularly holding clients against the will for weeks
- Rule 4 listed in 4th treatment Handout "No talking behind anyone's back, staff families or clients, by name or inference, neither positive, negative, nor neutral comments"
- Rule 17 "parents should leave promptly after Open Meetings and raps. No parking-lot gossip" [Controlling information and free speech]
- In his writing he always places the term "caring adult" in quotations. Why? Is this a euphemism? Is the "counselor" really something other than a caring adult?
- No one with a professional license evaluated the kids
- Newton uses multiple references to bolster his claims, yet they all are his own references from non-published works.
- Verbal threats (witnessed by state health workers): threatening children they can be "sent to a mental institution" He told one girl he was thinking of telling her parents to take her to Georgia, where their signature could get her "locked up for 6 months."
- Newton convinced Lulu Corter she had a sexual addiction. He forbade her to touch herself down there. They watched her toileting to make sure she did not touch herself. She was allowed but 3 wipes afterwards and was painfully restrained if she used 4.
- Sugar and white flour was forbidden
- One girl testified her boyfriend took a [peer counseling] job with Newton but when he got to New Jersey Newton made him start at phase I again before he could get the job.
- Relationships with the opposite sex were forbidden during treatment which night last 2 years though there are stories of children in the KIDS' cult many more years, extending past graduation. The penalty for dating was back to the First Phase.

Misc.

- Trekker Jab made an independent film of his experiences at Newton's clinic, where he was physically abused and alienated from his parents until he carried out a daring escape from Mirror Lake High School. The film is called "Eat Shit, Virgil, I'll Dance on Your Grave." It is awaiting distribution.
- Christ at the Sea is investigated in the late 90s by the State Department of Health and Human Services in the late 1990s, amid allegations that Newton was operating a "deviant sexuality clinic" in one of the church offices. It was alleged that clients were lured from boarding houses by offering cigarettes and candy [no authenticated]

Anonymous Testimonials

"I was an honors high school graduate already accepted into a competitive college, but because of my parents' poor parenting skills and their vulnerability to the slick marketing tactics of STRAIGHT, I found myself, at age 18 years, a prisoner with absolutely "no rights" according to Miller Newton, the executive director of STRAIGHT at the time. Submission to every rule and STRAIGHT custom was demanded and enforced by brutality."

"I was sat down [in] home rap...while trying to state my realizations and changes to earn talk each Monday and Friday." "I was always terrified of being called on in any raps when Newton was visiting because he was so much more intolerant of those kinds of things than were the [home] staff"