

Rebellion Dogs blogs & radio: February 2015



Rebellion Dogs Radio # XI

Rights and Duties in A.A. the 2015 General Service Conference

This is a transcript of Rebellion Dogs Radio #11 February 2015:

There is an aboriginal expression about our stewardship of the earth. It goes like this: “We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.” Is this a great fact? Does this have an application in A.A. stewardship? What if our duty in A.A. is not to preserve the legacy of our forefathers as much as it is to help craft and prepare A.A. for the next generation? How would that mentality alter how we view what we preserve and we adapt, what rituals we discard to better meet the needs of the next generation, and what we replace them with? Is there anything that has to be preserved? Is anything sacred; is anything forbidden?

Welcome to Rebellion Dogs Radio Episode # 11, a 21st century look at 12-step life, now with less dogma and more bite. Today we take inventory of our own stewardship. Do we deserve a pat on the back; what could be altered or improved upon?

We will re-visit some of A.A.’s previous stewardship struggles with including women and the LGBTQ community. You and I are going to look at A.A.’s history. We’ll look at how the 1955 *Big Book* employed affirmative action before the term existed. It made A.A. a more welcoming place for female members. In 1985 at the Montreal Convention of A.A., Barry L talked about the 1970s vote to list groups as Gay and Lesbian affirmative. It was quite dramatic.

As A.A. readies for its annual business meeting (for Canada & USA) in April, I just came back from C.E.R.A.A.S.A., the Canadian Eastern Regional A.A. Service Assembly which was held outside of Toronto – Mississauga February 20th to 22nd. There are ten districts from the Ontario/Manitoba border east to the Atlantic Ocean. GSRs, delegates and any member who wants to buy a ticket can come have their say as the ten delegates get a feel for the room, or hear from members as we discuss the agenda items for the General Service Conference in April 2015.

On the Saturday morning, I was looking forward to a presentation called, “Diversity in A.A. – our History of Inclusion.” It was a mixed message indeed. What I heard was a juxtaposition of A.A.’s view of itself and A.A. reality. While the program is public domain (cerassa.org), as far as I am concerned, the names are not important. Anything I might seem to be accusing the Area delegate of, I am quick to say, I have been guilty of myself. I have been pious, I have been quick to think others ought to save time and see it my way. *My way* of course was (in my mind) the



truth. I think we can be loyal to A.A. and expect more, too. You know that about me; of course you do.

A female delegate and a Latin district committee member were the presenters on A.A.'s diversity record. That's good. The delegate talked of how very welcoming and open-minded A.A. is. I know A.A. means to be forward thinking but I couldn't help noticing that the stage she stood on had no wheelchair ramp. How could an inclusive A.A. not be up to speed with current human rights legislation about barrier-free accommodation?

It's not that the hotel didn't have a ramp. The C.E.R.A.A.S.A. committee didn't think to ask for one. A.A.'s own Special Needs/Accessibilities Workbook says, "We may not require Special Needs Twelfth Step services today, but one woman describes herself as a 'T.A.P., a Temporarily Able-Bodied Person.'" Not only are we all going to need assistance if we live long enough, no A.A. member should feel that they aren't welcome to chair, speak or even read the Traditions at an A.A. meeting or conference, just because they use a wheelchair or walker. There should be no barriers.

So on a visual basis the talk got a five out of ten from the get-go—five points, for having visible minorities on the stage; five points docked for not having a stage that is compliant with current human rights legislation.

Next is something about attitude which I am sad to see creeping into A.A. stewardship. Some A.A. stewards are a wee bit drunk on dogma or tripping out on authority. Stewardship is servitude, not law-enforcement.

In A.A.'s Service Manual we are directed to avoid indulgence in either wealth or power. Bill W. writes:

We have seen why the Conference can never have any dangerous degree of human power, but we must not overlook the fact that there is another sort of authority and power which it cannot be without: the spiritual power which flows from the activities and attitudes of truly humble, unselfish, and dedicated A.A. servants. This is the real power that causes our Conference to function. It has been well said of our servants, "They do not drive us by mandate; they lead us by example." While we have been made abundantly sure that they will never drive us, I am confident that they will afford us an ever-greater inspiration as they continue to lead by example.ⁱ

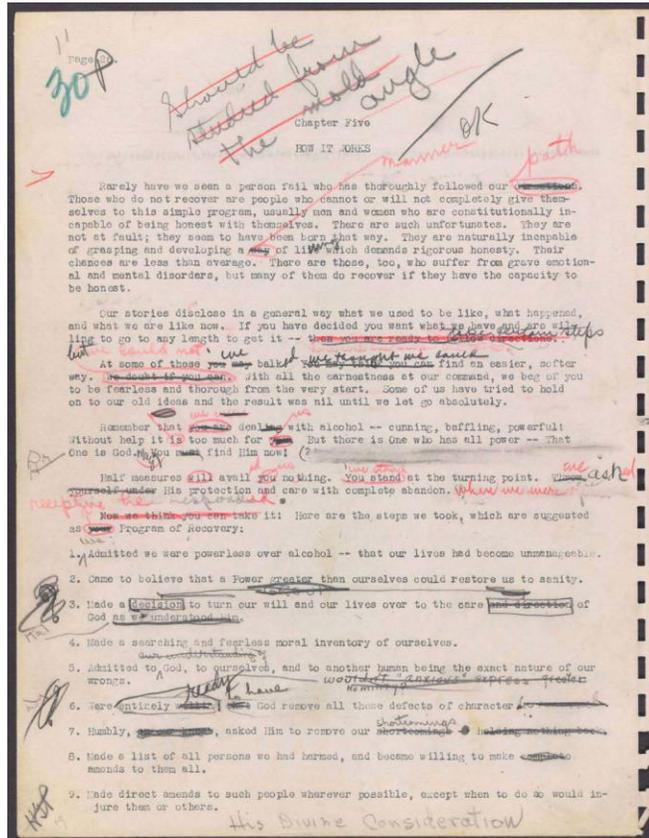
I like to emulate; I resist being told what to do. Who doesn't react to being told you must or you can't?

Dr. Howard, when reviewing the manuscript for *Alcoholics Anonymous*, recommended that all finger pointing such as “you must” be changed to suggestions, such as “we have _____” or “we tried _____.”

Here's a taste of what I'm talking about. The delegate at the Diversity panel said with pride that when she found a group that took artistic liberty such as adding “social media” to our 11th Tradition about “anonymity in press, radio and films,” she would jump to attention and explain that she is the delegate for GSO for Area such-and-such and that it's against the rules to change the Traditions and if their group wanted to stay an A.A. group it better read them exactly as written. She sees her role as an enforcer, and threatening A.A. members and their groups with expulsion is something that makes her a noble soldier of god's will or A.A.'s will.

But according to our Concepts, conformity is a right, but not a duty of groups. Warranty Six of Concept XII makes it rather clear that servants—such as delegates—“...act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, never performing any acts of government... (that) much attention has been drawn to the extraordinary liberties which the A.A. Traditions accord to the individual member and or his (or her) group; no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity... no member to be expelled from A.A... each group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes.” Warranty Six says that any group of alcoholics can call itself an A.A. group provided that, “as a group, they have no other purpose or affiliation.”

If there was another requirement to be an A.A. group, such as reading the Traditions and Steps exactly as printed in A.A. literature, it would say that, but it doesn't. Stamping out artistic liberty isn't our primary purpose; one *alkie* talking to another is our primary purpose. And they can talk to each other as respectfully or as irreverently or as literally or as figuratively as they like.



The delegate went on about some of our history with overcoming barriers, including our first women and our first African American members. At the end of her presentation, some of the members of the Agnostic A.A. community came to the microphone to say that in Toronto an exclusionary instead of inclusionary approach is taken where atheists and freethinker groups are concerned. One member from Widening Our Gateway group mentioned how promising the growth of WA.A.FT groups around the world are to her but that her group still isn't listed in the Toronto directory and the voice of three Toronto groups will not be heard at an Intergroup meeting. The delegate said, "I don't want to get into the controversy, but you can't have Steps without obeying God and call yourself A.A." She was rewarded by a smattering of applause.

So, let's review: She's talking about Inclusivity and Diversity. And from the podium she poisons the environment for atheists and agnostics, in Eastern Canada, by saying they aren't welcome to talk A.A. in their own language in any A.A. that she's in charge of. I am not saying she's not welcome to dislike atheists. But as a delegate, inciting a crowd to discrimination and hostility is not kosher. The delegate would be well advised to know that to talk that way from the podium is against the law. According to the Ontario Human Rights Code, there is term called: "Poisoned Environment". From the OHRC website:

A poisoned environment is created when comments or actions based on grounds listed in the Code make you feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. Sometimes all it takes is one comment to poison the environment.

In essence, by saying you can't express A.A. in secular terms you are intimidating, harassing and discriminating against one of A.A.'s minorities. Even while atheists in A.A. are unpopular, they aren't un-A.A.

Groups have rights. Where the ignorance of this delegate's brand of stewardship comes from is that she thinks—as too many do—that group rights are *granted* by A.A. and are therefore conditional. She is wrong. Member and group rights are *inalienable*. In her own theistic language that means that group rights, like member rights, are granted under God. These natural rights can't be given up or taken away. So the A.A. service structure doesn't grant rights, it protects them. An A.A. delegate does not restrict a group's freedom. She protects it.

It's obvious when we aren't biased, bigoted and fearful. It's hard to believe that this delegate has never read *A.A. Comes of Age*, where Bill defends a group's right to take "God" out of the Steps, if that group chooses to do so. If you have been a regular listener of this show, you could pretty much say this with me, by now. On page 81 Bill writes,

"But here we must remember that A.A.'s Steps are suggestions only. A belief in them, as they stand, is not at all a requirement for membership among us. This liberty has made A.A. available to thousands who never would have tried at all had we insisted on the Twelve Steps just as written."



This of course is in celebration of the first Buddhist A.A. group, the first group to read, print and distribute their interpretation of Godless A.A. Twelve Steps in their A.A. meeting. That was in the 1950s, when Bill W. was still alive.

It isn't a stretch to suggest that our cofounders would also have been approving of any group that chose to add "social media" when talking about Tradition 11. Of course the delegate is free to express her opinion of an A.A. program said verbatim, night after night in her own group. Where she is grossly corrupting our A.A. service structure is by putting herself in the position of

an unqualified authority over any other member or group. A servant, which is how her position is described, serves—she doesn't govern nor enforce. If we want her opinion, we'll give it to her and she can convey it to the A.A. General Service Conference. She betrays her position when she tells a group they have it wrong. Who is she to say a group conscience got it wrong; is she God; is she higher in rank than the group conscience? When we say, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern," maybe some of them miss the middle part. It's not "leaders govern"; it's "do not govern."

While the A.A. Conference can't be changing the Steps or Traditions on behalf of the Fellowship, that gives the Conference and its delegate no authority or enforcement over groups and members who chose to do what they think is right. In A.A., like the civilized society beyond our meeting doors, we accommodate minorities; we reduce or remove barriers. We carry the message to everyone. We allow each and every member to express themselves or their interpretation of *the* message, without censorship or threat of expulsion for non-conformity.

On the Saturday morning of C.E.R.A.A.S.A., one of the delegates we will send to the General Service Conference was asked to speak on diversity and she shunned a minority because she does not care for their unpopular view, or she chose to play to a crowd who fears or dislikes atheists. She played to the crowd, showed us the curb, just for her own gratification. She would say that she does this in the service of Alcoholics Anonymous.

This attitude, if we permit it, doesn't bode well for A.A.'s future.

I fear that the spirit of the conference will lean too much in favor of self-congratulatory patting on the back and too little looking at what is being done poorly and what changes ought to be made. I think A.A. has some questions we should ask ourselves. We are looking forward to the 2015 World Conference of A.A. in Atlanta, Georgia, celebrating 80 years of A.A. While so

many members gush over the accomplishments of our past, I look to A.A. 100 in 2035. Don't think that I believe we are entitled to survive another 20 years. I hope we do. Indicators suggest that we have problems to overcome before we can start putting candles in the centennial birthday cake.

These indicators are a rise in dissatisfied sentiment with the A.A. stands among the members and statistics that show some unhealthy trends.

Let's talk America for a while. While the USA is a mere 4.4 % of world population, Americans are 60.6% of worldwide A.A. members. While A.A. continues its efforts to make literature available in more and more languages, and make A.A. accessible to more and more people, Americans today are a larger percent of A.A. as a whole than in 1992 when Americans were 50%. I use 1992 as a measuring stick because that was the first year that the A.A. population exceeded 2 million members. For 23 years, membership has stalled. I'll give that fact a little more context later. Since 1990 our highest population of members was 2,215,000 in 2001. Our low water mark in these 25 years is 1,790,000 in 1994 and the number reported to us in 2014 was 2,138,000 members. We weave up and down with single digit growth, decline and growth again.

For context, and for those of you keeping score at home, A.A. grew from two to 6,000 members from 1935 to 1942, 115,000 in 1952, 190,000 in 1962, 395,000 in 1972, 1,065,000 in 1982, 2,049,000 in 1992, peaked at 2.215 million in 2001, dipped back to 2,092,000 in 2002, hit 2,132,000 in 2012 and we're about that size still.

So, since 1992 the USA has 161,000 more A.A. members and non-American members have dropped 90,000 over 20 years. For context, the USA population has increased over 25% from 257 million in 1992 to 324 million in 2015. So, compared to America's 25% growth, A.A. is becoming a smaller part of American life as our flat numbers lag against USA population growth. Internationally, on a percentage basis, non-American members were 50% of all A.A. It is titled *Next America* <http://www.pewresearch.org/next-america/> and it has some dandy stats.

AA Demographic	2007	2011
Non-white %	14.9	13
Females %	33	35
Average Age	47	49
Average Sobriety	8 yrs	9.9
Meetings / week	2.4	2.6
under 21 yrs. old	2.3	2
age 21 -30	11.3	11
age 31 – 40	16.5	15
age 41 -50	28.5	24
age 51 – 60	23.8	27
age 61 to 69	12.3	15
age 70 +	5.3	6

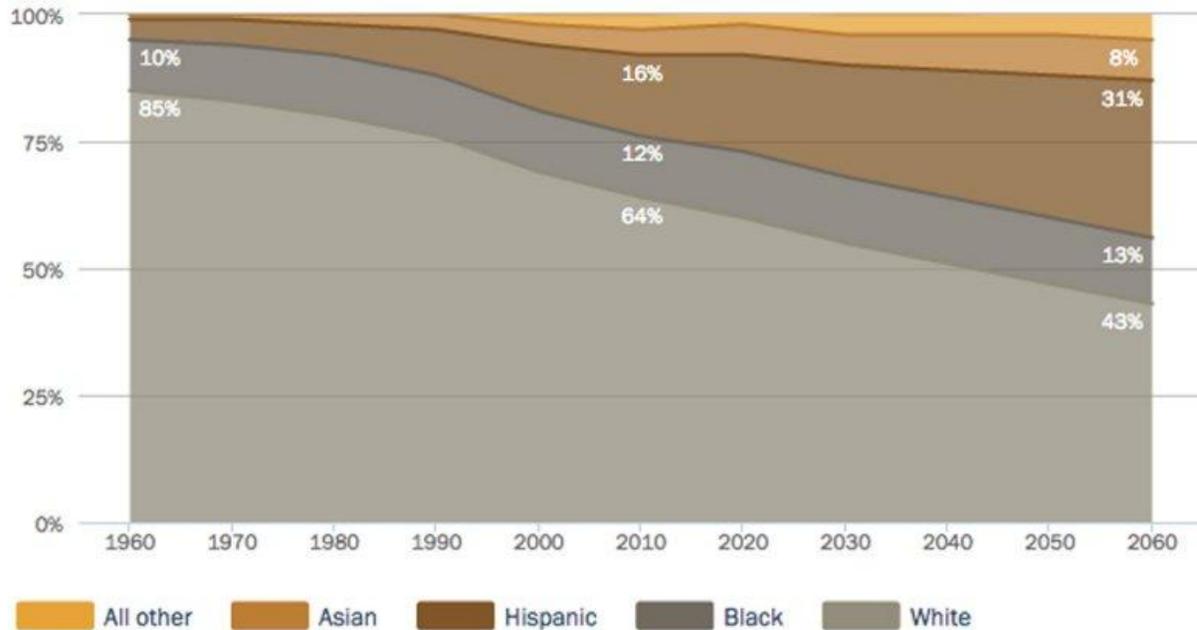
America is a country in transition. It has been in dramatic transition for the last few hundred years. The Pew study looks at changes in USA demographics from 1960, the year I was born, until now. When we compare the USA racial demographics and compare that to the A.A. triennial survey, we see a disconnect.

So you and I are going to look at A.A. stats. Not on their own. We are going to compare A.A. with N.A., with people receiving treatment for alcoholism and/or combination addictions

including other substance abuse. We'll also look at A.A. inside the doors compared to USA outside the doors, where over half our membership resides.

Changing Face of America

Percent of total U.S. population by race and ethnicity, 1960-2060



Next America shows how the racial tapestry is changing. When I was born in 1960 America was 85% white, or Caucasian. 10% were African American, 4% were Hispanic and 1% were Asian. In 2010 around the same time as the last A.A. membership survey, America was 64% Caucasian, 14% African American, 16% Hispanic, 5% Asian and 3% other. Sometime just after 2040 the USA will be less than 50% white. N.A., in their 2009 survey already started using the option “mixed race” for people to self-identify. 15% of marriages are interracial and if they produce children, they will expand the mixed race population.

So, what do A.A.’s own facts say about A.A. diversity? Is there cause for celebration or for shame? A.A. today is more Caucasian than American. Not only is 2015 A.A. significantly monochrome today, the 2011 survey shows an A.A. that is whiter than 1960 America. And 2011 A.A. is whiter than 2007 A.A. Alcoholics Anonymous is older, more male and, as many of us would attest about our own home groups, under representative of the cultural tapestry outside our meeting doors.

What are we going to do about it? I think this is a problem. I think it is a solvable problem but the first step, as you and I know, is to face the fact that we have a problem and stop lying to ourselves and to each other. A.A., if it was only as inclusive and diverse as the towns and cities we hold meetings in, would have been 40% non-white in its 2011 membership survey—not 13%. The 2014 survey results will be out in a few months. Will non-Caucasian membership have tripled since 2011 to catch up? We only have to think about our home groups to know the answer. Does this mean that A.A. members are white-supremacist racists? No. But we have developed practices, I assume quite unintentionally, that make it easy for some to feel comfortable and these same practices make it easy for others to feel uncomfortable. Because we don't do these things on purpose doesn't make us free of responsibility. If we told the judge that we didn't see the stop sign, would she be likely to dismiss our failure to obey a traffic signal ticket? Not likely; we have a duty to know the law and to pay attention, for our own wellbeing and for those around us.



Ontario Human Rights Commission

Commission ontarienne des droits de la personne

Did I mention the Human Rights Code? Where I live, the Ontario Human Rights Commission has something to say about A.A.'s responsibility to advocate for minorities. On their website you and I can read:

“Organizations must ensure that they are not unconsciously engaging in systemic discrimination. This takes vigilance and a willingness to monitor and review numerical data, policies, practices and decision-making processes and organizational culture. It is not acceptable from a human rights perspective for an organization to choose to remain unaware of systemic discrimination or to fail to act when a problem comes to its attention.”ⁱⁱ

At the last C.E.R.A.A.S.A. I attended, all ten delegates from Eastern Canada were Caucasian. I can also tell you that ½ of them were not women nor were ½ of them below our membership's average age of 49. Our ten delegates who are going to speak for us are whiter, older and more male not only than Eastern Canada but the A.A. meetings, too.

It seems that not only is A.A. on the wrong course, but we've empowered the people who caused the problem in the first place to assess how well we're doing. Narcotics Anonymous is younger, more racially diverse and is more inviting to a higher female population. Let's look at A.A.

population against NA and people getting treatment according to a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSA) survey in 2010.

	AA ⁱⁱⁱ	NA ^{iv}	Treatment ^v
Caucasian	87	73	60
African-American	5	10	21
Hispanic	4	10	13.7
Asian	1	2	1
Native American	2	1	2.3
Others	1	4	2
Male	65	58	68
Female	35	42	32
< 20 yrs old	2	2	12
21 – 30	11	14	29
31 -40	15	22	23
41 -50	24	34	24
51 -60	27	24	10
>60 years old	21	4	3

*Notes: treatment ages are estimated as they report ages in different categories

A few points about statistics and these stats, specifically. People going into treatment are younger than the average A.A. or N.A. member. Treatment stats more accurately reflect the 12-Step newcomer than the general population. A.A. members are, on average, sober for almost 10 years so this is why they are a decade or more older than when they were in treatment. We see that even in treatment for alcohol as well as other substance use disorders, more men than women are found. In a previous show, Dr. Vera Tarman shared with us that in food-addiction 12-Step rooms the numbers are reversed; there are more than 50% women. Could it be that more men turn to drinking and drugs and more women cope with stress by putting comfort food in their mouths?

You can torture statistics all you like but, while they show us what people do, they won't show you why people do what they do. Assuming that, of those who go into treatment, a good many are referred to or encouraged to attend A.A. or N.A., treatment stats tell us something about newcomers.

Of these newcomers who stay in A.A. or N.A.? These stats show that those most likely to feel comfortable and keep coming back are white, middle-aged men. So why we praise ourselves for being inclusive, what are we doing that makes our attraction/not promotion more attractive to one demographic and unwelcoming or unsustainable for another demographic? These are big questions that we should be asking. We shouldn't be afraid to ask them. If we don't ask them, more trouble will be a brewing.

There are four generations in 12-Step rooms right now. The Silent Generation started A.A. Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1965) are the stewards right now. Boomers aren't in any hurry

to turn the Fellowship over to the next generation and to that generation's vision. Gen Xers (1966 – 1985) have been the bulk of newcomers over the last decade or two and are smarter or, at least, way better educated than our A.A. founders were. Americans with university education in 1940 were a mere 5%. Now, 1/3 of Americans have a post-secondary education. Millennials (1986 to 2005) are internet *natives*; they aren't *adapting* like the rest of us. You won't hear "turn off your phone" at the start of meetings that a Millennial is chairing. In fact, they might be reading the preamble from their mobile device. "Books and binders? Dude, that's so last century." Almost ½ of Millennials are not the white-skinned alcoholics in A.A. today. One third don't believe in god (and never go to church) compared to just 5% of 45 to 65-year-olds.^{vi}

The fact that A.A. looks more like 1960 than 2015 in the rooms may be because of the people who have the greatest influence in A.A. (an aging service organization). Could current stewards, tribal like anyone might be and more conservative as older people tend to be, possibly, due to subconscious or deliberate insistence on nostalgic rituals, readings etc., be sabotaging A.A.'s ability to keep pace with modern life? Is A.A., *as Bill sees it* really a more inspired opinion or experience that any other member's way of seeing *it*? Here's a novel concept: Do we dare ask the newcomer, "What do you think of our meeting? Do you feel at home here or do you feel uncomfortable? What would you alter or improve?"

Going back to the wisdom of native elders, I talk about showing reverence to newcomers because they are who we've borrowed A.A. from—we didn't inherit it from our founders. Again, I am wondering, is our job as stewards to leave A.A. just like we found it when we got here? Maybe we ought to think more about whether we have prepared A.A. for the future. Is today's A.A. the best possible A.A. for this and the next generation of A.A. members? And if things could be improved, wouldn't newcomers have the most objective input? Sure. We have to give up the "take the cotton out of your ears and stuff it in your mouth" brand of, "The newcomer is most important member in the room; we're glad you're here," shtick.

If we find that we must admit where we are unmanageable and when we are wrong, taking inventory and humbly admitting our inadequacies is a good first step. Then we can find the courage to ask for help from those who can help.

One of the systemic flaws in our Conference election process is that we leave it up to those who have created the problem to evaluate the problem and come up with a solution. On the other hand, we have 40,000 A.A. members under the age of 20 and if they had equal representation at the General Service Conference, there would be four of them voting. Shouldn't they be tasked with addressing how A.A.s should express anonymity on social media? Who are we to tell them? The youth are our teachers and this is their Fellowship. But they don't participate in A.A.'s annual business meeting. Why? Because, we've never sent our youth there.

AA Groups are fundamentally little bands of people who are friends, who can help each other stay sober. Each group therefore reflects the needs of its own members. The way a group is managed is the way its members want it to be managed for their common benefit.

As a result we have large groups, small groups, groups which have refreshments, groups which like long meetings, groups which like short meetings, social groups, working groups, men's groups, women's groups, groups that play cards, groups which specialize in young people and as many other varieties as there are kinds of people. Each group has its own customs, its own financial problems and its own method of operation.

As long as it follows as a group the same principles AA recommends for individuals on selfishness, honesty, decency and tolerance it is above criticism.

AA in Cleveland – 1946

Reflections: Ernie Kurtz on the History of AA

To make A.A. look less like 1960 and more like the 21st century we need diversity at our Conference. This can be done through affirmative action or what's called *positive discrimination*. We've done it before. Reflecting on the flaws of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Bill W. aimed to correct our patriarchal bias. In the Second Edition, one-third of the experience, strength and hope was contributed by women. While far less than 30% of A.A. was female, the A.A. book was stacked with stories of women's addiction and recovery, in their own words.

In this way, A.A. was an early adapter to the women's lib movement. We might have been ahead of the curve with LGBTQ affirmative movement in some ways, too. When homosexuality,

was still illegal and/or immoral across much of North America, A.A.s set their own values aside for the better good of the Fellowship and in the 1970s, approved the listing of Gay and Lesbian groups. This wasn't matter-of-fact. Au contraire, Ma Cherie Amour, Here's an excerpt of a talk that Barry L. gave in Montreal at A.A.'s 50th anniversary convention. The entire talk is available on the links page or www.RebellionDogsPublishing.com.

<http://www.rebelliondogspublishing.com/files/63409/barry-l-originof3rdtrad.mp3>

I really recommend hearing his whole talk. The more disappointing news, which Barry avoided in the talk, is that the Conference had just rejected a pamphlet for Gay and Lesbian A.A.s. In 1981, the literature committee was recommending a pamphlet for homosexuals (the language of the day). In 1983 a draft was presented and recommended for the Conference to approve. They rejected it 1984, on the grounds that two stories in "Do You Think You're Different?" were enough. Barry L. died months after the Montreal talk and it wouldn't be until 1989 that the Gay/Lesbian pamphlet was conference-approved.

"A.A. for Women" has been around since 1951. It wasn't until 2001 that we had what is now called, "A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic." "A.A. for Alcoholics with Special Needs" just came out in 2011. So, who's read it? I didn't think so. GSO printed and distributed less than one for every ten meetings last year. Mental and Physical impairments don't apply to us

right now? Maybe they will one day? Maybe if we read it we'd be more compassionate? Maybe we can think about that next time we recite "I want the hand of A.A. always to be there; for that, I am responsible."

"A.A. for the Native North American" has only been with us since 1989, too—an afterthought at best. We've talked before about the lack of literature that celebrates secular recovery before, haven't we now? Don't expect anything in 2015 that praises atheists. AAagnostica.org's petition to simply collect all the *Grapevine* articles by atheists and agnostics that already exist, and put them into a book like the collections for *Young People* or the *LGBTQ sober and out community*, was given a "don't call us, we'll call you pass".

At the Eastern Canada Regional Forum in Quebec last year, I was invited to write a letter to the Literature Committee, explaining that atheists and agnostics are still waiting for a pamphlet by us and for us. My home group and other members encouraged me to send it and I did. The letter asked why—after all the requests from members from the 1970s to today—there isn't a pamphlet for and by atheist/agnostics/humanists/unbelievers. After all, they are sitting on hundreds of essays from members since the 2012 recommendation for stories about spirituality, including successful atheist and agnostics in A.A. The committee told me in a response early this year, "Now isn't a good time, but thanks for writing."

Now isn't a good time? What's that mean? Don't bother us for another 35 years; we're busy? I go back to this systemic problem of attitude with the A.A. General Service structure. "Now isn't a good time," isn't how servants answer their masters. GSO is, as described by their own literature, "the servant" and groups and members are "the master." Don't agnostics and atheist have a right to be treated with the same dignity that every other minority is? Doesn't GSO have a duty to accommodate?

Your answers to these questions will say much about your personality. Do you think that the rights of minorities are inherent or inalienable or, for fun, "god given"? You have to employ a certain style of humor to speak of atheist rights as "god-given" but that's just the superstitious word for inalienable.

Is it a god-complex that trusted-servants suffer from that gives them the impression that they choose when love and tolerance for others will be employed? Hey, using myself as an example, I have to say we all fall prey to getting drunk on ego-feeding delusions of grandeur. I am not accusing our General Service structure of an unthinkable deed; I am identifying. But the only way to cure a defect is to admit there is a problem. Come on General Service, say it with us: "Denial is not a river in Egypt."

Look at A.A.'s statistics; see how different our demographics are from the cities and towns outside our doors; apologize to those we have overlooked, and declare a sincere effort to identify systemic discrimination within our rituals and literature. Our Fellowship is unmanageable as long as we aren't attractive to everyone who might need our help.

In the same way that the Conference asks for help from the community at large for expertise through our non-alcoholic trustees, we can reach out to the community at large and ask under-represented minorities, “How can we serve you better?” Instead of telling the world, and ourselves, how great A.A. is, let’s apologize to those we’ve let down and ask them how we can alter or improve A.A.’s ability to fulfill our primary purpose—to carry the message to *everyone* who still suffers, regardless of creed, race, gender identification, age or language.

This is not overwhelming. We’ve been here before. This isn’t a shout out to them at GSO; it’s a call to action for everyone. Hey you, your delegate, your GSO office, is just a letter, a call or an email away. All that is necessary for the forces of evil to prevail is for enough good people to do nothing. Many small efforts make a big difference. And we don’t need to wait for GSO blessings to make a positive change at our own home group. We can all learn to be more accommodating and stretch our group’s boundaries just a little bit. Come on, we got this!

I won’t keep you; I see you have a letter you’re anxious to write and I won’t hold you back. You’ve had a lot of thoughts and stats thrown at you today; there is a transcript for this show available @ www.RebellionDogsPublishing.com Help yourself to our notes and share the pdf or radio show; re-post as you see fit. We’re all in this together. We’ll talk again soon on Rebellion Dogs Radio.

ⁱ *The A.A. Service Manual combined with The Twelve Concepts of World Service*, Concept XII, p. 64

ⁱⁱ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-48_membershipsurvey.pdf

^{iv} http://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/NA_membership_survey.pdf

^v <http://media.samhsa.gov/data/2k12/TEDS2010N/TEDS2010NWeb.pdf>

^{vi} http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/05/more-millennials-losing-their-religion_n_1571366.html