

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WATCH

Defending Religious Rights

A FEW FACTS ABOUT "THE RICK A. ROSS INSTITUTE"



Rick A. Ross

Rick Ross promotes himself as an "expert" on religion yet a review of his educational background shows no religious educational credentials whatsoever. To the contrary, his only formal education is a high school diploma.

Ross specializes in garnering media attention to create fear and suspicion in the family members of individuals in religious groups.

He then exploits this fear to get them to pay him thousands of dollars in fees to coerce people out of their chosen religious affiliation. Ross' deprogrammings very often finds broken families and dehumanized individuals who were coerced, lied to, and degraded by deprogrammers into renouncing their religious beliefs.

Public records reveal that Ross has been the subject of at least three arrests, including an attempted burglary and embezzlement of \$100,000 worth of jewelry from a jewelry store, in both of which he was convicted. In the third criminal case against him, Ross was charged with kidnapping a young Pentecostal man, holding him prisoner for 5 days while he attempted to forcibly change his religious beliefs. The hired thugs Ross used in the kidnapping plead guilty to lesser charges while Ross evaded being found guilty. However Ross was sued civilly by the victim of the kidnapping and in 1995 a federal jury awarded to the victim over \$3 million in compensatory and punitive damages.

Although Ross claims in media interviews that his criminal activity ceased with the jewelry heist, which he brushes off as an act of his youth, he has continued his pattern and practice of activity against others. For example, in the above mentioned civil kidnapping case, the jury found that Ross had **"acted in a way that is so outrageous in character and so extreme as to go beyond all possible bounds of decency and to be regarded as atrocious and utterly intolerable in a civilized community."**

As a further note on Ross' predisposition to criminal behavior and violation of the rights of others, when Ross challenged the finding in the civil kidnapping case, the Court upheld the punitive damages award and observed, **"A large award of punitive damages is also necessary under the recidivism and mitigation aspects of the factors cited in Haslip. Specifically, the Court notes that Mr. Ross himself**

testified that he had acted similarly in the past and would continue to conduct 'deprogrammings' in the future."

Rick Ross' character was further demonstrated when he filed for personal bankruptcy in the face of the \$3 million judgment against him. As part of the bankruptcy, Ross discharged a \$17,500 debt to his elderly mother.

Ross admits on his web site that he has committed over a dozen involuntary deprogrammings (kidnappings) on adult individuals, mainly Christians, and at least that many more on minors. Ross omits these matters when speaking to the media and establishing himself with media and instead focuses only on the 1975 arrests which he attempts to dismiss as "his youth" although he was 22 years old.



Haryonto Soedarpo

The "Rick A. Ross Institute" is actually a mail drop just across the street from Ross' apartment in Jersey City, which he shares with a close associate, Haryanto Soedarpo, whose role in the "Institute" is unclear. While Ross promotes the "Institute" as a tax-exempt, non-profit organization and solicits donations from the public, the "Institute" is clearly a front and promotional arm for Ross' continuing business of hatred.