

Former Westboro Cult Member Raising Funds to Help Other Escapees

An escapee of the Kansas-based group Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) has started a campaign to help ex-members of the cult start over after leaving.

Lauren Drain escaped WBC five years ago, leaving behind her family—who disowned her—and everyone she knew to start over in an unfamiliar world.

Now 27, Drain launched a GoFundMe campaign called “Help ex-WBS members start a new life” on Sunday. On the campaign’s webpage, she shares about the hardships she faced when she was 22.

“When I was ostracized I was given a few hours to pack my life into a few suitcases, dropped off by my father at a motel and told to never return, never contact my siblings and that I was now disowned,” she writes. “Anyone that leaves or is kicked out is banished for life and all ties to your family, friends, community, life are severed and you are truly on your own.”

Drain says only about 19 members of the cult have been able to escape in the past 10 years, and “many have struggled to find their way and start from near scratch. Often times the ‘church’ or family leaves the defector with little to no personal possessions and those who are able to plan an escape usually leave quickly with the bare minimums.”

With more and more young WBC members leaving the group, Drain wants to set up a “safety net” for defectors to be able to get back on their feet. She is aiming to raise \$20,000.

“This is an opportunity for others to lend a hand and show

your support for those willing to change,” she explains. “Together we can help ensure that those willing to escape but are too afraid to do so, know that there are countless people out there willing to help them, accept them, forgive them, guide them and offer up some sort of safety net for starting a new life outside of the cult.”

Her three siblings—Taylor, 22; Bo, 11; and Faith, 9—remain “stranded” in WBC, “born into the cult or otherwise indoctrinated as children by their parents and their new community,” she writes.

Drain has been a vocal critic of the group for last several years. She published a memoir, *Banished: Surviving My Years in the Westboro Baptist Church*, in March, and in February posed for a NOH8 campaign ad.