

Pastor, Instructors Convicted of Aggravated Child Abuse at Christian Boot Camp

A pastor and two instructors were sentenced to 20 years in prison for child abuse at their Christian boot camp, according to reports.

“The jury got to hear about the isolation chambers, kids being put in restraints for punishment and transport and the excessive physical training over several hours with no breaks,” Mobile County Assistant District Attorney Keith Blackwood told .

Pastor John David Young, William Knott and Aleshia Moffett worked at Saving Youth Foundation and its predecessor camp, the Restoration Youth Academy. Both programs are now shut down.

Multiple abuse victims have come forward, detailing horrific inhumane treatment, including stripping “cadets” naked and forcing them into isolation rooms. Cadets under “punishment” were only allowed out of the rooms twice a day to use the restroom.

Newsweek reports witness Capt. Charles Kennedy saw the following:

As he investigated, he found that many of the school’s “cadets” were afraid to talk. But those who did left Kennedy with the impression that he had stumbled across something terrible. The boys, for instance, told him they were often grabbed out their beds in the middle of the night and forced to fight one another until one was beaten to a pulp. All of them were subjected to a brutal, daily regimen of exercises, sometimes stark naked—pushups, jumping jacks and running in

place. Drill instructors, including Knott, frequently punched them, choked them and body-slammed them as they worked out. On his first day in the program, one boy claimed, Knott crouched down next to him, and, after yanking his head up by his hair, started pounding his skull against the floor while shouting, "You will exercise until I get tired!" Another told Kennedy he had been held upside down in shackles and hit with a belt, an allegation later supported by an eyewitness letter by another teen.

Young was forced to close Restoration Youth Academy in 2012 due to city debt. A few weeks later, he reopened his "ministry" under the name Saving Youth Foundation and Solid Rock Ministries.

reports police raided that school in March 2015, and the Alabama Department of Human Resources removed 36 children following allegations of child abuse and deplorable living conditions.

The jury at the 2016-2017 trial was horrified. ADA Blackwood says the 20-year sentences for Young, Knott and Moffett are fair. {eoa}