

History of Narcotics Anonymous - South Africa

Narcotics Anonymous in South Africa
Informal Post

by Chris S.
Cape Town, SA

History of South Africa NA,

as Chris saw it

I'm back in the rooms after the holiday break, have shared at a clinic , been asked to share again next Wednesday , have been to 3 birthday celebrations in 2 days..a 1 year , a 2 year and a 4 year...trust me when I tell you that for us out here that is good going... the 4 year almost regarded

by us over here as being your dinosaur age..... your 20 years...just totally pre - prehistoric... but hey, that's cool... we are still young in SA , but it seems that the foundations have finally been dug , cast and set... and now the real building of the fellowship is happening...

When I came in to the rooms..2 ½ years ago..it was very rare to see too many people with a year or more at the meetings...loads and loads from 3 to 9 months.....now , it is getting so

different...people who it feels like just came in yesterday are doing their year shares and sounding soooo different.....

Jayne at the translation office had also sent me a request on getting together a history of the fellowship over here...no-one has put anything like that together so I have sort of taken it on as an unofficial project...so far though have just had a couple of interviews with people..and have some scribbled notes and about half a page on the computer somewhere...hell who knows... maybe one day these can lie together in the same vault as Jimmy K's early stuff.....ooooh grandiosity will kill me... aargh.. talking of Jimmy K. am desperate to get some photocopies of the first NA meetings etc... that we can frame and put up in our office....you having the collectors bug.. I am sure you have something like that , that you could send over to your sugah this side....? ..pretty please..... so anyway..for what its worth...work is not busy at the moment ...something for you on NA in South Africa..well More the Cape side...but since it seems the first meetings happened here....here goes..... History of Na in South Africa (as Chris thinks he understands it...haaaaaaaaaaaaaa..thanks..)

Seems the first Na meetings in South Africa were held in the mid 1980's..the only place where addicts could get support was from the AA rooms..and then it seemed it was pretty much like the sort of thing that was going on in the 50's in the states .The other option was state run rehabs , jails or mental hospitals .

There were two addicts , Rauri _? don't have a surname initial and Craig B...or doctor B.(recently just sentenced to life or something like that in New Zealand for murdering his wife }..they had heard about NA and decided to start their own meeting...these first meetings , if you can call it that ,were held in the drug counselling centre in Observatory , Cape Town on Thursday nights...I say if you can call it that because there was no NA literature or preambles being used...and even more so because after the meeting they would go around the corner to the pub and discuss their staying clean over a pint or two....Oh well...it was a meeting of sorts , and appears to be the first time that two addicts had got together to discuss how to stop the use of drugs .

Importantly though , at this time another Doctor...Roger .M was in treatment in the UK in 88 in Bristol and was introduced to the NA program there...another addict from SA was also there.. Faisal B .. who I think started up NA meetings in Johannesburg .

On Roger's return to Cape Town after his 3 months or whatever , he got in contact with Rauri and through this the first NA meetings proper were started in South Africa .Roger contacted the WSO , registered the meeting and imported literature .Don't have the exact dates yet..Roger is still looking for me..but the first official Na meeting was held in June /July 1988 in the drug rehab centre in Observatory .There was however for a long time , never more than two or three people who attended...Guy _ from Fishhoek...still in the fellowship did start attending , and was also instrumental for starting other meetings in the Cape Town Southern suburbs..his wife was also responsible for getting Nar Anon off the ground in 1992 .

This appeared to be more or less the status quo for about 6 years...the fellow ship slowly growing with a couple more meetings having started off...It seemed to be only after 1994 when Roger M and Carrie B set up the first Minnesota model treatment centre in Kenilworth that things started happening .From Rogers point of view , he said it was important for him to get NA going before starting up his treatment centre...whatever one may say about the possible contravention of traditions at the time...and it certainly seemed to be a huge issue at one stage once the fellowship and understanding of the traditions really came about...the important thing is that addicts were for the first time being fed directly into the rooms from the treatment centre .

So by about 1996 the groups had grown to about 5 , including new meetings in Sea Point , Somerset West , Fishhoek , Observatory .The first ASC was established in 1996 In Rogers kitchen , The first National Convention was also held..in Johannesburg..attended by 50 addicts .

In 1998 there was a major fallout in NA..by this time as said , it had become more conscientised, for want of a better word...led by Sarah .F (this is as told to me by Roger M and I havnt got round to hearing the other sides of the story yet) Roger was in his words "accused of running NA as his personal fiefdom..running the ASC his way..Louis who had been getting a fairly consistent supply of literature from the States since 1994 was accused of profiteering for his own benefit with none of the money from sales going back into the fellowship..All in all it was pretty huge..for little us anyway..I believe that their were e-mails going off left right and centre to Geoff at WSO support about the whole thing....hopefully some are still on record..I'll get round to finding out one day .End of it was that Roger felt he had overstayed his welcome in NA and gave up all his duties , and sadly his involvement almost entirely...he now concentrates purely on the rehab side having opened up a huge number of new primary and secondary care facilities

all based on the steps and all sending their patients to step meetings... I still fell that we still have a lot to be grateful to him for.....

By the time he left..a phone line was in place , the first H&I subcommittee had been established...it did die and then start off again in late 1999 and the first local web site was getting off the ground . That's literally as far as I have got...their is still a shit load more that I need to do....I know that when I came in to the rooms... my clean date of 11 July 1999 being the other major happening in NA of course..

HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAR.. please don't tell anyone I said that.....

When I came in to the rooms there were only 9 or 10 meetings a week to go to...today there are about 27 .We are slowly starting to get more people in to the rooms off the street as it were and not purely from the clinics..those of us lucky enough to have gone to a clinic tend to come from the more affluent and well supported backgrounds..well financially anyway.. H&I is going strong..we have a meeting in one of the prisons..phone line works..public information has finally got up and running , we are translating literature into Afrikaans , we have got an office of sorts up and running..at the moment it is essentially a place where our subcommittees , ASC and 3 meetings meet..when we are stronger the goal is for a full time manned office..but that is still someway down the line . There is so much more..but hey what the heck..get yourself over here in October and have a looksee for yourself.... Now I am just going to have to work out how to save this...this being the first time I have really given any thought or effort into properly getting the story together..

Love and Hugs,

Chris S.