

# Black in A.A.

EXPERIENCE STRENGTH AND HOPE



*ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS*<sup>®</sup> is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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**Black in A.A.**



## Introduction

A.A.'s Third Tradition states: "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking." This Tradition proposes as one of A.A.'s fundamental principles that no alcoholic should be excluded from A.A. From its inception, however, the Fellowship has struggled to accept and include Black alcoholics as equal members. In 1945, as reported in the A.A. book *'Pass It On,'* Barry L. (of the Manhattan Group in New York) "was doing desk duty at a clubhouse on 41st Street. 'A man came in needing help. He was black, and we had no black members then. He was an ex-convict. He had all his belongings on his back. His hair was bleached blond; he had on makeup; and he told us he was a dope fiend'" (p. 317–318). After a heated discussion among the White members, "he was invited to attend meetings, and although he soon disappeared, his presence created a precedent for the Third Tradition." The origin of this Tradition, therefore, as recorded in this incident, highlights the importance of encouraging and supporting Black membership in A.A.

The first survey of the composition of A.A. membership was published in 1968 and continued at regular intervals (roughly every three years) until 2014. When in 1996 race was included as a category, that survey estimated Black membership at 5% compared to Whites at 86%. Since that time the highest registered Black membership reported was in 2007: Blacks 5.7%, Whites 85.1%. The latest survey published in 2023 listed Black, African American, or African Canadian membership at 3.6% with White, Caucasian, or European American membership at 87.7% and multi-racial membership at 0.3%. Since the 2020 report from the U.S. Census Bureau estimates the percentage of Black/

African Americans alone or in combination at 14.2% and Whites alone or in combination at 71.0%, the comparative data reveal that Black alcoholics are severely underrepresented in A.A. membership.

There is documented evidence, however, of Black alcoholics seeking sobriety just five years after the founding of A.A. in 1935: “As early as 1940, Bill [A.A.’s co-founder] had drawn fire for inviting two Black alcoholics to attend meetings in the New York area....[I]t was more or less decided then that Negroes should be invited to attend open or closed group meetings as visitors” (*Pass It On*, p. 317). Furthermore, a May 5, 1940, article in a Washington, D.C., newspaper, *The Sunday Star*, confirms the existence of a “colored” group in Arlington, VA: “An older member is a lumberman who feels Alcoholics Anonymous has corrected his illness. A prominent businessman in the group has established a colored chapter that meets each Thursday night in an Arlington (VA) church. Finding that some of his employees needed help to find freedom from rum, he is taking them to A.A. meetings.” Ever since that time, Black alcoholics have been active in carrying the A.A. message in both integrated and segregated meetings.

The first enquiry received at GSO from a Black alcoholic came in 1943. This member, from Pittsburgh (name unknown), is referenced in letters to GSO as being sober and active in Twelfth Step work for several years. Also in 1943, another member named Jake, in a letter to co-founder Bill W., reported that the East Liberty Group in Pittsburgh, PA, had Horace A., described as “a gentleman of color,” as its leader for their meeting on January 19.

That same year, Joe D., an early African American member of Group 3 in Chicago, who described himself as “a humble G.I. A.A.,” was in contact with Bill W. regarding the racial problem in A.A. Bill replied to an October 15, 1944, correspondence from Joe: “Along with you, I feel very deeply about this race business. Save this one question, I suppose A.A. is the most democratic society in the world. All men should have an equal opportunity to recover from alcoholism — that is the shining ideal.”

St. Louis, MO claims to have created the first “Negro” group in the new Alcoholics Anonymous movement on January 24, 1945. The earliest correspondence from St. Louis is dated August 3, 1945. It reads, in part: “I can’t tell you how delighted I was to have your letter of July 30th and to learn that our first negro group has actually started.” Torrence S., the group secretary, wrote the New York A.A. office on October 20, 1945, and explained that there had been a compromise initially adopted in St. Louis which banned Black people from coming to the white A.A. meetings, but did allow them to form their own separate segregated Black A.A. group. Earl R. founded another Black A.A. group in Chicago on March 20, 1945. This was the Evans Avenue Group which is still active in Chicago today. The September 1951 Grapevine featured an article about this group, titled “The Negro in A.A.”

GSO Archives provides evidence that a “Colored group” in Washington, DC, may have started in April 1945. James C., acting chairperson of the group, wrote to the GSO, stating: “Our group organized in April of this year.” This group was first listed in the February 1946 print directory as having 27 members. One year later, in February 1947, reported membership had risen to 135. In 1947 the name of this group was changed from the Washington Colored Group to the Cosmopolitan Group. Jim’s story was the first by an African American to appear in the Big Book in the second edition.

Ruth H., a 23-year-old nurse, got sober in Cleveland, OH, mid-1945 before there were any “interracial” or “colored” groups in that city. It is reported that after she got sober, she “devoted over six months of intense effort in overcoming prejudice and suspicion of motive.” May 31, 1946, Ruth H. and her three sponsees held the first official meeting for Black AAs in Cleveland. On June 10, 1946, the G.S.O. received news from Ruth of the Outhwaite Group in Cleveland, Ohio, which had eight members. Ruth submitted a number of informative articles on A.A. for Cleveland’s *Call & Post*, a popular Black newspaper. Ruth’s activities in carrying the A.A. message were recognized by

the *Cleveland Central Bulletin*, A.A.'s oldest newsletter, which preceded the *AA Grapevine* by two years.

The years 1946 and 1947 marked the founding of other Black groups across the U.S., with reports of groups in Los Angeles; St. Louis; Washington, D.C.; Newark, New Jersey, and one in New York City. Another letter with information on an African American group in Charleston, South Carolina, arrived at A.A. headquarters on July 16, 1946.

A.A.'s history confirms that, despite the vision and efforts of Bill W. and the spiritual principles enshrined in the A.A. Traditions, members identified as Black have always had to struggle for full equality in A.A., both as group members and in visible leadership service positions beyond the group, particularly those perceived as prestigious.

In 1999, in response to a need expressed by A.A.'s General Service Conference, a committee was formed with the specific task of developing a pamphlet directed to Black and African American alcoholics. When the pamphlet appeared in 2001, its title reflected the resistance to highlighting the concern the pamphlet was intended to address: It was titled "Can A.A. Help Me Too?" with a subtitle in smaller font, "Black/African Americans Share Their Stories." In 2007, the title of the pamphlet was changed to "A.A. For the Black and African American Alcoholic." In 2019, the Trustees' Committee on Literature requested that the pamphlet be updated with fresh stories and a new title. This new pamphlet, "Black in A.A. — Experience, Strength, and Hope," is in response to that latest request and incorporates sharing from across the United States and Canada.



## **Do you have a drinking problem?**

It can be difficult for many of us to admit and accept that we have a problem with alcohol. Sometimes alcohol seems like the solution to our problems, the only thing making life bearable. But if, when we look honestly at our lives, we see that problems seem to occur when we drink — problems at home or on the job, problems with our health, with our families, with our social lives — it is more than likely that we have a drinking problem.

In Alcoholics Anonymous, we have learned that anyone, anywhere, regardless of their personal circumstance, can suffer from the disease of alcoholism. We have also learned that anyone who wants to stop drinking can find help and recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous.

## **You are not alone**

The stories that appear in this pamphlet represent a wide range of experiences and perspectives of being Black in A.A. in the third decade of the 21st century. If you think you have a drinking problem, you may identify with the experiences shared in these stories. These stories will, we hope, serve to encourage and inspire alcoholics of all ages, ethnicities and genders to find sobriety and joy in the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Evette**

*Claiming my seat*

My father adopted my two older sisters, and I came along four years into my parents' marriage. Dad was labeled an alcoholic, and my sisters teased me that I would grow up to be "just like your father." In many ways, my sisters were right.

We were a military family and moved a lot. I was a shy and awkward child. The constant moving made it difficult to make friends and fit in. I was often the only African American child in my class, and I never had any elementary teachers who looked like me. I was a good student but did not like school because it was lonely; I was teased and had to contend with cruel racist taunts. These early experiences made me mistrust people from other cultures.

My first "drink" was at age 7. I drank a lot of cough syrup that had alcohol as a main ingredient. From an early age I developed a preference for being numb and sleepy. I dabbled in alcohol-based cough syrup throughout childhood, moved to beer in my teenage years, and attended kegger parties. At these keggers, I discovered two things: I could be numb without getting too sleepy, which allowed me to enjoy things a bit more. I had a severe physical allergy to alcohol, and I frequently vomited when drinking. Because of my childhood experience, I knew what alcoholism looked, felt, and smelled like. I accepted I was an alcoholic in my early teens. I knew, but I didn't care. The ordeal of being the only Black person among my peers continued. However, as I got older and drank more, it didn't matter much.

Throughout my life as an African American, I've

had countless experiences with ignorance and misinformed assumptions about my race and culture. I learned to mistrust anyone who wasn't from my community and to anticipate mild expressions of prejudice and more aggressive racial taunts. Along the way, I developed a veneer that allowed me to drink with anyone who was offering. It was not relevant that I did not trust those I drank with. What mattered most was who had the alcohol, how much was available, and who had money to get more if there was a chance the liquor would run out.

By age 23, I began to have severe gastrointestinal issues as a result of my drinking. I was so physically sick that being in public when I drank was impossible. When drinking, I had to be near a toilet. I could not keep food down, was often bent over with stomach pains, and began to waste away. I felt myself losing the ability to think straight.

I still knew I was an alcoholic, but I began to care. I did not want to die. I sought help. I knew about treatment and A.A. In my mind, treatment was acceptable, but A.A. was filled with people who did not share my racial background. A friend from treatment knew about my distrust of other cultures and directed me to an A.A. Fellowship mostly attended by Black folks. I attended A.A. meetings there and made sure I arrived late and sat by the door so I could leave early. During this time, my health improved a bit, but feelings of isolation and a desire to be numb persisted. I went to A.A. meetings at the Fellowship for almost a year and I continued to drink. I was among other Black people and was still miserable and drinking. I could no longer blame my continued isolation and misery on individuals from other cultures.

Eventually, I found a sponsor who sat me down with a Big Book, read it with me line by line, and led me through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. This woman could not be more different from me racially, culturally, and spiritually. My Higher Power used her to hand me the spiritual tools that have resulted in a life beyond my wildest dreams. She taught me to claim my seat in A.A. and hold on tight while walking through this life with dignity and grace no matter what I encounter.

Through my relationship with my sponsor and

others, I learned that ignorance about my race and culture will persist. When fellowshiping with A.A.s outside the meeting, it's painful when ignorance and misinformation rear their head. Today, I understand life is not pain-free and trust is not a prerequisite for continuous sobriety. Today, I have Twelve Steps, Traditions, Concepts, and a sponsor to help me inventory the fear and pain, take responsibility for my actions, and try to make it right when I cause harm. I must grab the hand of A.A. and extend my hand in service to every fellow sufferer I encounter to give back to the Fellowship that gave me a life beyond my wildest dreams.

**Robert**

*Unity does not mean looking the same*

I grew up in the Black part of a Chicago suburb during the 1950s. We didn't drink alcohol at our house. I followed our church's rules and shunned the families of people who drank because drinking was "immoral." I wanted to get to heaven, though my chances were slim due to my affection for other boys.

I didn't choose to have my first drink. High school AP classmates, whose friendship I thought I needed, served me a coffee that I didn't know was spiked with whiskey. I woke up the next day with a terrible headache, no memory of what happened and no idea of where I was. My classmates told me we were in Paris, and nothing else.

I agreed to take my second drink after a college classmate's stepmother assured me that having a cocktail was sociable. When I "awoke" (came to) the next morning, I learned that I'd passed out at my classmate's house after trying to seduce his stepmother. I couldn't believe it. Alcohol brought out the worst in me.

People suggested that I stop after one drink. Had they forgotten that one drink made me crazy? Some adults insisted, "Indians and Negroes can't hold their liquor." No one talked about alcoholism as a disease. Classmates told me to learn to drink

like a gentleman and I tried for nineteen years. My parents had raised me to be a gentleman. I am a gentleman, but I cannot drink like one.

I was desperate when I arrived at A.A. I needed a new life. A.A. gave me one. I learned in A.A. that the first drink triggers a physical allergy followed by a mental craving for more. I drank and drugged to dull physical, mental and spiritual pain, including some due to competing on an unlevelled playing field — of being labeled as the black problem rather than recognized as a human being. I chased the numbing of feelings that alcohol seemed to provide, and continued until I passed out. My origin or race didn't make me an alcoholic and it doesn't keep me from staying sober one day at a time in Alcoholics Anonymous.

The basic tools as outlined in A.A.'s "Big Book" and "Twelve and Twelve" are: Don't pick up the first drink (or substance) no matter what happens; attend meetings often; join a home group and volunteer to help there; get a sponsor and talk with them on a regular basis; listen; read the literature; spend time outside meetings with other sober A.A. people; live the Steps; and keep it moving when people offer unsolicited advice, opinions or judgments.

The Third Step offers me the care of something greater than ourselves and the responsibility to practice "sustained and personal exertion" in daily sober living. I stick with the winners who live the Steps each day and avoid people who just talk. I share my honest and authentic "experience, strength and hope" to the best of my ability. Ideally, when someone gaslights me, I listen politely, thank them for sharing their opinion, then walk away. I don't let others bait me and I don't make other peoples' bait my problem. I return to groups where I can describe what frightened, seduced or angered me into self-medicating with alcohol and drugs without being censored or cross-examined.

Each A.A. can renew and maintain emotional sobriety by applying A.A.'s original long-form First Tradition. In my opinion, this means respecting and including all types of people. I believe that no self-diagnosed alcoholic belongs to "remote communities." The concept of near and remote com-

munities stifles attraction and can turn away people who have an honest desire to stop drinking.

I am definitely better off living sober than high. I personally couldn't stay sober without the way of life that Grace, the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and A.A. members give me. I grow in sobriety as I embrace my experience as a valid expression of multifaceted human reality, not as a challenge to another person's experience. Unity does not mean looking the same, acting the same or conforming to a single cultural norm. It means each A.A. has a spiritual life. It means living the program and trusting that even though no human power can make my life manageable, something "greater than ourselves" can and does restore us to sanity.

**Robin**

### *Transitioning in the halls of A.A.*

I walked out of an A.A. meeting when an oldtimer said to me "Did you have enough yet, kid?" I came back after several years out there, full of hurt, loneliness and hate. I had a failed relationship and was bankrupt financially and spiritually, with three young children that I was willing to abandon. Suicide was my answer to every problem. Then, at the time when I was physically sick and at my worst, I had that bright light experience.

My very first sponsor had called me during those years when I was drinking. When I finally had enough, I called him. I was told to go back to A.A. and I went. The people in the rooms began to care for me from day one. I picked a sponsor that I knew in my heart would reject me because he was a Black guy. I knew he would give me a reason and justification to end it all. Yet, he saved my life. I met with my sponsor one-on-one and the first thing I shared with him was my suicide letter. He listened and then told me that is not the way to do a Fifth Step and that I was afraid of living. I was told some other things that rocked my world at that first meeting, but "something" held me back

from rushing out of his office in a rage. My sponsor explained the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous and read the Big Book to me for the next three months. Wherever my sponsor was during my first three months of sobriety, I was his shadow. I immediately started writing down everything and was done with my Fifth Step by the time I reached 90 days. I had some revelations about how I tried to run my life and how bad I was at it.

I found a God of my understanding and learned how to live a sober life. My sponsor insisted that I become a parent to my children. I had financial difficulties for a long time and the only thing I had to offer my children was my time. I have a relationship today based on my time and not on what I could buy them.

I had to learn to co-parent, which was difficult. I had a resentment that kept festering because I was still keeping score and it felt like I was getting beaten by my ex. It took a lot of emotional sobriety to learn how to get along with the ex. I got into service. Service saved me from causing a lot of pain in my life. When I was losing it and about to react badly to a situation, I would have to stop and go to a service commitment. Frequently, everything that was wrong before the commitment would be fixed with no help from me after I finished doing the commitment, which made me believe in a higher power and that people were not out to get me.

Around three years sober, I hit a spiritual wall that oldtimers talked about. I was told don't drink and don't kill yourself. I had a nervous breakdown and my A.A. family surrounded me and did not try to pick me up or fix me. My sponsor told all the well-meaning folks to leave me on the floor — that it was between me and God. I had been trying to live my life for everyone else and to be anything except me. I was full of fear that no one would accept me being a Black transgender woman. The biggest fear I had was that I would be murdered or destitute.

My sponsor is a jock. He's the epitome of a Black male and I thought if I followed him around I could be just like him. He told me one day: "You're a girl. Get over it!" I was able to start transitioning from male to female in plain sight in the halls of

A.A. One year I was “he” and the next year I was “she.” I kept my service commitments, and I followed the doctor’s instructions and the guidelines for transitioning. The doctors and psychologists credit my work in the program for why I was able to transition quickly. The women in my A.A. family treated me kindly during the awkward years of transitioning. I only caused a little ruckus in the meetings, which I didn’t know about until afterwards because my A.A. family protected me from the nonsense and I was able to grow into me. My grand sponsor offered guidance to my teenage children about my transition.

Wonderful things happen when you’re not ruled by fear. One day my children came into my house and cleared out my male wardrobe and stopped calling me dad. I’m post-op, comfortable and at peace in my own skin today. I use the spiritual principles to live my life today. I still have normal problems living life and use the recovery program to solve them. I love my life as a sober Black woman!

**Jim**

### *I needed to be heard*

By the time I went to my first A.A. meeting, every fiber in my body was shouting out that I could no longer live the life of misery, betrayal and shame that alcoholism and addiction had ensnared me in. My treacherous alcoholic lifestyle was over. No longer was it possible to live a life of deceit, denial, deception. The delusional demons that ruled my thinking had finally brought me to my knees. I could no longer live with my back against the wall, so I surrendered and went to my first A.A. meeting on July 14, 1988. I just wanted to stop being miserable, depressed and suicidal.

Although I had heard of Alcoholics Anonymous in the 1950s, my impression was that A.A. was a white program. My thoughts were that it did not have much to offer anyone from the Black, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), Pan-African or Black Diaspora communities.

Because of the extent of my drinking, I found



myself in a small California beach town, thousands of miles away from my home in Harlem, New York City, spiritually, mentally and emotionally lost. Desperate for help from anyone and anywhere I could get it, I believed my only option left was to try A.A. Nothing else had worked up to that point so why not, I thought. My drinking had destroyed my identity as a proud Black man and reduced me to living in a social cesspool and spiritual no-man's-land.

Everybody except me at the first few meetings was white. Everyone was pleasant and nobody seemed to care about me being there or even noticed me. By the end of my first couple of weeks, I thought that there was not much help for a Black man in Alcoholics Anonymous. I just knew A.A. wasn't going to work.

Despite thinking this way, my life was already getting better. I hadn't picked up a drink since that first day and I had found a place to sleep. So, what was I talking about? My thoughts were that this group of people were not interested in hearing about how alcohol wreaked havoc in every aspect of my culture and life. I thought they would not be interested in hearing my story unless it did not include anything about race.

I needed to talk about how alcohol was used to ease the emotional pain and anger of the social injustices I had heard about from my grandparents and others and had also experienced myself. I needed to talk about how I dealt with workplace discrimination by drinking. I needed to talk about how I dealt with social and economic racism by drinking. I needed to talk about how, in the words of Herbert Spencer, I was held in contempt prior to investigation because I wasn't treated like a Black man with a disease, but rather like a criminal with a hidden agenda. I needed to be heard. A.A. provided that opportunity and much more. I was no longer afraid to tell you about my Blackness once I understood the framework of A.A.

My trust in the Fellowship got stronger with each subsequent year. I began to listen to the healthy voices of men and women talk about how alcoholism was a wretched solution to their social, gender and racial discrimination issues. It was a

revelation to hear other members talk about how they dealt with their own discrimination by drinking. How they would drink on the way to work going to dead-end jobs that would not pay enough to keep food on the table. How they would drink to try to forget about the way they were treated because they were obese or came from a certain area in their hometown. In my humble opinion, A.A. is a place where Blacks get sober and grow spiritually.

As I met other Black alcoholic women and men, we would sometimes talk about what it is like being Black in Alcoholics Anonymous. A.A. has done for me what nothing else has been able to do. I began to talk about how I drank to deal with social injustice because of race. I remembered as a child the men in my community talking about how they needed a drink because they knew they had to deal with racism on a daily basis.

In A.A. I've learned you should surround yourself with the healthy healing members and distance yourself from toxic "bleeding deacons" who do not work a program and only focus on what they have and not on what it takes to sustain the gifts from the Promises in the Ninth Step.

My life growing up in New York was an immersion in culture, art and Black identity that was suffocated by booze and drugs that were available everywhere.

Today my life is a tapestry of memories of healing, self-respect and a willingness to help others who may feel as I did when I first got here 34 years ago. Keep coming back.

**Ruby**

### *I feel I belong*

Hello, my name is Ruby and I am an alcoholic from Surrey, British Columbia. Those words took a long time to admit because I believed that I couldn't be an alcoholic since I was a woman of color who grew up in the Sikh culture. For me, coming out as an alcoholic in my community was a deep shame.

But I had to let go of the secrets and admit that I was very sick both physically and mentally. I received a dual diagnosis and my drinking took me to skid row, and my bottom was being admitted to hospital 20 times in the space of 10 years. Today, after 19 years of sobriety, I wouldn't change my life for anything. I believe it was the unconditional love I was shown in A.A. that helped me to feel I belong. And for that I am grateful.

**Farrah**

### *I am along for the ride*

I have always played a character for as long as I can remember. As a small child, growing up in suburban America with a single father of four girls, I knew my role was to be whatever it was that he expected. As part of a small religious sect, I knew my role was to be whatever was dictated for a young, humble, submissive woman. Living in one of the few Black communities in an affluent suburban area, I also knew the stereotypes, judgments, and obstacles I was up against. My father made it clear to my three sisters and me that we always needed to strive to be different, to achieve greater, and at times to be apart from the Black community and many things associated with that community.

For the first 18 years of my life, religion was supposed to be in the forefront of all of my thoughts and behavior. We attended services several times throughout the week, which kept me away from the majority of secular events around me. Although my religious training was primarily recitation and regurgitation, one positive aspect of it was the public speaking, reading, and comprehension skills I acquired in addition to my formal education. However, this religious sect was the cause of great shame, in part due to the isolation that accompanied it and the separation from the Black community in which I lived.

My response was to gravitate toward the majority group of students at my school — the white students who communicated as I did, who didn't have expectations about the type of music I should like,

the food I should eat, or the automatic way I should move to a beat. It was easy to assimilate to the role of the Black girl who was *almost* a part of, the one who was funny, but who was also an anomaly to the stigmatization of my race. Because my father and my religion shielded me from so much of the outside world, I always felt two steps behind the cultural references, movies, music, and even slang that my Black counterparts referred to. I felt as if I always had to play a character in that arena as well and overcompensate because of the assumptions people had of a light-skinned Black woman who dressed and spoke differently.

When I left for college, I thought I was leaving behind all of the resentments that were created back home. I thought this was the opportunity to define myself and to start over. I identified myself as an alcoholic during my second year at school. However, the characters that I effortlessly played continued to thrive. I found myself code-switching in the classroom among the all-white faces in my major, with the Black faces on my sports teams, in the main college hub, and during my extensive partying. I felt like the poster child for imposter syndrome, never fitting in in either world. Through all of that, I was most comfortable inebriated with alcohol always within reach. Alcohol never cared about race, slang terms, or who could do the “Wobble.” My alcoholism only cared to have me in its grips and on my knees.

When my higher power, Lady Universe, finally brought me to A.A., it was just as I’d expected. Every room I entered was a sea of white faces and I was the designated token. Unfortunately, that was a world I knew very well and even though it was less than ideal, it was very familiar. Lady Universe guided me to a sponsor who was not afraid to talk about race and many other issues. She was able to do this, despite the fact that her face looked nothing like mine. She was able to receive my statements of feeling alone in the very rooms that had lovingly become my sober community. It was a relief to be able to express that, yes, I am an alcoholic like everyone else, but I am also a Black alcoholic who has had very different experiences. However, I was also extremely perplexed as to

what to do with my flood of emotions. To practice the A.A. principle in all my affairs of being rigorously honest and yet censoring myself in meetings seemed a contradiction and untrue to who I am. So, my sponsor encouraged me to seek out meetings where I would never be the token.

This alcoholic will always be stubborn and maybe a little defiant. But just as with sobriety, things take the time they take. If I can be honest, open, and willing, then I can open the door for discovery and change. I always coupled therapy with my program of recovery. At the suggestion of my previous therapist, today I am willing to have a Black therapist with whom I can discuss the issues that continue to follow me. I realize that it is not easy to stay sober, but if I am willing to go to any length, it is beyond possible. Today I have decided to hold myself accountable and make it a priority to attend a weekly meeting where I am completely a part of, in appearance and in my primary purpose. To be able to be 100% honest in my truth *and* to continue to build time, gives me hope. To think of the possibility of forever letting go of the roles I played gives me faith that this program can work in all of my affairs. This journey is continuously evolving and one day at a time I am along for the ride.

**Nathaniel**

### *Today I belong*

As a biracial man it has always been difficult for me to feel like I belonged to any community. My father is a Black man from Weymouth, Nova Scotia, and my mother is a white woman from Sarnia, Ontario. I was raised in rural Nova Scotia in predominantly white communities where I experienced a lot of racial prejudice and struggled with feeling like I didn't fit in. The feeling of not fitting in went away when I drank. Alcohol made it easier for me to socialize with people. I could make friends and have fun with people when I was drinking, but when the liquor was gone I was right back to feeling out of place, different and hated.

Throughout the years of drinking, I went to Alcoholics Anonymous several times. I looked at the people in the rooms like they were different from me. I didn't find a sponsor in A.A. because I felt different than everyone I saw in the rooms. These were homeowners, working class, happy people and I was an ex-convict with different colored skin. I thought, they probably can't even believe that I've experienced racism let alone relate to how I think and feel.

For a number of years, I went in and out of the rooms of A.A. without finding a sponsor. My drinking got worse and worse. Eventually, after losing everything I had worked for, getting divorced, and having my child taken away, I hit my bottom. I knew I needed help so I, finally, became willing to ask for a sponsor. I walked into an A.A. meeting and asked the first person I saw to sponsor me. He pointed me to another man who agreed to sponsor me. He was an old white man, a business owner, a very spiritually minded man who knew a lot about A.A. Although I didn't think we had much in common, after getting to know him for some time I discovered we really did share very similar life experiences. I laugh now to think that my first sponsor appeared so different from me but related so closely to my life and story that he says I AM him.

I worked very hard at living the lifestyle of Alcoholics Anonymous. I volunteered with A.A. committees, I attended meetings even after long work days, I helped make coffee and clean up, I talked to people before and after the meetings, I sponsored men who asked me to, I spoke in treatment centers, I prayed and meditated, I brought people to meetings... I did everything I could to help other people.

Gradually, I made friends in A.A. People who I would have never chosen to befriend, befriended me. These were people who asked how I was doing and cared what I had to say. They wanted to help me without asking for anything in return. They'd meet me anytime I asked, they'd answer the phone anytime I called, they helped me move when I got evicted as a result of my drunkenness, they gave me a place to stay when I was homeless, one gentleman even loaned me a vehicle for a few months

so I could get to work. These people, who I had judged so harshly, only wanted to help me recover, and they did.

When I came to A.A. willing to accept help, I was at a point where I couldn't stay sober for more than a couple of days. Often, I couldn't stay sober for one day. Today, as a result of doing what is suggested in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, attending meetings, and being of service to the community and people of A.A., I've been sober for over three years.

My life is slowly becoming better and better. I've made a lot of new friends and my self-esteem has grown immensely. I look at the world a lot differently than I did before working the Twelve Steps became part of my everyday life. As a young man I didn't feel like I fitted in or belonged anywhere. Today, I'm happy to know that I belong to a worldwide community of alcoholics helping other alcoholics.

**Selena**

### *My inner beauty*

On September 12, 1985, I crossed over from a recreational drinker to an alcoholic/addict sinking into the depths of despair and self-pity when my physician told me I couldn't have children. After telling my husband, I thought: *I know what will fix this*. Painful memories bombarded my mind — not having my song published, dismissal from my religious family, and the murder of my puppy. Things for which I had no solution. Now, this. Yes, the alcoholic mind is a terrible thing.

There was nothing appealing about the taste of gin. I sought the effect. It numbed the excruciating pain of feeling less than a woman. Alcohol comforted me, told me everything was okay. Once intoxication subsided, the cycle of think-drink-repeat continued. For eight years, I lived a life of "pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization." Precious items bought on our honeymoon along with my wedding rings, car, and body were easily traded to feed my addiction.

June 1986, I chopped my long hair to one-quarter inch. Peering into the mirror, staring into lifeless eyes, I saw how ugly I was. A liar. Unable to have children. A cheater. I didn't deserve to look so beautiful on the outside knowing how ugly I was on the inside. I entered the first of two in-patient treatment centers.

In 1987, I relocated to North Carolina, underwent infertility treatment, and had the first of two children. My inability to stop drinking, even for my son, made me think I might be an alcoholic. Another geographic cure was in order. October 1991 in Mississippi, things became worse. I was a slave trapped in a prison without physical walls confining me and mentally without any regard for spirituality.

The middle of October 1994, I returned home. Later a voice asked, "What would've happened had he been there? Either he'd be dead and you'd be in jail. Or you'd be dead. Either way you'd lose that child you claim to love so much."

Two weeks later, November 2, 1994, I entered a treatment center. Giving me a Big Book, they suggested I read the first 164 pages. Within "The Doctor's Opinion" was HOPE (Hold On Pain Ends). Dr. Silkworth talked about "an allergy to alcohol — a disease." I couldn't fully comprehend the meaning of what he wrote, but I believed I could break free from the chains tethering me to alcohol.

My son and I entered the smoke-filled Little Yellow House which smelled of percolating coffee mixed with cigarette smoke. Out of 40+ people, my son and I were the only people of color. That day I began practicing Traditions Five and Twelve. My primary purpose was "to stay sober" and "place principles before personalities." The seven years I attended the LYH as the only regular person of color, I didn't experience prejudice. Everyone understood the disease of alcoholism doesn't discriminate — and neither did they.

The Program says Trust God, Clean House, and Help Others. With a sponsor, I completed one Step per month. The Twelve Steps helped me grieve the loss of my frenemy. Step One moved me past denial. Step Two allowed the anger of not drinking



to subside. Step Three helped me not compromise my sobriety. By the time Steps Four and Five were completed in May 1995, I arrived at acceptance. I have an allergy to alcohol controlled through abstinence and the program of Alcoholic Anonymous.

God remained on my Fourth/Fifth Step lists for five years. I worked through my complaints. God was disappointed with my choices, but He still forgave me and loved me unconditionally. The pride and arrogance of an alcoholic is boundless: I forgave God and myself. I stopped blaming him. Acknowledging I was the problem changed my life. God saved me at least five times (that I know of). My Higher Power has patience and humility preferring humility to ability. He loves me despite my imperfections.

I've been blessed with sponsoring many women. In 2018, I co-founded a People of Color (POC) telephone meeting to provide a place for those feeling out of place. The Covid-19 pandemic gave us Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) virtual meetings. Therefore, the telephone meeting ended in 2022. As chairperson, I started a virtual Corrections meeting in 2022. Throughout the pandemic, the International Corrections Meeting and the Never Too Early Sunday Morning Big Book Workshop saved my sobriety by allowing me to serve and by filling me spiritually.

Daily trusting in God, annually cleaning house, and prioritizing helping others provide the best chance for me to remain spiritually fit. Today when I look in the mirror, I see my inner beauty. My insides now match my outsides. I am forever grateful to be an alcoholic who has the privilege of living two lives in one lifetime!

**Leila**

### *Important for me to show up*

Growing up in a racially mixed household, I felt caught in the middle of two identities. I grew up in Queens, New York, immersed in the cultural traditions of my father's Irish background, with danc-

ing, Catholic school upbringing, and of course, drinking. My mother, as an African immigrant, learned to assimilate and adapt herself to these customs, but I never learned her native languages or how to cook her dishes. I didn't realize at the time that often my mother and I were the only spots of melanin in an otherwise white family, but that quickly changed. I began to hear degrading remarks by my own family members about my skin color that I would remember and hold onto for years to come. I was told that my lips and backside were too big and that my hair looked better straightened. I used their remarks to fuel my own internalized racism about my identity as I grew into a self-loathing adolescent.

I was ready for a drink years before I took my first one at age 15 in a room full of teenagers who laughed and snickered as I made a fool of myself in a drunken blackout. The embarrassment and shame quickly wore off and I sought out alcohol at every chance I could. I went to college in New Orleans and the party only grew larger as I added other substances to the mix. I continued partying for an entire decade before I hit my rock bottom. For 24 hours I was in a walking blackout, lost my job, and barely got out alive from a dangerous situation I was in while procuring more drugs and alcohol.

By the grace of God on May 8, 2013, my journey in sobriety began. I was sent to a treatment center in northeast Louisiana where I was first introduced to the Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and where I found my first sponsor. We worked the Steps and I threw myself into A.A. service work. It wasn't until I had a few years sober that I realized I felt like I did years ago as one of the few drops of melanin in a sea of white faces. A member of my local A.A. community even asked me what it felt like to be the token Black friend in the Fellowship? To which I had no response.

As I started to look around the A.A. committees I served on, I swallowed hard and realized that if I wanted things to change, I was responsible too. I became involved in general service and had the honor of serving on the Accessibilities Committee. I was able to share how remote com-

munities can appear right under our noses and within our own backyards. Our committee looked at how we can better reach the BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) community, especially in a state that is over 30% Black yet still struggling to be found in the rooms.

The most important thing I realized was how important it was for me to show up so that others who look like me could find the fellowship they crave. I became the first female member of a BIPOC-centered virtual A.A. group in Louisiana and helped spread the word to others like us. We reached out and spread the word about our YPAA (Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous) conference to young, Black alcoholics so that they could see the fun we have in sobriety. In my professional life, I completed my doctoral degree in education and taught a meditation practice to a class of Black junior high students at a Title I school, introducing them to some of the same tools I used in practicing my Step Eleven in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I am responsible to practice these principles inside and outside of the rooms and to be a living Big Book for the next alcoholic. I can now say that I no longer carry the shame, guilt or remorse I once felt about my alcoholism or racial identity. Today I can help welcome others as others welcomed me.

**Tony**

### *The miracles kept coming*

I am a Black man and I've been gay all my life, although I went to High School prom with a girl. I was born in 1937 so this qualifies me as a senior. I am also a veteran. I joined the U.S. Air Force in 1955 and served for eight years during peacetime. During my service I was a heavy drinker, like most military personnel, though I was not drinking alcoholically. Additionally, I was not openly gay and kept very discreet. In 1963, I left the Air Force with two Honorable Discharges.

Being actively gay and living in Brooklyn, NY in the 60s and 70s was a fast life — booze, drugs like weed and poppers, at bathhouses around town and up in Harlem. Then AIDS arrived in New York City in early 1979. At the time we just knew it as the “gay cancer.” The New York City bathhouses closed down, the gay cancer got an official name, and gay men were dying like flies.

My last drink was on April 4, 1979. I joined A.A. in New York and have been sober ever since my last drink. My first home group was the Roosevelt We Care Group. That group started years ago because Freeport, New York A.A. members didn't want Blacks in their group. Those Black men moved to Roosevelt, a predominantly Black town, and started the We Care Group. When the group got on its feet, they started another group, We Care Too, in Newcastle, Suffolk County, also a predominantly Black town.

I got sober and everything gay to me came to a sudden screeching halt. But the gay men kept dying, and soon straight people, too — inside and outside of the A.A. rooms. It was horrible to go to my regular A.A. gay meetings to learn four or five members had died since the last weekly meeting. This death rate went on at every gay meeting I attended. No one knew, understood or trusted a person with AIDS, so we stopped hugging, kissing, touching or holding hands before and after A.A. meetings. Very much like today with our Covid-19 pandemic.

Yes folks, in my A.A. sobriety, I have lived with the pain of two death-dealing illnesses here in America, coast-to-coast. But in A.A., we don't drink, we go to meetings, carry the message to the suffering alcoholic, and get a life beyond our wildest dreams. In my ninth year of sobriety, I moved to San Francisco, CA. First Place's gay A.A. meeting on Geary St. became my home group and still is today. It's located in the Tenderloin, a sleazy area of drugs, booze and love for sale.

I met a newcomer in San Francisco who was a schoolteacher named Lloyd. Lloyd introduced me to a realtor who had helped him buy his first house in San Francisco. I resisted meeting her for years. I was a federal employee, with a terrible credit card history. She said, Tony, are you a veteran? I said

yes. She gave me the address to a federal agency and within five minutes I had this piece of government paper allowing me to move into a condo *with no down payment*. I had a 30-year mortgage and I was 60 years old. My babies said, “Tony, what are you going to do?” I told them I’d pay my mortgage on time and if I died, let them fight over it. It was my first sober miracle but not my last.

The miracles kept coming and it was like being on a pink cloud each time. I was 78 years old when I received an email from another woman in A.A. who writes plays. She asked me to meet her to read a script. Are you kidding me? I am shy, never acted or wanted to act ever. But I learned to say “yes” in A.A. So I showed up, read the script and got the part. For about two years I traveled with this show all over California. It was a great experience being an actor in my senior years.

Now I am 83 years old, I am waiting to see when the next miracle will happen. Today I have 41 years of continuous sobriety. I still have a sponsor, and I sponsor others and have stayed in touch with many “Babies” throughout my sober years. I also have many grand and great-grand Babies, from five years sober up to 39 years. My life, like my A.A. program, is rich, serene and fulfilling.

**Robyn**

### *For people of all colors*

I celebrated two years of sobriety on my brother’s belly-button birthday which amps up my reasons to stay sober. I believe God chose that date since my brother supports me in staying sober. I came into the rooms needing help to get away from the beast that had imprisoned my life, made me feel sick, wretched, and separated from those things I loved the most: family, work, sanity.

Each Step caused a mental change, One through Twelve. Admitting powerlessness was most important during my first year working to give up drinking. And I continue to experience a spiritual awakening. But initially I seldom met

members like me who shared the same ethnic background as an African American female with a career in education. In my rural town, many exhibited “conservative” values, widespread in the South. But being a desperate alcoholic, I found it worth the gamble to immerse myself in this Fellowship, stretching myself to join in with mostly older white men. These gents were like other neighbors I learned to accept after moving here from a diverse big city. Many were retired veterans, older, eggshell or cement white, wearing baseball caps — some with combat pins from the armed forces. One, with long hair, wore a tee shirt with the name of a rock band. He reassured me that if I listened, things would be all right.

I met a few women who nurtured my road through recovery; they were a balm for overcoming the tidal wave of alcoholism that arrived after my mother had passed away a decade earlier. They also reminded me of a relative who had been like a sister to me who had joined A.A. when I was young and showed me that a vibrant lifestyle was possible in the Fellowship.

Early in my sobriety, I walked into a church basement and sat down next to a man who seemed to want to comfort me; he jumped up, grabbed a napkin from the coffee table, and handed it to me. I must have looked forlorn, and I did cry during that hour, grateful for the paper towel. But later I noticed that this Caucasian fellow wore the same baseball hat to every meeting, and on it was a political slogan that made me uncomfortable.

Generally, I rarely felt unsafe with these new A.A. friends, until... one evening that man who'd handed me a napkin arrived at the church with a gun on his hip. It was a time in 2019 when the news featured national turmoil, mass shootings, civil uprisings and protests. Federal officials seemed to treat some Americans more harshly than others. Skin color, religion and plenty of other categories made a lot of people feel vulnerable. When this guy brandished his weapon, I considered leaving that meeting, but I knew I needed to be in A.A. What happened next was unexpected as well, as others reacted to this threatening gesture. One of the men got up and left; he was white and was

one of the dearest people I had met, always greeting me warmly and taking time to ask how I was doing. I realized there were plenty of folks in this Fellowship who joined me in good faith, treating others with kindness, respect, and the camaraderie we so desperately need to get and stay sober. My parents had taught me to accentuate the positive and to lift others up, where possible, because other people will see how we regard those closest to us. I keep that in mind with members of A.A. — my sponsor, friends, and a network of many colors — because my Higher Power showed me “They had visioned the Great Reality — their loving and All Powerful Creator.” (*Big Book*, pg. 161).

This journey hasn't always felt comfortable, and I've had reservations about race matters in the rooms where there were few African Americans like me. But some of these men reminded me of my father. More a cinnamon shade, he was a man's man who also had this disease. My dad became sober after years of abusing my mom and subjecting our family to the tyranny of alcoholism. I do not know if he was a member of A.A., but his example of becoming healthier — happy, joyous, and free — continues to enlighten my journey in the Fellowship.

I am learning to rely on our Big Book which, though written by men from a decidedly different cultural history, reminds me of wisdom I have sought in other books. The elaborate phrases and choice words in A.A.'s manual are not unlike those in the *Holy Bible*, spiritual edicts written principally by men from an ancient, pastoral world. Both books resonate in my life as *living* words for people of all colors, while A.A. Traditions remind me that we should “place principles before personalities.”

**Brian**

*We have a chair for you!*

For a long time, I found myself looking around the meeting circle for another face that looked like mine, which was something I learned to do as a child being the only Black face in a predominant-

ly white community and school system. That is one of the reasons I always felt different growing up. I've come to understand most alcoholics felt different growing up as well, but most members didn't look like me, so I knew that the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous couldn't possibly understand my pain and suffering as I drank myself into treatment centers, hospitals and jails in a repeated pattern of self-righteous insanity for years.

I couldn't see that my alcoholism was keeping me in a state of self-pitying anger and that this would drive me away from Alcoholics Anonymous, its people, and the simple Twelve Step solution outlined in the Big Book, which was designed to save me from myself. It took a long time and a lot of unfortunate painful consequences due to my drinking for me to truly realize that I am bodily and mentally different from other people, and that my difference is NOT because I'm a Black man who can't stop drinking; it's because I'm an alcoholic who is spiritually sick and beyond human aid. I would rather judge you all for judging me and leave before I was kicked out for not belonging, because my disease tells me that a room full of people who aren't Black or remotely close to it don't want me there and only allow me to stay and participate as a courtesy. I was dying when I was drinking and I'm a dead man walking when I separate myself from Alcoholics Anonymous because of the lies I tell myself about the program and the people in it.

After doing some Step work, I was able to see a pattern within me that was different from the one I told myself every day which was grounded in life not going my way because of the color of my skin. Life wasn't going my way because I didn't know how to get honest and seek acceptance, but most importantly I didn't know how to ask for help. I didn't want to talk about my childhood traumas or the fears I had of the past, present and thereafter. I was wrapped in a cocoon of fear and false pride which allowed me to use my skin color as a shield to separate myself from anything that made me feel uncomfortable, whether it was Alcoholics Anonymous, jobs, friends or relationships. This was the perfect cover for an alcoholic like me



because it gave me reasons to drink the way that I wanted to. But if you're also an alcoholic like me, then you're of the hopeless variety suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience can conquer.

When I first got to Alcoholics Anonymous as a young adult in his twenties, I just wanted the room I saw full of happy, joyous and free people to accept me and like me, but the minute I thought I was being judged (I thought that a lot) or looked at differently because of the color of my skin I made a decision to continue on living as I had been. Today I know that old way of living is certain death for me.

After having spent some time in the program, I have come to believe and actively experience what this Fellowship is all about. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. What I've discovered by doing that is an unconditional level of love and tolerance that does look a little different from one person to the next, as we are not perfect people (I learned that in Alcoholics Anonymous, too), but we are a people of one and all inclusive. We need people of all walks of life to help pull other sick and suffering alcoholics back from the brink of death and restore their faith in whatever makes sense to them; it just can't be them. Just like I can't do this without other alcoholics of all races, shapes and sizes who know and have experienced the destructive power of alcoholism. No matter where you are from and how you got here, and what color your skin is, we have a chair for you. More importantly we have a solution. Please keep coming. We need you!

## **Where to find A.A.**

There are A.A. groups in large cities, rural areas and villages throughout the world. Many A.A. intergroup or central offices have websites where information about local A.A. meetings can be found, and almost anywhere in the United States or Canada you can use the “A.A. Near You” section on the A.A. website: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org). You can also find a meeting by downloading the “Meeting Guide” at no cost on your smartphone. These resources can help direct you to a meeting in your community. Additionally, information about local meetings can often be obtained from healthcare workers, faith leaders, media outlets, hospitals and alcoholism facilities that are familiar with our program.

Each A.A. group endeavors to provide a safe meeting place for all attendees and to encourage a secure and nurturing environment. In A.A., the shared experience, strength and hope of sober alcoholics is the lifeline to sobriety; our common suffering and our common solution transcend most difficulties, helping us to create the conditions in which to carry A.A.’s message of hope and recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic.

Many Black alcoholics feel quite comfortable in any A.A. group. Yet, many A.A. communities also have special interest groups for Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), where it may be easier to identify as an alcoholic or to be open about certain personal issues.

If you cannot locate a group in your area, please contact the A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163, (212) 870-3400, [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org). They will put you in touch with the group nearest you.

## **How it works**

A.A. provides a proven pathway that can lead to recovery. By listening to the many men and women in A.A. share frankly and openly about their alcoholism, we come to recognize that we, too, are suffering from the same disease. Utilizing the Twelve Steps of A.A. and the A.A. principles we come to rely on, we discover new ways of living. If we are willing to be honest about our drinking and earnestly apply what we learn about ourselves in A.A., our chances at recovery are good.

While A.A. may not have the solution to all our problems, by following the simple suggestions of the A.A. program, we can find a solution to our drinking problem and a way to live life one day at a time without alcohol.

## THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.



**A.A. PUBLICATIONS** Below is a partial listing of A.A. publications. Complete order forms are available from the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Telephone: (212) 870-3400. Website: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

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**BOOKS**

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS  
DAILY REFLECTIONS  
AS BILL SEES IT  
OUR GREAT RESPONSIBILITY  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS COMES OF AGE  
DR. BOB AND THE GOOD OLDTIMERS  
'PASS IT ON'

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**BOOKLETS**

LIVING SOBER  
CAME TO BELIEVE  
A.A. IN PRISON: A MESSAGE OF HOPE  
A.A. FOR THE OLDER ALCOHOLIC — NEVER TOO LATE

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**PAMPHLETS**

**Experience, Strength and Hope:**

WOMEN IN A.A.  
BLACK IN A.A.  
A.A. FOR THE NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN  
YOUNG PEOPLE IN A.A.  
LGBTQ ALCOHOLICS IN A.A.  
THE "GOD" WORD: AGNOSTIC AND ATHEIST MEMBERS IN A.A.  
A.A. FOR ALCOHOLICS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES —  
AND THEIR SPONSORS  
ACCESS TO A.A.: MEMBERS SHARE ON OVERCOMING BARRIERS  
A.A. AND THE ARMED SERVICES  
DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DIFFERENT?  
MANY PATHS TO SPIRITUALITY  
HISPANIC WOMEN IN A.A.  
BEHIND THE WALLS: A MESSAGE OF HOPE  
IT SURE BEATS SITTING IN A CELL  
(An illustrated pamphlet for those in custody)

**About A.A.:**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A.  
IS A.A. FOR ME?  
IS A.A. FOR YOU?  
A NEWCOMER ASKS  
IS THERE AN ALCOHOLIC IN YOUR LIFE?  
THIS IS A.A.  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP  
THE A.A. GROUP  
PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL  
THE A.A. MEMBER—MEDICATIONS AND OTHER DRUGS  
SELF-SUPPORT: WHERE MONEY AND SPIRITUALITY MIX  
EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT US:  
AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR TWELVE TRADITIONS  
THE TWELVE STEPS ILLUSTRATED  
THE TWELVE CONCEPTS ILLUSTRATED  
THE TWELVE TRADITIONS ILLUSTRATED  
HOW A.A. MEMBERS COOPERATE WITH PROFESSIONALS  
A.A. IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES  
A.A. IN TREATMENT SETTINGS  
BRIDGING THE GAP  
A.A. TRADITION—HOW IT DEVELOPED  
LET'S BE FRIENDLY WITH OUR FRIENDS  
UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY

**For Professionals:**

A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY  
A BRIEF GUIDE TO A.A.  
IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AS A RESOURCE  
FOR THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL  
A MESSAGE TO CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS  
IS THERE A PROBLEM DRINKER IN THE WORKPLACE?  
FAITH LEADERS ASK ABOUT A.A.  
A.A. MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

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**VIDEOS** (available on [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org))

A.A. VIDEOS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE  
HOPE: ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
A NEW FREEDOM

**For Professionals:**

A.A. VIDEO FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS  
A.A. VIDEO FOR LEGAL AND CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS  
A.A. VIDEO FOR EMPLOYMENT/HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

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**PERIODICALS**

AA GRAPEVINE (monthly, [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org))  
LA VIÑA (bimonthly, in Spanish, [www.aalavina.org](http://www.aalavina.org))  
ABOUT A.A. (digital-only, [www.aa.org/about-aa](http://www.aa.org/about-aa))

## A DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to A.A.'s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

### I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.

And for that: **I am responsible.**

