

2023.07.11

Dear Jaan Tallinn,

Alice of the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk explained that this is the way I should try to contact you.

I am a victim of the Let Me Think Scholarship Workshop <http://www.let-me-think.org> which is funded by you and The Survival and Flourishing Fund. I was enticed by the organizers to participate in the eight week program in Oneonta, NY from June 4 to July 29. They paid for my air flight from Lithuania to New York City and back to Lithuania. They provided food and lodging for the first five weeks. They also paid the initial \$500 stipend as promised. However, on Sunday, July 9, they dismissed me from the program. I have requested that they provide, as promised, food and lodging for the final three weeks as well as the final \$500 stipend. They have not replied to my requests. Currently, I am getting by as a vagabond, living in a tent and eating at food pantries.

I ask you to intervene with them so that they respect their promises to me. I also ask you to honor their promises if they themselves would not. I would appreciate if you did that for all of the participants.

I have published several exchanges of letters regarding this:

<https://www.freelists.org/post/math4wisdom/Fwd-Please-intervene-at-the-Let-Me-Think-Scholarship-Workshop>

<https://www.freelists.org/post/math4wisdom/Options-regarding-the-Let-Me-Think-Scholarship-Workshop>

I include below my letter reaching out to you, the written demand by the organizers that I leave, and the letter which I wrote to them after I left.

Please do reach out to me as I have reached out to you. I think this is an important case study for what can go wrong with „effective altruism“, especially if we wish to be rational and learn from our mistakes, and if we are humane and care about what happens to vulnerable people when projects fail, all the more so when we tolerate high rates of failure for the sake of big wins.

I would gladly help you reach out to other participants as well as the organizers. I would be interested in inviting them to have a video chat with you or your colleagues at your convenience.

I await your response.

Andrius

Andrius Kulikauskas

math4wisdom@gmail.com

<http://www.math4wisdom.com>

Dear Jann Tallinn,

You and The Survival and Flourishing Fund are listed as the funders of the Let Me Think Scholarship Workshop.

<https://let-me-think.org/scholarshipworkshop.html>

I am one of eleven participants of the eight week long Workshop. Five weeks have gone by and there are three weeks left. The never ending failures of the organizers have made the Workshop dysfunctional and often abusive. From a research point of view, the results are useless, fruitless and in many ways, unethical, as Human Subject Research is taking place with no understanding or oversight.

I ask you, please:

- 1) tell the Workshop organizers Joshua Meyers, Bethelihem Gebresilasie and James Mathews to end their research program
- 2) confirm to the Workshop participants that they will be provided room, board and stipend, as promised
- 3) have independent, outside experts interview the participants and organizers regarding their experiences at the Workshop
- 4) make public the conclusions your experts draw from those interviews.

I am making public the following abusive 4 minute conversation which organizer Joshua Meyers and participant Jorge had with me on July 6, 2023 and which they allowed me to record.

<https://www.math4wisdom.com/files/20230706-LetMeThink-JorgeJoshuaAndrius.mp3>

You will find the transcript at the end of my letter, how I was pressured to go to New York City and be left there - homeless - for two weeks, without shelter or food. This is just one personal example. I think all of the participants have suffered harmful stress during the Workshop.

Moving forward, I want to focus on your role, as funder, in enabling this social experiment gone wrong. I suspect we are suffering the consequences of a "high risk, big gain" philanthropic strategy which is willing to fail many times in pursuit of big wins. The problem is that the Let Me Think Scholarship Workshop and other such projects attract people who are poor, marginal, vulnerable and treat them as disposable.

In as much as your philanthropy is humane and responsible, this is the time to intervene. In as much as your philanthropy is rational, you have the perfect opportunity to learn from a large ensemble of mistakes. These include mistakes that you made in selecting this project for funding. The organizers seem to have had no track record of leadership on smaller projects but you enabled them to lead a large project. This may well be a problem with your funding approach. You did not appreciate that this project by its nature involved Human Subject Research into which participants would inevitably be pressured to participate. You did not check whether the organizers demonstrated the psychological constitution required of community leaders, most obviously, an ability to empathize with another human being and act from their perspective, addressing their personal needs.

I ask you to assess the harm your funding has caused on the participants. You had \$100,000 available for this project. I think you should distribute your next \$100,000 to the 11 participants - the victims - of this Workshop. I also suggest that you proactively approach the Internal Revenue System to work out with them the oversight that you should provide to the high risk projects you fund in the spirit of "effective altruism". And clearly, given that you fund high risk projects, you should have a clear understanding with the organizers on how they can promptly end projects that have clearly failed. You must allow them to fail. You should not penalize them for failure but rather you should study their failure.

I await your reply to my four requests 1, 2, 3, 4.

Andrius

Andrius Kulikauskas
math4wisdom gmail.com
<http://www.math4wisdom.com>

On Sun, Jul 9, 2023 at 5:23 PM Let Me Think <contact let-me-think.org> wrote:

Dear Andrius,

We have reviewed your proposal for remaining at the workshop (see proposal here <https://www.freelists.org/post/math4wisdom/Options-regarding-the-Let-Me-Think-Scholarship-Workshop>). We must regretfully decline this proposal. Furthermore, we must dismiss you from the workshop. We are doing so out of a concern for the safety of the remaining participants, as well as to protect the mission and integrity of the workshop.

Within the first week of the workshop, the list of violations that would result in being kicked out was presented and all participants reviewed it. These violations are:

- Intentionally causing bodily harm to self or others
- Insulting or verbally abusing others
- Stealing
- Forced, coercive, or non-consensual sexual contact, or any form of sexual harassment
- Getting in the way of scholarship
- Unreasonable refusal to help with chores

This list has been hanging in the dining room since it was presented. No participant objected to this list at any time during the workshop. You have repeatedly violated rules 2 and 5. What follows is an abridged list of incidents:

2) Insulting or verbally abusing others

During a group meeting, you declared that another participant was autistic and pathological and would do everything in your power to annoy them until they agreed to change their mind. You acknowledged that this could be considered harassment.

In the kitchen, you yelled at this participant at dinner, calling them pathological. This tension and conflict was extremely upsetting not just to them, but also to many participants witnessing it.

While we acknowledge that your conflict with this participant was motivated by defending another participant, this does not justify verbal harassment.

You told multiple participants in this workshop as well as two of the organizers (Beth and Jimmy) that you don't see them as real people.

You engaged in angry, dismissive outbursts, particularly against women. (video evidence exists documenting one such instance).

You intimidated interlocutors through interruptions, distortions of statements, and rejection of alternative viewpoints.

5) Getting in the way of scholarship

You opted out of a particular study plan, but was nonetheless present in the study space. You proceeded to disrupt the study plan by starting irrelevant conversations, including making accusations of anti-semitism.

Because of your history of verbal abuse, you generally makes any space you inhabit less comfortable for participants, and you often occupy the dining room (the main open space in the house). This limits the amount and quality of scholarship because mental energy must be rerouted to exist in your presence.

You have intervened in group meetings of which you had opted out to press your own agenda.

You have objected to various proposals for alternate uses of study space, placing your own desires above those of the group.

We have established a chronology of leadership's interactions with you, as well as the experience of other people, should you or anyone have questions regarding the process leading up to this decision.

We ask that you collect your possessions and leave the property by 7pm on July 9, 2023. We have arranged for a Lyft to pick you up at that time and take you to The Village Motel in Richfield Springs, about 20 minutes from Cooperstown, where we have reserved you a room for one night. Otherwise, you may make arrangements of your choosing. In copy are the property owners, who have been informed of our decision and request you to leave the property and not return.

Regards,

The organizers (Joshua, Beth, and Jimmy)

Andrius Kulikauskas <math4wisdom@gmail.com>

Mon, Jul 10, 10:54 AM (23 hours ago)

to Let, beth, Jimmy, Joshua, Jermaine, Samuel.Hutchens, Brent, Anya, Philippe, Isa, ELIZA, aslam.kakar, Jorge, ray.doraisamy unrealeel, Jay, info, thezvi, sff-contact, enquiries

Dear Organizers (Joshua, Beth, Jimmy),

Yesterday, July 9, Sunday, at 5:30 pm, at a meeting at the Oney House, you presented me with the following letter, which I read aloud. You asked that I leave the property by 7:00 pm that same day. I complied with your request. I noted that it was raining (which means that the inside of my tent could get wet) and Beth told me "You will figure it out." I asked if I could take some food. I was allowed to take the food I had packed that morning for an outing with friends and also a bag of oatmeal.

The day before, on July 8, Saturday, while walking from the Oney House into town, Joshua drove by and offered me a ride. Joshua was traveling with Beth, Brent and Jakeem. Joshua expressed concern about the seriousness of my leg infection and insisted that I take care of myself. I said that I should stay at the Oney House until my leg healed and certainly until my doctor's appointment Tuesday evening at the free clinic. Joshua agreed. Beth started singing along to the Doors song "Light my fire". We all joined in song. Joshua let me out at the Walmart pharmacy where I purchased antibiotics. This was a second round of treatment because my wound was serious and not getting better. Saturday afternoon I wrote the letter explaining why I was declining your offer

that I leave voluntarily. I gave eight reasons why I was choosing to stay. The most important reason was medical. My offer to accomodate you and others was that I stay away from the house between the hours of 10:00 am and 8:00 pm. This was the offer that I proposed to Jimmy when I spoke with him for 17 minutes on July 7, Friday, 7:50 pm. At the time, he assured me that he would intervene and he told me that my offer was reasonable. In keeping with my offer to accomodate you, on Saturday evening I walked for five hours from Walmart to Main Street to Walmart to the Oney House, much of it uphill, all of it with a backpack.

Not long after my conversation with Jimmy, on July 7, Friday, 9:34 pm, I received an apology from Jimmy, Joshua and Beth that "you (Andrius) felt pressured into conversations or group work" and an (incorrect) assumption "you feel a lot of distrust in the environment around the house" and an offer for my consideration ("do you WANT...?" "feel free to make alternative suggestions"). Your offer was that I spend the next 3 weeks not at the Oney House but at a separate campsite or an AirBnb. You offered to pay me \$1,515 (\$500 for the second stipend, \$315 for food, \$700 for lodging).

Please, I request that you deposit in my checking account the \$1,515 that you offered. Additionally, I request that you add \$60 for my travel from Oneonta to New York City. Additionally, please note that I will not be able to deduct the money that you provide for food and lodging. I need to declare this as income to both the US and Lithuania. I need to pay 15% Social Security to the US and 20% Social Security and Income Tax to Lithuania on the total I receive from you for that. This means that I need you to multiply those figures by $1/(1-0.35) = 1.54$. Which is to say, you need to increase them by 54% for the money I receive from you to cover my food and lodging costs after I deduct for Social Security and Income Tax on. Thus I request that you add an additional \$170 for food and \$377 for lodging. I request a total of \$2,122. I request that you alert me when you expect to deposit that. I request that you deposit it promptly.

Similarly, I request that you promptly deliver at least \$1,515 to each of the participants who have left since July 6, Thursday - namely Rachel, Anya, Isa, Eliza, Aslam - or are leaving - namely, Samuel. Certainly, you can apologize to them in writing just as you did to me on July 7, Friday.

The Let Me Think Scholarship Workshop received funding for 20 participants. In actuality, there were eleven participants, not counting the organizers. Now there are only 4 participants left: Brent, Jermane, Eliot, Jorge.

I thought that I would be participating in a Scholarship Workshop where the organizers would help me succeed in my project "Math 4 Wisdom" by catalyzing it as an alternative scholarship institute of the future. I would work together with others so that there projects would likewise succeed. So, for example, on my own initiative, I made connections with the Friends of Wisdom, a group of scholars who seek to reform universities so that they pursue wisdom-inquiry, and I made those connections available to all who wished in our Workshop. I collected answers from 10 of us, 10 of my colleagues at Math 4 Wisdom and 10 of the Friends of Wisdom, regarding our unique relationships to truth and our deepest values in life. As the weeks progressed, in describing my experience to myself and others, both in our group and beyond it, it felt like we were subjects of Human Subject Research, an involuntary "reality TV show", or as Dr.Anya put it, a "lizard ecosystem", or perhaps more vividly, a laboratory cage of rats or guinea pigs. What happens if you force many different rats to live together in tight quarters? At a certain point it felt like we were living in a cult, out of touch with the world.

Based on what ended up happening, with so many people leaving, it seems that I was made to leave simply because I declined to leave.

Today, with fresh consideration, considering how events have unfolded, and the small yet significant amount of money at stake, my personal experience is that we are victims of "human trafficking" as defined by the Department of Homeland Security

<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/what-human-trafficking>

They warn: "The safety of the public as well as the victim is important. Do not attempt to confront a suspected trafficker directly or alert a victim to any suspicions. It is up to law enforcement to investigate suspected cases of human trafficking."

Organizers, I hope that you can take prompt efforts to clarify that you are not human traffickers. Please understand that at this point I should limit my interaction with you. Certainly, I have nothing to debate with you.

Hoping for clarity,

Andrius

Andrius Kulikauskas

math4wisdom gmail.com

<http://www.math4wisdom.com>