

80,000 Posters for Rev. Moon at Madison Square Garden - A World of Blue

Joy Schmidt [Pople]
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New York will never forget the 80,000 posters advertising "September 18th Could Be Your Rebirthday" plastered by David Byer and his team of 21 on every construction site and poster board in New York. Most newspaper stories and television news coverage of Reverend Moon's campaign were illustrated with photos of vast expanses of wall to wall posters.

I had never seen anything like it. Brilliant red, white, and blue posters two by three feet became a sort of wallpaper to cover up the dirt and gloom of many areas of New York. The access roads to the Queensboro Bridge were lined three deep on either side, as far as the eye could see with about 4,000 posters. On Second Avenue in Manhattan, after leaving the Queensboro Bridge, 407 posters on a construction site greeted a million and a half commuters daily. Columbus Avenue's round postering poles were all covered with Reverend Moon's face. Wall Street had been plastered. Even three areas in the center of Harlem were decorated with the red, white and blue.

Seven New York Unification Church members began the postering spree on August 4. In two weeks they placed 1200 posters in shops along the

main avenues in New York. One Sunday afternoon when they were postering the owner of the building came out to observe their work. "Well," he said, "they're going to cover it with something else anyway. They've been covering it for the last twenty years, so you might as well cover it." David Byer reported that he was kind of pleased because it looked so much better.

When the IOWC teams arrived in the middle of August, fourteen more were drafted for the postering team. One team of seven postered new areas of New York, another team of seven postered new areas in the surrounding boroughs, and the third team of seven retouched any damaged posters.

"Our standard is the perfection stage," Byer explained. "The posters shouldn't be a little crooked. It should be like wallpaper; there shouldn't be any spaces left uncovered. The posters should start from the left-hand or whatever side we were working from -- beginning from the absolute corner on the side and the top and then go perfectly across. That way we can't be accused for not really respecting Reverend Moon's picture. And it has had an incredible effect on people because of that."

A couple of times New York Unification Church members went out and postered randomly throughout the city. But Byer's experience shows that such postering has less effect than wall to wall postering. "When we keep it up," he said, "people can't help but recognize that this is a great effort. Just putting posters anywhere, anyone can do that. But this way our determination is all summed up in that postering. If anybody covers it, whoosh, we cover it right back up, no problem. And they are absolutely defeated."

Campaign posters for city and state primaries were all covered over, as well as posters for various Communist groups. On Columbus Circle, Socialist Workers Party members covered the entire construction board with their own posters, appealing for the working class to unite against the capitalist class. "This Communist group is the first group to entirely cover our posters," Byer commented. "It shows some amount of determination, but they are the only group that can really show any determination."

After the team began postering on Columbus Circle, two men worked for twelve hours scraping the posters off and the construction boards were painted gray. The postering crew came back and covered it immediately with posters again.

"I was arrested here," Byer reminisced. "The guard of the Coliseum pressed charges and then we got into the police car and went over to the station house. The captain of the guard had a little conference with the police after I told him about Reverend Moon. In a sense he was for us at that point. The policeman couldn't determine who had the right to press charges, so he asked, 'Who owns this property anyway?' The captain of the guards said, 'We own the property,' and the construction men said, 'We own the boards, but we don't want to press charges.'

"Then they said, 'Well, we don't really want to arrest him anyway, but we'd like him to take all these posters down.' I said, 'Is there any way I could speak to the manager or president of this building?' I waited for an hour until the manager came in. 'You don't have to take them down,' he said, 'just don't put

any more up.'

"So I replied, 'But other posters will be put up there that are so ugly, and we really love this man. This man is such a wonderful man. He's done so many good things. And they'll write on them and deface his picture and everything, and we just couldn't allow that. September 18th is such a short time away and it looks so beautiful this way. It's very wonderful, and all the media will come to photograph it and it will make Columbus Circle even more famous. Couldn't you just let us keep it up? We'll maintain it and keep it clean. And we promise not to let any other posters stay up more than a few hours.'



"The manager said, 'Aw, sure. And will you send me some tickets too?' When I brought him some tickets, he said he had never seen such determination in all his life. Every day, he said, there are three girls outside his building publicizing the September 18th program, and he can see their smiling faces. It makes him very happy.

"That kind of thing is happening more and more," Byer concluded.

On two early-morning rounds with the postering crews I was amazed at the speed with which they worked. Byer said they can paste up 200 posters an hour, or 2,000 for a night. Their daily activities begin with the major postering from 12:00 until 10:00 a.m. They sleep from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. at the 71st Street Unification Church. When they rise, they clean and meet for prayer. After breakfast around 5:15 they go out until about 9:00. They eat dinner with the Manhattan church members, and after dinner they prepare the glue (six 20-gallon garbage cans of potato starch paste per night). Long window-cleaning brushes and paint rollers are the most popular glue applicators.

The three teams poster and maintained 150 to 200 locations, mainly construction sites.

According to New York Unification Church advisor, Mr. Takeru Kamiyama, "the postering crews have done a 100 percent perfection job." And I had to agree.

There is a wonderful spirit of unity and dedication evident in the postering teams. "We tried to treat each poster like a person," Byer explained. "We haven't been able to do any direct ticket-giving or witnessing in this postering campaign, so I really wanted our team to see the value of what they are doing and to love those posters so much. The more care they take in putting them up, the longer they stay up.

"I really feel the Principle working so much. If there is any problem of unity, I know I can expect an attack someplace -- people defacing or ripping down posters, etc. I treat these posters like some kind of battle front. I really can see the spiritual battle going on. If someone tears down our posters I feel the need to quickly replace them, to protect that place. Once we put up posters, we have to defend that place. If we can maintain even one point, we can build on that strength."

Byer praised his team. "The team is just so cooperative. They are so sacrificial it's incredible."

In our early morning travels with the postering teams we saw people stop and stare with amazement at the long, long rows of beautiful posters, and the teams of six or seven men and women working with incredible speed and efficiency.

The final night before the Madison Square Garden event, the teams plastered 400-500 large posters printed for transit advertising and some fifteen-foot rally banners on top of the smaller poster. The effect was astounding. The huge rally banners carried the slogans "Prophet for the Salvation of America," "God has chosen one man to speak to America," "God's prophet, Rev. Sun Myung Moon," and "September 18th, Madison Square Garden."

The postering work of these 21 men and women was probably the most controversial part of the whole campaign, as well as the most visible. New York City ordinances do not forbid postering on construction sites, but complaints were registered. In his speech to banquet guests at the Waldorf Astoria on September 17, Reverend Moon promised to remove all posters the night after the Madison Square Garden program. All Unification Church members assembled in New York did just that. By the morning of September 19, New York had returned to its usual splintered drabness.