

Hospital forced to free Unification Church member from deprogramming

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Christen Ausehus

"I wanted to get involved and find a way to help humanity, and I didn't think I could do that by cheering at a football game," said Christen Ausehus, the 16-year-old girl whose experiences with the Unification Church, California "deprogrammer" Ted Patrick, and confinement in a mental hospital were recounted in the Sun last week.

Christen was released from Richard Young Memorial Hospital last Thursday after three weeks of confinement. She told the Sun her lawyer, Bennett Hornstein, representing the Nebraska Civil Liberties Union, "informed the hospital board that if I wasn't released a suit would be filed. The tests I was given showed there was nothing wrong with me.

"It was a strange thing. The lawyer said he called up and asked for Christen Ausehus, and they said, 'there's no Christen Ausehus here.' But eventually he got in to talk to me."

The hospital and deprogramming sessions in October were "bad experiences," Christen said. "But basically what they did was strengthen my convictions 10 times."

Christen is now living at the church at 4106 Davenport St. "I'd like to forget about those times now and go on with my work at the church," he said.

"My involvement with the church was no fly-by-night thing," Christen said. A friend told her about the Unification Principle, a summary of the church's beliefs and interpretation of the Bible. Then Christen said, she "attended lectures and gradually began to study the church in depth."

Study of religions and philosophy in the past had not satisfied her "search for purpose and meaning in life," Christen said.

"But I was pretty happy before I joined the church. I just couldn't find a lot of the answers I needed." Christen believes family and friends "were very positive about my association with the church until I quit school. But the church had nothing to do with me leaving school. There was no pressure whatsoever -- I wanted to move into the church because for me it's been a higher atmosphere, a more stable environment."

Christen said she is now being tutored by an accredited teacher who lives at the church in preparation for taking a high school equivalency exam.

"I plan to go on to college and pursue some field, I don't know what yet. The church has given me that inspiration."

She said she felt her world was "closed" before joining the church. "It was just parents, boyfriend and school," she said. "Now I'm exposed to all kinds of people from different places and in different fields. My scope has been so widened." About charges that the church "brainwashed" her, Christen said, "the only brainwashing that took place was when I was 'deprogrammed'."

"They would quote portions of the Bible and use my name in it, like, 'God wants you to do this, Christen.' Mr. Patrick hadn't researched the Unification movement at all and kept making accusations that had to do with other groups that have strong satanic leanings," Christen said.

"They (Patrick and her parents) assumed I was hypnotized or something by the church and wouldn't listen seriously to anything I said about my beliefs." She said her psychiatrist also "refused to talk about my religion." "When I started talking about my religion," Christen said, "he'd say he didn't want to talk about that; he wanted to talk about me. But that is me. I'd lived at the church for five months. So we'd end up talking about the weather.

"I'd say, 'when am I going to get out of here?' and he'd answer, 'when we solve your problem,' " Christen said.

"Then I'd ask him, 'well, what's my problem?' and he'd say, 'you'll have to figure that out.' "I took my stay at the hospital pretty calmly," Christen said. "I think they expected more anger or hysterics from me."

Now that she is living at the church again, Christen said, she hopes to cement her relationship with family and friends.

"My mother made an agreement that I could live at the church. I think I'll be visiting home," she said.

"It does hurt when friends reject me because of this, because I had something I wanted to give them, and I felt that most people didn't even take the time to listen to what my beliefs are," Christen said.

"But I think the rejection has made me a stronger person. There's a strong bond of sharing at the church, and I feel God's love like I never have before."