

Cyclists Seijin Tranberg and Joshua Wildman Rally at Gold Dome on Cross-Country Tour Against Deprogramming

Doug Burton
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Donzella James

The student body president of Georgia Gwinnett College (GCC) in Lawrenceville will join Georgia State Senator Donzella James at a press event at the Georgia Capitol Rotunda at 11:00 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 15, 2011. Mr. John Seijin Tranberg, 22, the student body president of GGC, and Joshua Wildman, 21, of Los Angeles, are embarking Thursday on a 2,300 mile cycle tour to protest religious persecution of minority religions everywhere and Unification Church members in Japan in particular. The duo starts at the GGC campus in Lawrenceville earlier Thursday and will stop at the Gold Dome.



Tranberg shows off the bike and riding equipment that he will use for his cross-country "Tour De Cause."

“An injustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere,’ Dr. King taught us in 1963, and the freedom ride that these two young men are doing will draw the nation’s attention to the longstanding and cruel persecution of Japanese members of the Unification Church in Japan, which is a story too long neglected by the world’s media,” Sen. James has written in a statement. She added, “I respect Rev. Sun Myung Moon of Korea and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, for their efforts to create peace and reconciliation among the faiths of the world, and I applaud the ‘Tour de Cause’ of these two bike riders which may move the authorities in Japan to enforce the guarantees of due process under the law enshrined in their own constitution.”



Joshua Wildman

A 22-year-old college junior in political science and international relations, Tranberg is the second out of the six children of Mr. David and Mrs. Sumiko Tranberg, from the United States and Japan, respectively. Tranberg looks to a future at a “top-tier graduate school” and a Masters in public policy. “Foreign policy is an area I’m particularly interested in, specifically U.S. foreign policy to East Asia,” he said.

Wildman is a senior at California State University, majoring in psychology with a minor in criminal justice, who looks towards a future in law enforcement. Wildman decided to join Tranberg for his journey across the United States after hearing that Tranberg was doing so to raise awareness about deprogramming. “I first heard about Seijin's bike trip when my older brother, Daniel, told me about it after seeing it on his Facebook,” Wildman said. “I was immediately intrigued by it and read that he was doing it for a very worthwhile cause. Deprogramming is a very serious and disturbing issue that definitely needs to be dealt with. I believe Seijin is making an enormous sacrifice in order to make progress in tackling this injustice. A cross-country trip right around the start of winter sounded like a pretty intense challenge to undertake. I want to be there to support Seijin on his journey, because I understand the passion he has for doing this.”

Tranberg and Wildman are both second-generation Unification Church members whose mothers are Japanese and whose fathers are American citizens. Their goal is to raise public awareness of the fact that since 1966 more than 4,000 Unification Church members in Japan, and many members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, have been abducted and confined for months or years of psychological harassment in an effort to break their faith. Some have been raped or tortured. Many marriages were broken as a result of victims being required to renounce their church-sanctioned marriages. Hundreds are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to journalists covering the issue in Japan. Shamefully, clergy members of various churches in Japan have condoned, advised, aided and abetted the kidnappers, and have often participated in attempts at forced conversion. Ministers often charge large fees for their illegal services.

“The big hearts of the people of Georgia inspired me to do this trip,” Mr. Tranberg says, adding: “My professors at GGC, my friends, family, and complete strangers encouraged me to affirm my heritage and to do something to bring attention to the plight of prisoners of conscience in Japan.”

The Institute on Religion and Public Policy says that it “strongly urges the immediate and forceful intervention of Japan’s Government, Diet, prosecutors, police, human rights organizations, and religious leaders to put an end to kidnapping and forced religious conversion in Japan. A conscious lack of action on the part of the Government of Japan to end these kidnappings and forced conversions makes the government complicit in such acts.”

Unificationist Dan Fefferman, president of the International Coalition for Religious Freedom says, “Japan is in many ways an exemplary nation where human rights are concerned. But in this matter [of deprogramming], its behavior clearly fails to live up to international standards.”

A certified Japanese psychologist will also attend the press conference to answer questions about treating victims of PTSD. Mr. Katsuya Tsukakoshi of Tokyo says he has counseled more than 200 Unificationists who were abducted and harassed but who returned to the Unification Church. Of these, approximately 20 need professional remediation for PTSD.