

Freedom Riders John Seijin Tranberg and Joshua Wildman Hailed by Supporters at Georgia State Capitol

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John Seijin Tranberg, left, and Joshua Wildman, look down Mitchell Street in Atlanta on the first day of their six-week tour.

Two young Unificationists on a cross-country bicycle trip got a warm welcome at the Georgia State Capitol on Thursday, Dec. 15, 2011.

A press event hosted by Georgia State Sen. Donzella James at the State Capitol building welcomed John Seijin Tranberg, 22, and Joshua Wildman, 21, of Los Angeles, who are doing the 2,300 mile trip under the banner of “Faith, Family, and Freedom.” Tranberg explained that he was doing the exhausting trip to call attention to the faith-breaking persecution of his fellow Unificationists in Japan which goes on under the noses of Japanese police and without the enforcement of laws that guarantee freedom of religion for all citizens.



The tour began at the campus of Georgia Gwinnett College at 8:00 a.m. Tranberg (second from left) was cheered by several supportive faculty, members of the Blessed Teens Academy, and by his immediate family. David Tranberg (with tie) and Sumiko Tranberg, his parents, back row center.

He told the gathering at the State Capitol in Atlanta: “About 30 years ago, hundreds of American citizens were abducted and harassed for weeks or months in an effort to break their faith. Most of these folks resisted this cruelty, returned to the Unification Church, got married, and raised fantastic children. The people who were paid to abduct Unification Church members stopped doing it about 20 years ago after several of them were arrested and went to jail. But in Japan the abductions and faithbreaking still goes on. No one has been prosecuted. The Japanese media has refused to report this cruel phenomenon to the public.

“Thank goodness we have a free press in the United States, and thank goodness that Americans are proud to be the home of Faith, Family and Freedom. I see all of these virtues embodied in my Mom and Dad. To be honest, I owe my parents for so many blessings that have come my way, especially for setting an example of hard work and for giving me an example of faith and a sense of vision.

“The church culture greatly has benefitted me. But thousands of my fellow believers in Japan are not as lucky as I am to be able to practice their faith freely. This is not to knock the great people of Japan, either. I love the culture and history of my mother’s home country. I love both America and Japan. Religious Freedom is guaranteed both by the U.S. Constitution and by the Japanese Constitution. The difference is, in Japan the law is not enforced to give all citizens due process. I have read that in the great state of Georgia Black people had a similar problem several decades back.



From left front, Ted Gaines, Seijin Tranberg, Josh Wildman, Sen. Donzella James, and (far right) Mrs. Jacqueline Leathers at the State Capitol Dec. 15, 2011. The event was festive, including the duet of Nicki and Shanae Davis who sang a tribute song.

The Reason for the Freedom Ride

“I am making this ride so that I can tell a story that hasn’t been told. I want to give a voice to the saints of every persecuted religious community in the world, and there are many, I’m sure you know – Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostals, and new religious movements. But especially I want to honor the suffering saints in Japan who have suffered for more than 40 years almost in silence. They are victims of unfounded fear, media misrepresentation, and the greed of “lawyers. Today, the State of Georgia does its level best to give due process to every citizen, and where there are issues, I know absolutely that Sen. Donzella James is on top of them.

“Japan needs to do better. The Japanese government can do better, and they owe it to all their citizens to live up to their own ideals of fair treatment for all, religious freedom for all. My mother is good. She

comes from a people who are good – so good, in fact, they should be and can be better.”



Sen. Donzella James gave a tribute to the freedom riders for bringing greater awareness of prisoners of conscience.

Sen. James invoked the famous words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he said that “an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” in introducing the issue to the gathering. She acknowledged seven local Japanese-American members of the Women’s Federation for World Peace who attended in the rally in Japanese *kimonos* to show solidarity with the thousands of Japanese women who have been kidnapped and subjected to faith-breaking efforts.

Katsuya Tsukakoshi, a clinical psychologist (who is also a Unification Church member) visiting the United States spoke to the participants about counseling hundreds of victims of faith-breaking in Japan during the last three years.

“This issue is a serious psychological problem and serious religious freedom issue,” Mr. Tsukakoshi said, adding: “I have counseled approximately 200 Unificationist survivors of the so-called deprogramming, and about 20 of them are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). These victims suffer from anxiety, and sleep disorders. Their parents and relatives are pushed by professional deprogrammers and lawyers eager to sue the Unification Church.” He explained that: “Sadly, the church members who return to the church earnestly want to stay in touch with their parents, but they know that in order to do so, they will have to face a battery of lawyers and bigoted Christian ministers bent on destroying their Unificationist faith.”

Tranberg is the student body president of Georgia Gwinnett College in his home town of Lawrenceville, Georgia. Wildman is a college student in California majoring in psychology.

By Friday evening, Dec. 16, 2011, the two young men were camping near the Georgia-Alabama state line, according to Luke Higuchi, president of Survivors Against Forced Exit. Mr. Higuchi is following the bikers by car for the first few days of the trip.

Both young men are second-generation Unification Church members whose mothers are Japanese and whose fathers are American citizens. They say 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. Hundreds are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to journalists covering the issue in Japan.