

Wait! You're a Moonie??!?

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Photo date and location unknown

I went back to college, to get my bachelor's so I could attend the seminary. Told God I wasn't going to advertise my church membership, but I'd be absolutely straight about it when it came up. After several quiet months, a young woman got up to give her talk in my public speaking class.

“My talk today is about cults, and what's wrong with them.” She proceeded to give a speech loaded with such gems as “The purpose of cults is to make money for their leaders.” It was the basic Readers' Digest take on evil cults and of course, she mentioned Rev Moon.

Now, it just so happened that my speech was scheduled for the next class. So I prepared, decided to have some fun.

“Last week our classmate talked about cults. I'm going to talk about cults too, one in particular. This cult has a foreign leader who speaks a language nobody understands and has everyone send him money. He controls his followers' sex lives, lives in a palace, and wears fancy clothes while they live in poverty.

You may have an idea of which group I'm talking about, but everything I just told you came from a pamphlet written in the 1800s about the Catholic Church. (at this point, the prof had his head up and was looking interested) So today's cult could be tomorrow's mainstream religion.

You may think of cult members as wearing bedsheets, banging on cymbals or selling flowers. But people from what are called cults may be completely normal. You might be around someone from one of these cults and not even know it. In fact, I bet you know someone from a cult, and you're not even aware of it. But keep your money, because you know me, and I'm a member of the Unification Church, also known as the Moonies.”

Jaws literally dropped open. Some people were stunned. The prof had started smiling broadly during the build-up. He was enjoying himself. You have to understand, this was at a time when people believed we were brainwashed zombies, and there had been pushes to legalize kidnapping and committing us just for being members.

During the Q and A period afterwards, one young man raised his hand and asked “Do you think it's possible you could be brainwashed and not know it?”

I don't remember the answer I gave. Maybe I said something about being on the Dean's list with a 4.0, or being in the Student Senate. But in the car later (when all the best answers come) I thought of: “Yes that could be true, I could be brainwashed and not know it. But it it's true for me, how about you? Could you be brainwashed and not know it? Could all of us? Where does that stop?”

It was fun watching people swallow their gum, and it certainly set people talking. But they already knew me, and so they had to take their experience of me and put it next to what they'd heard about Rev Moon. Then decide what was true. Because it didn't all fit. I think Rev Moon enjoyed rearranging people's concepts this way.

What was your favorite “You're a Moonie!!!?” moment?