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bard free press

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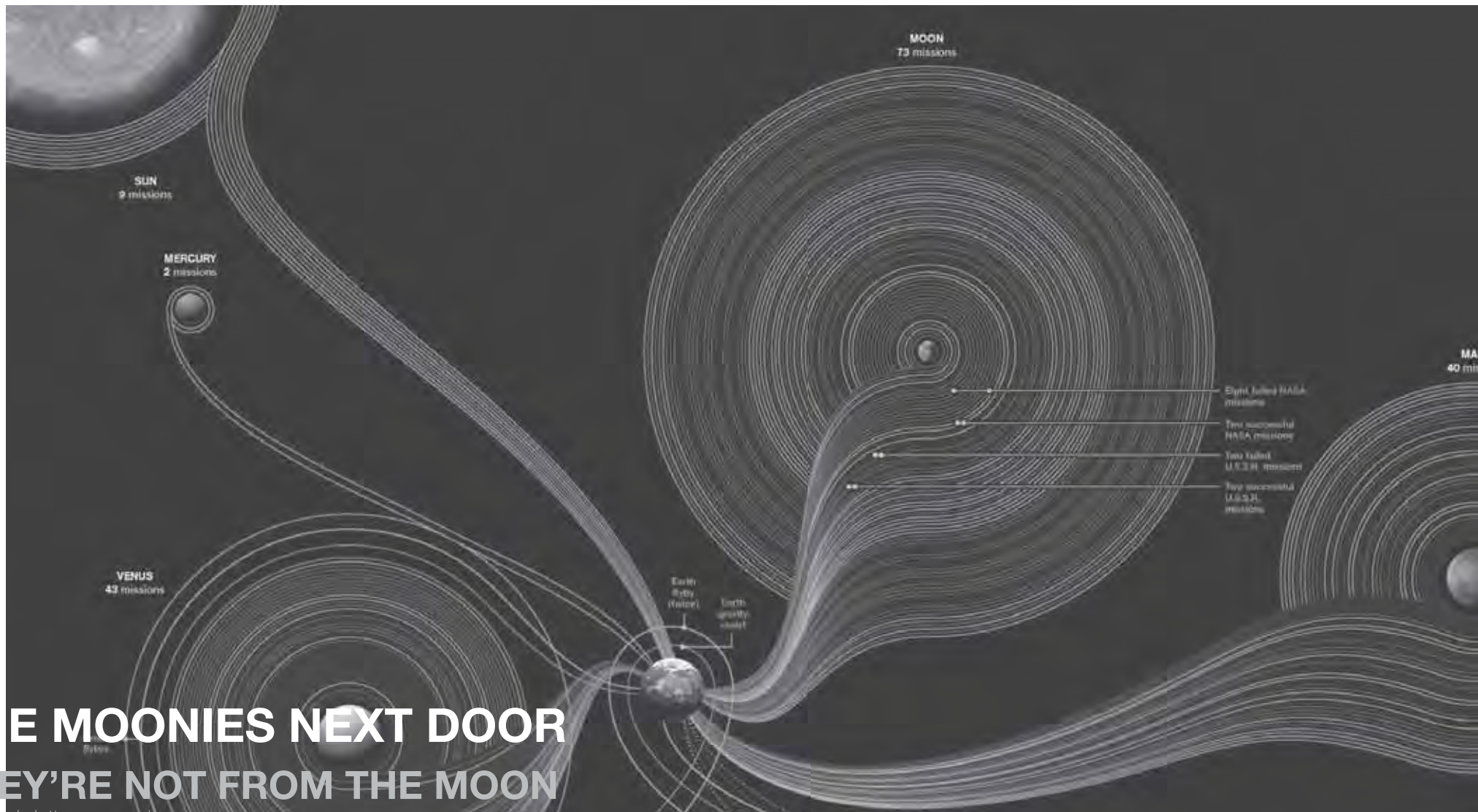
CORRECTIONS

Jenna Galka & Enrico Purita were not listed as staff members last issue, and they should have been. Sorry guys & thanks for making the FP work so well.

ATTN

Our website was recently redesigned. Check it out! <http://freepress.bard.edu>

Also: we've partnered with the Peer Health Educators to bring you a new monthly sexual health q&a on page 15. This issue we address safe sex in hot tubs and where to get condoms on campus. Send us your questions for next month. BardFreePress@gmail.com



THE MOONIES NEXT DOOR THEY'RE NOT FROM THE MOON

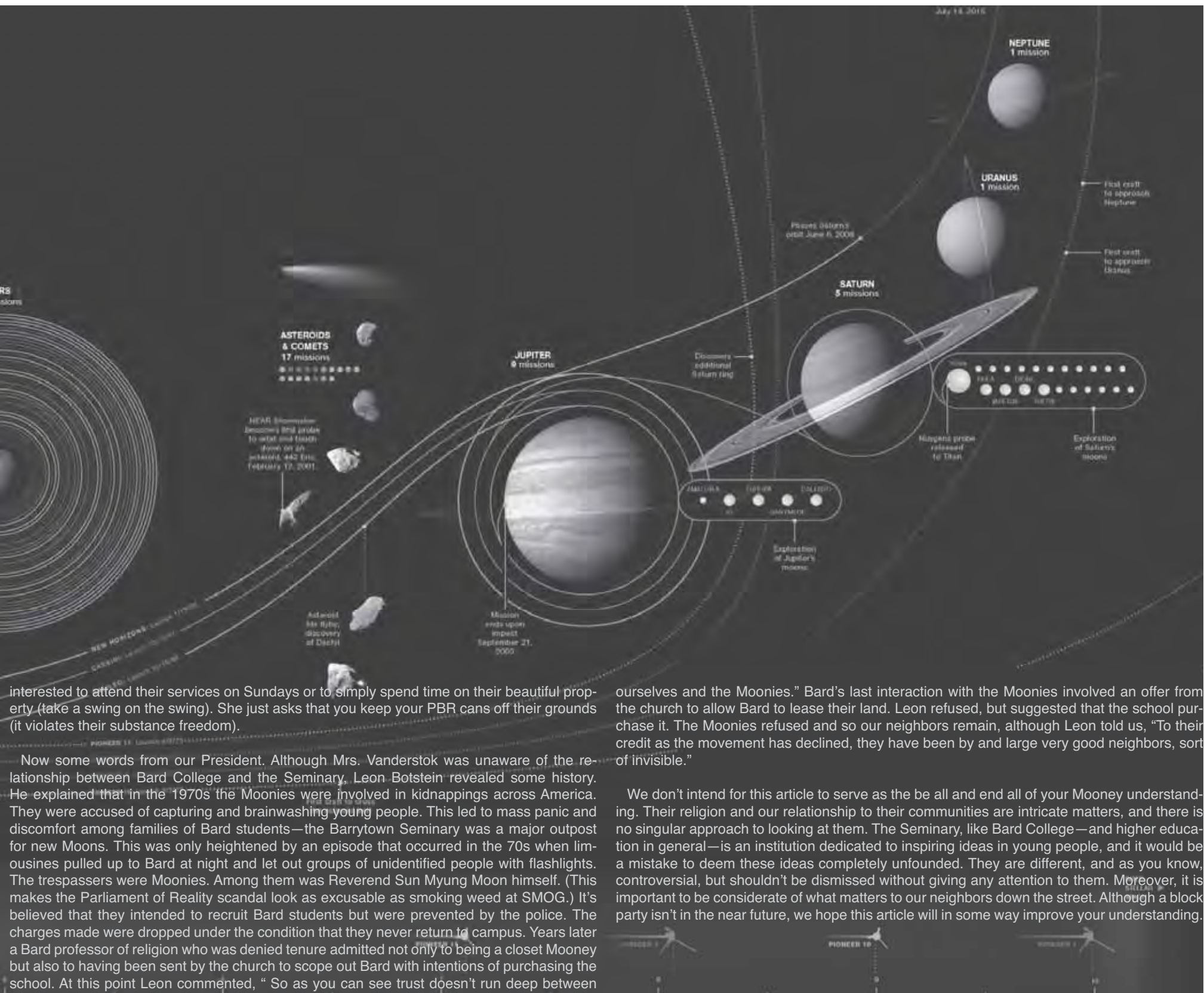
by *lotterman and anna swann-pye*

A little bit of background: did you know that there is a Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, AKA Mooney turf? (Yes, we did get the OK from Leon to call them the Moonies.) The faith was founded by Reverend Sun Myung Moon, a man who claims to be the Messiah. He believes that the word of God was bestowed upon him and that it is his duty to create a functional world with it.

Sammi Vanderstok, a Mooney herself, who is getting her PhD at the Barrytown Seminary, explained that the Mooney faith is largely focused on the family (no really, Reverend Moon has 14 children and 40 grandchildren). Reverend Moon and his wife bought the land in 1975, a very tumultuous time in American history-- and in the history of American Mooney presence. The idea of a new religion that offered a community and sense of purpose was incredibly appealing to young, vulnerable Americans who wanted something to belong to. However, Mrs. Vanderstok explained that a Korean immigrant claiming to possess God's word scared some people. Government efforts emerged to "deprogram" Moonies who were considered brainwashed. She told us that Moonies were locked in rooms and systematically stripped of their faith. Trying to uncover what made the Mooney beliefs so controversial, we asked Mrs. Vanderstok what their purpose was. "In a sentence, our purpose is [to inherit] the true love of God, bring people back to God and [to create] a functional world. I'm an idealist so I think this

can happen," she said. She then told us more specifically about their focus on "interfaith"—acceptance of different religions and an emphasis on creating harmony between them. She explained that many Moonies take time off in high-school to go to places of conflict to try to create resolution. However, this seems dangerously similar to what we know as being a straight-up missionary.

We asked about the differences between the Mooney religion and what appears to be a close relative: Christianity. Here are some key beliefs: Virgin Mary is not a virgin. And more broadly, evolution makes sense and although God created the spark of life, they don't deny that things progress. They feel science—as opposed to creationism—explains that. They're pro-choice-- baby's not a baby till it departs from the birth canal. However, being a floozy is not cool (no sex before marriage). They preach tolerance—but don't tolerate homosexuality. We asked how they reconcile this, but the answer could not be given. We know you wanna know about the arranged marriages—they happen, they're encouraged, and Sammi's was arranged by Mr. Moon himself. He felt that the aura that her emailed picture gave off connected with that of her now husband. Things are looking good so far. Mrs. Vanderstok ended by touching on discrimination against the religion. She feels that the Moonies' beliefs are skewed by the public eye and that people fail to see the crux of the religion. She encourages anyone who is



interested to attend their services on Sundays or to simply spend time on their beautiful property (take a swing on the swing). She just asks that you keep your PBR cans off their grounds (it violates their substance freedom).

Now some words from our President. Although Mrs. Vanderstok was unaware of the relationship between Bard College and the Seminary, Leon Botstein revealed some history. He explained that in the 1970s the Moonies were involved in kidnappings across America. They were accused of capturing and brainwashing young people. This led to mass panic and discomfort among families of Bard students—the Barrytown Seminary was a major outpost for new Moons. This was only heightened by an episode that occurred in the 70s when limousines pulled up to Bard at night and let out groups of unidentified people with flashlights. The trespassers were Moonies. Among them was Reverend Sun Myung Moon himself. (This makes the Parliament of Reality scandal look as excusable as smoking weed at SMOG.) It's believed that they intended to recruit Bard students but were prevented by the police. The charges made were dropped under the condition that they never return to campus. Years later a Bard professor of religion who was denied tenure admitted not only to being a closet Mooney but also to having been sent by the church to scope out Bard with intentions of purchasing the school. At this point Leon commented, "So as you can see trust doesn't run deep between

ourselves and the Moonies." Bard's last interaction with the Moonies involved an offer from the church to allow Bard to lease their land. Leon refused, but suggested that the school purchase it. The Moonies refused and so our neighbors remain, although Leon told us, "To their credit as the movement has declined, they have been by and large very good neighbors, sort of invisible."

We don't intend for this article to serve as the be all and end all of your Mooney understanding. Their religion and our relationship to their communities are intricate matters, and there is no singular approach to looking at them. The Seminary, like Bard College—and higher education in general—is an institution dedicated to inspiring ideas in young people, and it would be a mistake to deem these ideas completely unfounded. They are different, and as you know, controversial, but shouldn't be dismissed without giving any attention to them. Moreover, it is important to be considerate of what matters to our neighbors down the street. Although a block party isn't in the near future, we hope this article will in some way improve your understanding.