

Legal Scholar Confirms Facts Reported by Unificationists about Deprogramming in Japan

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“The deprogrammings in Japan have occurred in spite of the fact that Japanese legal documents (constitution and laws) clearly guarantee religious freedom.”



Rev. In Jin Moon's report about the persecution about Japanese Unificationists was reported in the Washington Times on July 13, 2011, the first time in a mainstream US newspaper.

Law Professor James T. Richardson, in his recent article in the law journal, *Crime, Law and Social Change*, explores the origin of deprogramming (coercive faith-breaking), its development in the United States, and its continued practice in Japan. Richardson, a professor of sociology and judicial studies, and the director of the Master of Judicial Studies Degree Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, uses his extensive knowledge in social and behavioral science evidence, sociology of religions, movements, and law, and new religious movements (NRMs), to document the many – often unethical – forms of deprogramming. See *Deprogramming: from private self-help to governmental organized repression here: <http://law.journalfeeds.com/society/crime-law-and-social-change/deprogramming-from-private-self-help-to-governmental-organized-repression/20110214/>*

According to Richardson, the word “deprogramming,” initially defined as “private self-help,” was coined in the United States in the 1970s, during which thousands of young adult Americans underwent a process of forceful removal from NRMs.

“The word deprogramming itself makes a statement because it implies that those being “treated” through the process have first been “programmed” by some other entity, with the clear implication that the other entity doing the original programming was somehow mistaken, or even worse, evil and destructive,” Richardson writes. This view on deprogramming built significant hostility towards NRMs, which were accused of “brainwashing” or “mind-controlling” their members.

On one end of the continuum of deprogramming are social-control efforts that are private and do not involve governmental assistance, commonly labeled as “self-help,” Richardson explains. On the other end are social control-efforts conducted by the government to enforce beliefs and behaviors that have been labeled as official. “These official governmental actions, carried out by functionaries of the government, can involve vigorous, even violent, efforts to dissuade people from participating in groups deemed unacceptable to the government,” writes Richardson. “Such effort can be given legal sanction by the

passage of laws that make illegal the activities or even the beliefs of the unpopular movement or group being targeted.” This line between “self-help” and governmentally sanctioned deprogrammings is often blurred in that even though the deprogrammers may violate laws and constitutional protections, if the authorities support the beliefs of the deprogrammers, they “can choose to ignore the legal violations that are taking place.”



Toru Goto reported abuse at the hands of deprogrammers from 1996-2008.

First Amendment and Its Value

In the United States, the First Amendment asserts the right to religious freedom and thus formally limits the degree to which the government can intervene in issues such as deprogramming. Yet, from the mid-1970s through the late 1980s there were many efforts conducted informally and covertly in reaction to young people’s joining “cults.” Most of the young people joining NRMs came from “relatively affluent classes whose families had the means to actively pursue them in efforts to get them to return to their usual place in the family of origin and society,” writes Richardson. The resources of these well-educated, middle-class families were used to develop the deprogramming industry in the United States, an industry that was part of a larger Anti-Cult Movement (ACM).

After nearly two decades of rampant deprogramming, court decisions such as the *Katz* case in California, which concerned members of the Unification Movement who had been kidnapped and deprogrammed, raised the awareness that deprogramming contradicted the important American value of religious freedom.

Yet, the industry continued to flourish elsewhere, particularly in Japan. Peaking in the late 1980s and early 1990s, deprogramming in Japan differed in that, according to reports from the Unification Movement, they are longer in duration and “are accompanied by intense psychological and physical abuse upon the targeted person by deprogrammers and family members.”

“Perhaps the most striking thing about the deprogrammings in Japan is that they often involve Christian ministers,” Richardson writes. “Apparently some Christian ministers have become convinced that siding with those who would oppose the UC and other minority faiths is the best way for them to gain acceptance and legitimacy in Japan for themselves and their churches. So, a number of these ministers have taken leadership roles in the deprogramming movement within Japan, and some do the actual deprogramming.”



Unificationists women in Korea mourn the disappearances of fellow members who have been kidnapped and confined in Japan.

In addition to Christian ministers, the Japanese Communist Party has “actively sought to assist in controlling if not stamping out the UC [in Japan]” because of the Church’s anti-communist views. Furthermore, the Japanese Bar Association took part in the anti-UC campaign, “with some of its members being quite successful at filing legal actions of various kinds to harass and deter UC activities.”

On a brighter side, the U.S. State Department has mentioned the issue of deprogramming in Japan in its International Religious Freedom Report every year but one since 1999, focusing specifically on the cases of the UC members.

Richardson credits this heightened awareness to the Unificationists themselves. “It is worth noting that the information concerning deprogramming of UC members in Japan was called to the attention of the U.S. State Department by representatives of the UC, who decided after decades of frustration to become more aggressive in their effort to educate the Japanese media and the international community about what was happening in Japan concerning forcible efforts to dissuade participation in minority faiths, particularly the UC. These efforts have borne fruit, as evidenced by the State Department reports, and by other international publications.

“The deprogrammings in Japan have occurred in spite of the fact that Japanese legal documents (constitution and laws) clearly guarantee religious freedom... The fact that the UC could be defined as beyond the pale in terms of acceptable religion, that other religious leaders have become leaders in the effort to exert control over the UC, and that the government and law enforcement entities have been involved in the effort (even if somewhat passively) demands some explanation.”