

Church lawsuit against gun-toting Pennsylvania minister Hyung "Sean" Jin Moon

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THE MORNING CALL

The Rev. Hyung "Sean" Jin Moon (right), a Pennsylvania minister who glorifies the AR-15 semi-automatic rifle in religious services and political commentary shows, has been sued by a larger international church led by his mother. (Screen shot of YouTube video)



A Pennsylvania minister -- who glorifies the AR-15 semi-automatic rifle in religious services and political commentary shows -- has been sued by a larger international church led by his mother.

The copyright lawsuit was filed Monday in U.S. Middle District Court in Harrisburg by Unification of World Christianity, also known as Family Federation for World Peace and Unification and Family Federation for a Heavenly USA.

The lawsuit claims the Rev. Hyung "Sean" Jin Moon has hijacked the Unification of World Christianity's decades-old, trademarked "Twelves Gates Mark" symbol to espouse his "gun-centered theology and political agenda repugnant to central tenets of HSA-UWC's theology."

The red Twelves Gates Mark looks like a radiating sun inside a square and steering wheel.

The lawsuit claims the symbol has been used for half a century by Unification of World Christianity, which was started in 1961 by Moon's late father, a Korean evangelist, self-proclaimed messiah and businessman. The church received a U.S. patent for the symbol in 2009, three years before the patriarch died.

The lawsuit claims Sean Moon stole the Mark for his offshoot church, World Peace and Unification Sanctuary, in New Foundland, Wayne County. Sean Moon's symbol uses the same radiating sun design, but paints it gold and surrounds it with weaponry.

The filing asks a judge to order Sean Moon to stop using the symbol because his gun-based religious and political beliefs run counter to the main church's teachings. Those competing belief systems -- and symbols -- are leading to public confusion and harming the reputation of the main Unification church and its leaders, the suit says.

"Most notably, while the theological textbook of Unification Church, known as the 'Divine Principle,' prophesies that the 'rod of iron' as discussed in the Book of Revelation in the Christian Bible signifies the 'Word of God,' Sanctuary Church teaches that 'rod of iron' is embodied by an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle or equivalent weapon," the lawsuit states. "As a result, Sanctuary Church theology is gun-centered and a perversion of the beliefs of the Unification Church, and by extension HSA-UWC."

Timothy Elder, Sanctuary's director of world ministries, declined comment.

"The lawsuit was just filed and we are still looking at it," said Elder, who is church spokesman.



The lawsuit is the latest legal fight between the heirs of the religious dynasty started by the late Reverend Sun Myung Moon, whose followers have been known as Moonies.

The Rev. Sun Myung Moon started his church in 1960. Critics considered it a cult as it grew into a worldwide conservative faith. Its political influence and business ventures included conservative media holdings, such as The Washington Times, and firearms companies. In the 1980s, Moon went to federal prison for tax evasion but still was well-received on Capitol Hill.

Moon installed Sean Moon, one of eight children, as his successor in 2009, the year the Mark was patented. The elder Moon died in 2012 and his widow, Sun Myung Moon, dethroned her son and took over, leading to several lawsuits in other states and countries.

In 2013, Sean Moon then started his own church in the Poconos, near a firearms factory started by one of his brothers, Justin Moon.

Sean Moon's church of about 200 congregants operated in relative anonymity until 2017. That is when Moon exploded onto the state's and nation's political and religious scenes.

It started when Moon, wearing a golden crown of bullets and sitting before an AR-15, interviewed Paul Mango, a Republican candidate for Pennsylvania governor, on a YouTube channel. During the interview, Mango nodded in agreement when Moon claimed public schools are bastions of liberalism where teachers indoctrinate children into "homosexual" and "transgender" political agendas, and asserted colleges preach Sharia law.

[Democrats](#) blasted Mango, who did not back down from his support of Moon, Mango eventually lost the GOP primary to Scott Wagner.

Then Moon got international media exposure when he announced his church would conduct a religious ceremony to bless AR-15s. The ceremony was announced days after a gunman used an AR-15 to kill 17 students and adults at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

In July, the Democratic Party criticized Wagner for making a campaign stop at Justin Moon's gun factory and having his minister brother in attendance.

The lawsuit claims Rev. Sean Moon's media attention, accompanied by pictures of the pilfered Mark symbol, "continues to be the subject of media fascination and curiosity. These recent events have drawn vast publicity, which has greatly increased the actual and likely confusion engendered by Sanctuary Church's activities and cast plaintiff's name and Mark into disrepute well beyond Sanctuary Church's prior activities.

A court date has not been set.

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