



The Moon's

the Limit

by Anna Kaplan

Anyone can proclaim to be the messiah. It's easy: find a public place, a corner outside a liquor store, a city square, and start preaching the gospel. Provided such individuals are not inciting violence, they're entertaining and, at most, mildly annoying when pestering passersby for change. One can't really argue with people who are convinced they are the next Jesus Christ; they will continue to believe whatever they want to believe.

However, it's highly unlikely that a self-proclaimed messiah will get enough attention to get, say, crowned. Especially not in a ceremony with members of the U.S. Congress present. Especially not in a Senate office building. Right?

It's amazing how much "respect" money can buy these days.

On March 23, 2004, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, leader of the international Unification Church (whose followers are commonly called "Moonies"), was "crowned" at the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C., in regal robes and all. The event created a media stir in June, three months after the fact, but Moon's influence goes much deeper than the duping of a few senators. Using the millions of dollars he's made through thousands of front groups, Moon has infiltrated the U.S. government, media, and even public schools in order to further the agenda of what many critics call a cult religion.

The crowns were technically "Crowns of Peace," and the ceremony claimed to be an awards banquet for interfaith religious leaders actively working to bridge gaps between beliefs. Several Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders were honored in addition to Moon, but the difference was that they wore suits while the reverend and his wife were decked out in robes. He also preached about his being the messiah and about Stalin and Hitler posthumously recognizing him as such.

For a man who has called homosexuals "dirty dung-eating dogs" and American women "a line of prostitutes," this was just a regular speech. The right-wing Korean businessman and owner of the ultraconservative *Washington Times* newspaper is known for performing mass weddings, showering politicians with money, and claiming that it's his job to complete Jesus' mission on Earth. He is also a convicted felon, having been incarcerated for eighteen months in 1982 for tax fraud and obstruction of justice.

This Ambassadors of Peace Awards event was sponsored by the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP), one of the many groups under the Unification umbrella. Moon's other front groups include the Women's Federation for World Peace, the American Family Coalition, the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut, a New Jersey after-school celibacy program for teens, the Washington Times Foundation, and United Press International.

Among the attendees of the March event were Senator Mark Dayton (Democrat, Minnesota) and Representatives Roscoe Bartlett (Democrat, Maryland), Sanford Bishop (Democrat, Georgia), Christopher Cannon (Republican, Utah), Philip Crane (Republican, Illinois), Harold Ford (Democrat, Tennessee), and Curt Weldon (Republican, Pennsylvania). Several news sources reported that the offices of these members of Congress claimed they didn't know this would be a Moon event and only attended because their constituents were being honored. "We were duped," Dayton's spokesperson told the *Washington Post*.

Representative Danny K. Davis, a Democrat from Illinois who wore white gloves and carried the Reverend Moon's crown on a velvet pillow, was in fact aware what sort of event this would be. He defended his role by saying that school homecoming kings and queens get crowned all the time in this country and that this was no different. Davis claims to be a devout Methodist who doesn't believe Moon's preachings but respects the Unificationist's peace work.

Davis is listed as a cochair of the IIFWP, and a press release from an openly Unificationist organization states that "The Congressman has known Father Moon for many years.... He has continued to affirm his friendship and trust in Father Moon's efforts for peace."

Of course, Davis has the right to befriend whomever he wants. But the fact that he placed the crown on Moon's head after Moon said that "kings and presidents who enjoyed opulence and power on earth" had died, gone to heaven, and then "declared to all heaven and earth that Reverend Sun Myung Moon is none other than humanity's savior, messiah, returning lord and true parent" implies his support for more than just Moon's peace efforts.

There is also an issue of the requirement that a group be sponsored by a member of the House or Senate in order to use a congressional building. The Senate Rules and Administration Committee has persistently declined to divulge the sponsor's name, but Virginia Republican Senator John Warner's office confessed to sponsoring the room in July.

This is not the first time Davis and other government figures have attended Moon events, then denied their participation when the media found out.

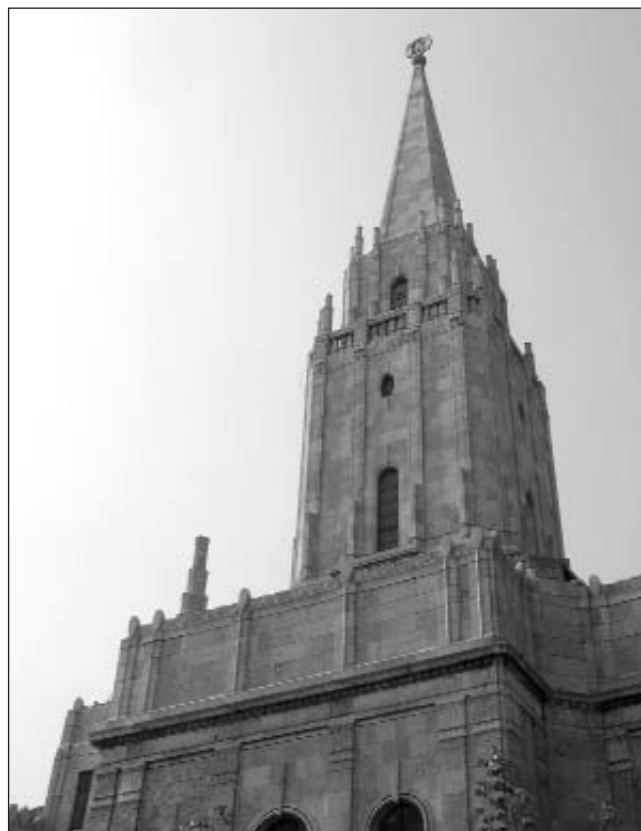
The Unification Church sanctuary in Washington, D.C.

This architecturally significant structure was built by a division of the Masonic Order. Its acquisition by the Unification Church is an example of a new religious sect seeking status by obtaining a prominent structure in a prominent city.

In 1996 Moon's Family Federation for World Peace held an inaugural world convention at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. Speakers and attendees included Gerald Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Mikhail Gorbachev, Coretta Scott King, Bill Cosby, and George H.W. Bush. The day before the event took place the *Washington Post* contacted these individuals inquiring about their involvement with the Unification Church. Upon finding out who was sponsoring the event, Bush's spokesperson said the former president would donate his speaking fee to charity and Cosby tried to back out of the engagement before being convinced otherwise by Moon's lawyers.

Barbara Walters has spoken at a past Moon event, later saying she didn't know of the link. Even a celebrity agent who's booked prominent public figures to speak at Unification front group events told the *Post* that "nobody's ever been aware that there's a connection to Moon."

When George W. Bush was sworn into office, Moon's Washington Times Foundation threw an Interfaith Inaugural Prayer Luncheon featuring 1,700 religious leaders, public officials, and religious right operatives, including then-Senator John Ashcroft, Representative Davis, Southern Baptist Convention President James Merritt, televangelist Jerry Falwell, and Pat Boone. When *Church & State* magazine covered the event, Merritt said, "We knew that it was going to be an interdenominational event, but we had



no idea that the luncheon was hosted by Moonies....I believe this incident will teach us to be a little more judicious.”

However, in reporting on the 1996 event, the *Washington Post* wrote: “The Rev. and Mrs. Moon are clearly mentioned in the invitation that several thousand Washingtonians have received.” At the time, Larry Moffitt of the Washington Times Foundation said, “We take great pains to let everybody know who founded this. Everybody is routinely given an awareness of the founder. If somebody is not aware, that is not possible. That is not true.”

More recently, with the fallout after the March coronation, Archbishop George A. Stallings Jr. of the Washington, D.C., Imani Temple informed the *Post* that the March 8 invitations to the IIFWP event bore the names of Sun Myung Moon and his wife Hak Ja Han Moon. “You’d have to be deaf, dumb, and blind to not know that any event that is sponsored by the *Washington Times*...could involve the influence, or the potential presence, of the Reverend Moon,” Stallings said.

The connection between Moon and the GOP is not a new one, starting with the evangelist’s cozying up to Richard Nixon in the 1970s. Shortly after leaving office in 1993, George H.W. Bush began appearing at *Washington Times* events alongside the newspaper owner. When Moon launched the *Tiempos del Mundo* newspaper in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the elder Bush spoke at the conference dinner. Incidentally, Argentinean then-President Carlos Menem was absent from the event because of the controversy associated with Moon. At this dinner Bush praised the *Times* for its “defense of liberty and democracy.”

Speaking fees for former presidents aren’t cheap. Although Bush’s spokespeople have consistently refused to divulge if and how much the Unification Church paid him for his numerous speaking engagements, outside sources estimate the total figure to be near \$10 million, with up to \$500,000 for the Buenos Aires appearance alone. In addition, the former president received \$1 million from the Washington Times Foundation for his presidential library.

Sun Myung Moon has a formidable record of buying out his opponents. In the late 1970s, Jerry Falwell went on

record to say that Moon’s church exploits children, yet changed his views when a Unification front group gave him \$3.5 million in 1994 to bail out his rapidly sinking Liberty University. And Representative Davis has admitted that a Moon organization once put together a fundraiser for him, giving him several thousand dollars.

Reverend Moon’s shopping list doesn’t only consist of politicians. In 1992 the Professors World Peace Academy, an

organization openly affiliated with the Unification Church, effectively bought out the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut. The details of the takeover were never made clear and the Community Coalition of Bridgeport has sued the PWPA over the transaction’s legality. In the meantime enrollment in the formerly public institution has dropped down more than 50 percent and students have reported they’d been offered scholarships if they agreed to attend Unification seminars.

Some of Moon’s most active political organizers have gained government positions in George W. Bush’s administration. For example, David Caprara, former leader

of the American Family Coalition (AFC), a faith-based social action group whose funding comes straight from the Washington Times Foundation and the Unification Church, was appointed in 2001 as director of AmeriCorps Vista, which works with community organizations in low-income neighborhoods. Caprara’s appointment goes along with Bush’s push for increased funding for faith-based initiatives due to his experience working with such faith-based groups as the AFC and the Empowerment Network (TEN).

Another Unification Church–affiliated individual singled out for promotion by Bush is Josette Shiner, who was appointed U.S. Deputy Trade Representative in 2003. Shiner was active in the Unification Church for more than twenty years and worked as the managing editor of the *Washington Times*. Although she has claimed to distance herself from the church in favor of becoming Episcopalian, Shiner’s office persistently refuses to answer press inquiries concerning any remaining Moon involvements she may have.

With Bush’s faith-based initiative came funding for religious abstinence-only education. One of the recipients of a

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2002 sweep of federal grants from the Department of Health and Human Services that totaled \$27.7 million was Free Teens USA, a Westwood, New Jersey, based after-school program which received \$475,280. Free Teens USA promotes abstinence until marriage among middle and high school students in urban areas. The program's bottom line is that if you have sex before marriage you will most likely die. A headline on the Free Teens website says the government no longer believes condoms to be effective. According to the site, Free Teens is used in thirty-eight states and seventy countries.

The director of the program is Richard Panzer, a former Unification Church official. Panzer has been trying to get this program off the ground for more than a decade. In 1995 the group's slide presentations were approved for use in Long Island, New York, schools, then taken off the program because the ties to Moon were revealed. A similar situation took place in the early 1990s in Chicago when another Moon-affiliated abstinence-only education group, the Pure Love Alliance, was banned from public schools because of its ties to the Unification Church.

A popular Free Teens lesson plan has students spitting into cups then being told to exchange cups and drink each other's spit. The lesson is that sex is even more intimate than drinking someone else's spit. But a more problematic lesson Free Teens teaches is that having sex before marriage endangers a person's entire lineage. "It's not just your body, it's your entire lineage forever," the group's literature says. The message is problematic because it is a tenet taken directly from Unification Church teachings.

While all faith-based groups that indoctrinate public school students with religion-specific ideas threaten the separation of church and state, a glance at the background of Moon's Unification Church makes most other groups seem unbiased by comparison. Sun Myung Moon's religion centers on him being recognized as the returning Christ of the second coming. The story Moon propagates about his messiah status involves his claim that Jesus appeared to him in 1935 when Moon was fifteen years old and said that his mission on Earth wasn't completed because he was prevented from gaining worldly power. Moon accepted the mission of completing Jesus' work in the world.

Sign bearing Unification Church slogan at their Washington, D. C., church.



After several failed attempts to amass a fortune and spread his vision in Korea, Sun Myung Moon moved to the United States in 1954. He married Hak Ja Han Moon and, in 1972, they bought an estate in Tarrytown, New York. This became the training center for church officials.

By this point Moon had spent many years investing money in various companies. He founded the *Washington Times* newspaper in 1982. It has lost money every year it's been published, staying afloat only because Moon continues pumping money into it.

The Unification Church first began drawing attention when Moon started holding mass weddings, officiating the arranged marriages of thousands of couples at a time. In the early 1970s he managed to lure enough young Americans to his promise of a "true love revolution" to prompt most mainstream media to label his movement a cult. In these early days Unificationists lived on rural communes, like the Moon family estate in New York. According to some reports, the young followers weren't allowed to contact their families and were made to sell flowers on the street for eighteen hours a day to support the church. They called themselves Moon Children, which the media shortened to "Moonies." Today the church claims more than 30,000 Unificationists in the United States, but different sources report figures as low as 3,000.

The church's philosophy is based on a revival of "family values." In this case it means that Father Moon, as he refers to himself, arranges matches for young people and marries them en masse. After the wedding the couples must perform an elaborate three-day consummation ritual. To prepare for this ritual the couple must have a picture of Moon that will watch over their union, a "holy handkerchief" (a washcloth supplied by the church that is used to clean the body after sex and not be washed afterwards), and "holy salt." After blessing the space with the salt the couple has intercourse first with the woman on top then with the man

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on top. This is meant to symbolize the reversal of original sin—Moon believes that Eve had sex with the devil when she tasted the apple in the Garden of Eden, and the goal of marriage and procreation should be to reverse this.

This explains the abstinence-only education, discrimination against homosexuality, and belief that a woman who has been raped is better off killing herself. The prescribed sexual positions also echo Moon's emphasis on parenting. The wife first takes the role of her husband's mother, then vice versa, bringing to mind a bizarre Freudian dystopia.

Moon believes that "God is the true parent of mankind" (this phrase is written on a large banner in front of the Unification Church in Washington, D.C.). Sun Myung Moon, as the purported messiah, is Father Moon, of the "True Family." Couples married in the church are also called "True Parents" and their offspring "Blessed Children."

Unique sexual and family practices aside, the Unification Church has been swimming in controversy since its inception. Serving his 1980s jail term didn't stop Moon from allegedly laundering money through the Banco de Credito in Uruguay in 1998, depleting the bank as a result. The two "True Parents" are banned from Germany and other Schengen Treaty nations, and Japan has repeatedly refused to grant Moon a visa because of his criminal record.

Moon's own family is riddled with problems. Nan-sook Moon, the ex-wife of Moon's oldest son, filed for divorce because her husband had drug and alcohol problems and had abused his wife while she was pregnant. Moon himself created a stir in the 1970s when church members reported that he had performed "sexual rites" with early female initiates.

In 1997 a congressional investigation revealed that Moon had been involved with the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, which helped him launch the American Unification Church as a "political tool." Moreover, Moon has always been openly against most principles upon which the United States was built, including church-state separation, individualism, and religious tolerance. In a 2003 sermon he condoned the Holocaust because it was the Jews' payment for killing Jesus. In the same sermon he said that the separation of church and state is the work of Satan.

With his careful building of an empire, delusions of grandeur, and determination to essentially take over the world, Sun Myung Moon isn't a suitable character to be welcomed in Washington, with or without his dubiously acquired millions—especially not when just three years ago he said, "If we stick with the American way of doing things, there is no hope for America; no hope, no country, no heaven." ☹

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