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Bad Moon on the rise

Overcoming his church's bizarre reputation and his own criminal record, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon has cemented ties with the Bush administration -- and gained government funding for his closest disciples.

Editor's Note: The Rev. Sun Myung Moon's "coronation" in a Senate office building, the [subject](#) of a Salon story this week, has now captured the attention of Washington lawmakers and the media. In September 2003, writer John Gorenfeld illustrated Moon's close ties to the Bush administration -- and to George H.W. Bush, who has spoken to Moonie-run causes abroad, and once said he shares values with Moon's group, including "strengthening the family." Salon has reposted this piece for the convenience of our readers.

By John Gorenfeld



Sept. 24, 2003 | Last December, at his three-day God and World Peace event, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon drew a notable slate of political figures, from Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., to Rep. Danny Davis, D-Ill., and, perhaps most notably, James Towey, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, who offered some respectful opening remarks to Moon's Unification Church faithful. Moon followed, and called for all religions to come together in support of the Bush plan for faith-based initiatives.

Coming from Moon that made perfect sense, because he already believes all religions will come together -- under him. "The separation between religion and politics," he has observed on many occasions, "is what Satan likes most." His gospel: Jesus failed because he never attained worldly power. Moon will succeed, he says, by purifying our sex-corrupted culture, and that includes cleaning up gays ("dung-eating dogs," as he calls them) and American women ("a line of prostitutes"). Jews had better repent, too. (Moon claims that the Holocaust was payback for the crucifixion of Christ: "Through the principle of indemnity, Hitler killed 6 million Jews.") His solution is a world theocracy that will enforce proper sexual habits in order to bring about heaven on earth.

What sort of proper sexual habits? According to Moon, in order to restore blood purity, very specific practices [are](#)

prescribed. Sex before marriage is out of the question, and when sexual consummation does happen, it must adhere to very specific instructions. First, a photograph of Moon must be nearby, so that everything occurs under the reverend's watchful eye. After two nights of woman-on-top sex, the couple reverse positions, whereupon the man, according to Moon, restores dominion over Eve, via the proper missionary position. Then, according to the instructions attributed to the U.C.'s American Blessed Family Department, "after the act of love, both spouses should wipe their sexual areas with the Holy Handkerchief" --referring to the church-supplied washcloth -- which must "be kept individually labeled and should never be laundered or mixed up."

Incredibly, it now appears that under the new priorities of the budding Faith Based Initiative, the federal government has given Moon disciples its imprimatur -- and funding.

Last summer, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services gave a \$475,280 grant to fund Free Teens USA, an after-school celibacy club in urban New Jersey. Free Teens USA, like other Moon civic organizations, claims it has no ties to the Unification Church. But according to documents obtained by Salon under the Freedom of Information Act, the director and chief finance officer of the Free Teens USA club, as well as others listed on the group's board of directors, are former or present high-ranking Unification Church officials who omitted those leadership roles from their applications for the federal grant.

The small success of Free Teens' government funding is just a small indication of the remarkable transformation of the billionaire Moon. A man who once inspired considerable public horror in the 1970s when his church faced a congressional inquiry and battled accusations of coercive recruitment and mind control, not to mention his own criminal conviction for tax fraud and conspiracy to obstruct justice, now goes about his business generally unnoticed. (The Unification Church would not return calls for this story.) Along the way, he has been able to gain acceptance by the most powerful people in the country, surely with the help of his media mini-empire -- including the UPI wire service and the right-wing newspapers *Tiempos del Mundo*, in South America, and the *Washington Times*, which he runs at losses well into the tens of millions every year. His exorbitant spending on politicians, largely conservative, hasn't hurt either; his *Washington Times* foundation gave \$1 million to the George H.W. Bush presidential library and has paid the former president untold amounts in speaking fees.

And Moon has also made impressive headway into the current Bush White House. Other administration officials have attended Moon events, including then-coming Attorney General John Ashcroft, who attended Moon's Inaugural Prayer Luncheon for Unity and Renewal, just before George W. Bush took office. And perhaps more important, other former and current members of his Unification faithful have ascended to high levels of the Bush administration.

There are many other signs suggesting the Unification Church keeps close tabs on Free Teens USA as providential work for Moon. In a remarkable 2000 [sermon titled "God's Tylenol"](#), Tyler Hendricks, president of Moon's Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, praises the group, along with other Moon nonprofits, as helping to treat the "three headaches of God." For headaches No. 1 and 2 ("the disunity of Christianity" and "the scourge of Communism," respectively) Hendricks claims Moon brought God "Tylenol" in the form of his charitable, confusingly named organizations. For headache No. 3 -- youthful immorality -- Hendricks says that Moon prescribed the medicine of the Pure Love Alliance, Free Teens USA, and two other groups. Indeed, he said, alumni of the seminary that's uniting Christianity are, even now, "on the frontline for the relief of God's third headache, the decline of youth morality and the family."

In its grant application to the Department of Health, Free Teens identifies Martin Porter as the group's central figure. Porter -- who has a Ph.D. and an MBA from Century University, a correspondence school that was in California until it fled the state in the late '80s to avoid new regulations -- discloses that he was CEO of the "Tongil Trading Company" in Toronto from 1977 to 1983. But Porter was also Moon's chief lieutenant in Canada from 1977 to 1983, and his face appeared throughout Toronto on promotional posters that called him "Moon's Man in Canada," according to published church history. (Tongil, a Korean word for "unification," sold ginseng tea and vases, and it was also affiliated with Moon's fleet of tuna fishing boats.)

In the Summer 1987 issue of the Church publication *Blessing Quarterly*, Porter testified to a series of supernatural

visions he received in 1968 that led him to Moon. "I was sitting in my car, thinking about Father and what he may be doing. I was unaware that on that particular day the Blessing would take place. Suddenly I saw little pink hearts appear in the car all around me!" he wrote. "Spiritual experiences were so common in those days, that if several days went by without one, we thought there must be something wrong."

Similarly, the application does not mention that director Richard Panzer was head of the Unification Church of Rhode Island in the 1980s, as well as the special projects director for Moon's morality lobbying group, the American Freedom Coalition.

Free Teens' directors are also solidly Unificationist -- with the notable exception of New Jersey state assemblyman and Baptist pastor Alfred E. Steele. (According to the Unification News, Steele did once [introduce](#) Moon as a leader sent by God at a 2001 revival stop in Newark organized by Free Teens director David Konn. Steele, listed as the president of Free Teens, didn't return calls for this story.)

Of Free Teens' other eight directors, at least seven are close to the Moon organization. Among them:

- Director Eric Holt, at one time comptroller of the Unification Church, lists an address just down the block from Moon's secluded East Garden estate, 40 minutes north of New York City.
- The working address of another director, Anthony Appia, has doubled as the offices of the Blessed Family Department, as well as Washington Times owners One Up Enterprises, the Unification Thought Institute, and dozens of other Moon religious projects -- according to various litanies of "front groups" compiled by outside observers of the church. [One](#) lists Appia's 481 Eighth Ave. address no fewer than 66 times.
- David Konn is identified, in a lawsuit against the gun company Kahr Arms, as the president of Kahr's Moon-owned parent company Saeilo, whose Web site advertises "Absolute Concealed Power." ([Here](#), Konn is shown brandishing 9 mm pistols.)
- Directors William Gaigg and Bjorn Ottosson both work with Moon's jewelry company, Christian Bernard. Ottosson is also a former vice president of Moon's campus group CARP (Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles).

Panzer bristles at the idea that Free Teens -- which celebrates "Gen Xers ... rebelling against their divorced baby boomer parents and seek[ing] lasting love relationships" -- in any way encourages a lasting love relationship with the True Father of the Unification Church. He will not be made a part of a "conspiracy theory," he told Salon.

"If groups founded by Catholics receive abstinence funding, as there surely are, is that a sign the pope is infiltrating the White House with his pro-chastity beliefs and influence?" he said.

Panzer maintains that Free Teens is his idea, and his life's work.

But Free Teens was first alleged to be a Moon operation in 1995, when a Free Teens program was dropped from private Catholic and Protestant schools on Long Island. Despite the bad press, the club has enjoyed the approval of the state of the New Jersey, whose \$100,000 grant in 2001 was one step along the club's journey to federal funding. The organization is based in three New Jersey cities and Westchester City, N.Y., employing about 25 people, according to its tax forms, and claims to operate in 38 states.

The group boasts a "reality centered" approach toward sex education, summed up by a fairly simple message: Don't have sex before marriage, or you will probably die.

Free Teens hosted a contest at Marshall High School, Wis., in 1999, where teens were asked to compile a top-10 list of reasons not to have sex. The winning entries, celebrated [on a Unification-affiliated Web site](#), included "If you don't want to kick the bucket, don't knock the boot," (No. 3) and "Two words: Brighter future" (No. 1).

Similarly, the specter of death hovers over the [Free Teens Web site](#). There are grim morality tales: "Mary"

testifies -- with diction and grammar so uneven it seems scripted -- that "[m]y son has not seen his father since the day he was born and i could've prevented that had I waited until I was married. I would not give up my son for the world but i will never be able to give him the world, and every child deserves that. So if you care about your future children you will wait."

Perhaps fearful her message will be misconstrued, Mary adds: "And don't think that protection works, cause i used protection and it obviously didn't. good luck!"

Another place on the site features Magic Johnson and interprets his tale of HIV survival to mean that even the most healthy-looking sex partners might be carrying the seeds of death. It's even hinted that not even French-kissers are safe from HIV. The site also heavily spins a 2001 study from the National Institutes of Health, saying that the "U.S. Gov Now DOUBTS Condoms!" And, in a slogan reminiscent of Moon's emphasis on the "blood lineage" that binds the biblical Adam to the True Father, Free Teens implores its subjects with the message: "It's not just your body, it's your whole lineage forever."

Free Teens recommends a classroom exercise in which teenagers spit into a cup, then are asked to trade with another student and drink out of it. The lesson: Sex is even more intimate, and it should be approached with all the vigilance of drinking a warm cup of spit.

Panzer, in an e-mail interview, writes of the cup exercise, "[W]e picked up this activity at a national abstinence conference several years ago from another abstinence group that was using it." As for its success, Free Teens cites a New Jersey trial showing that teenagers who participate in their program are two-thirds more likely to agree with the statement "Sexual intercourse can cause problems for people of my age" and that one-third were making plans to abstain from sex.

The men of Free Teens are not the only ones with Moon affiliations to benefit from Bush largesse. Josette Shiner, who rose up through the Moon organization first as a Washington Times reporter and Moon disciple and later as editor of that newspaper, was named deputy trade representative earlier this year. In 1982 she told the Washington Post, "I joined the church full well knowing it is something not yet understood by society." In the 1990s, she claimed to have broken ties with Moon and to have become an Episcopalian. Her press secretary, Richard Mills, refused to comment on whether Shiner had rethought Moon's political views.

And in December of last year, Bush appointed David Caprara, a top official for Moon in Washington, to head the War on Poverty program AmeriCorps VISTA. Caprara had been director of Moon's American Family Coalition and was one of the Unification Church's top political operatives.

A former aide to Jack Kemp, Caprara founded a pro-faith policy group called the Empowerment Network. It claimed Sens. Rick Santorum and Joseph Lieberman as leaders, though their names recently disappeared from the site. (Lieberman's spokesperson told Salon the senator had never been formally affiliated with the Empowerment Network; Santorum's office didn't return calls.) The site's Resources Directory section includes links to both Free Teens USA and the [Pure Love Alliance](#) -- a now seemingly defunct, openly Moonie entity that was discovered in 2000 to be operating in 61 Chicago public schools before being shut down.

And Caprara, according to a [report](#) on another Unification-affiliated site, is involved in the "effort to reach ministers" as well as "educating political leaders" about Moon's beliefs. Asked whether Caprara is presently opening doors for Moon, AmeriCorps spokesman Sandy Scott replies: "The premise of your question is wrong, and the answer to your question is no."

Moon has managed to forge powerful relationships through a cause that trumps most concerns: politics.

In 1996, Moon praised communism for producing obedient followers "trained under totalitarianism," who are "trained to follow once an order came from above," unlike wayward Americans ("individualism is what God hates most," went his refrain in a 1987 speech). And today his business holdings include an automotive company in U.S.-sanctioned North Korea. But before the fall of the Berlin Wall he was the sworn enemy of communism,

having formed an aversion to it in a prison camp of the brutal Kim Il Sung regime. Later, he would play a key role in the Iran-Contra affair when the Washington Times created a fund that contributed the first \$100,000 to Oliver North's Nicaraguan Freedom Fund. His followers still take credit for it as a blow to the Reds.

Now he has found common ground with the religious right on sexual abstinence. The alliance is financial, too. In 1995, it came to light that a debt-ridden Jerry Falwell (who told Esquire in 1978 that Moon was "like the plague: he exploits boys and girls") had quietly accepted \$3.5 million from Moon's Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) to bail out his Liberty University.

Another important Moon contact is President Bush (the father), who has spoken to Moonie-run causes abroad. The elder Bush defended his closeness with Moon strictly on philosophical grounds, telling the Post through a spokesman that "this group is about strengthening the family and that's what President and Mrs. Bush are deeply focused on."

The question is, do Bush and Moon mean the same thing when they talk about family values?

In the past, Moon has taken out full-page advertisements in newspapers, transcribing his communications with the Spirit World, where figures from Confucius to former U.S. President James Buchanan have vouched that he is, indeed, the savior of humanity. Earlier this month, a two-page testimonial in the Washington Times quoted the 36 former U.S. presidents "from the vantage point of heaven" (Moon, according to George Washington, is "the messiah").

This year, claiming instructions from the True Father himself, Unificationists announced that a new stage had begun in the raising of Cheon Il Guk (or heaven on earth). Believing that the crucifix could be the last obstacle keeping America from accepting Moon as the messiah, they have held conferences across the country with banners reading "Tear Down the Walls/Who is Rev. Moon?" culminating in a final crucifix-burying ceremony. Moon's Family Federation for World Peace Web site describes the inspiration as a vision that the True Father first made public last year at the 20th anniversary party of his Washington Times. (The speech, in which Moon said, "The Washington Times will become the instrument in spreading the truth about God to the world," sent many reporters to the bar for a drink, the Post reported.)

But while Moon's anti-cross rhetoric would surely turn off many of his friends on the religious right, he remains invisible in the media. Even though his rhetoric far surpasses Louis Farrakhan's in vitriol towards Jews and gays, he goes unnoticed by groups like the ADL, whose Web site highlights the Nation of Islam as a hate group, while its only mention of Moon comes in a warning about the violent threats of extremist rabbi Meir Kahane (who in 1976 "declared war" on Moon missionaries, vowing none "would walk the street safely").

Disciples insist it is a mistake to take Moon's words literally, out of the context of the broader Divine Principle. They hasten to add that the massive archives of speeches online are hastily written translations and are trustworthy only in the original Korean.

But at his [Unification.net FAQ](#), webmaster Damian Anderson warns of any politically correct dilution of, for example, Moon's attack on Jews.

"The fact is that the Jewish people committed a grievous sin in rejecting the Lord, and the world is today committing a grievous sin in rejecting the Lord," he writes. "I will not water down what Father said to please liberal constituencies within his own church."

Within his church, his entreaties to cherish and punish your "love organ" (with pliers if necessary, he suggested in 2001) manage to find an audience. On Blessed Children World, an online message board for kids of Unification families, there is much discussion of church beliefs. "I hate gay people," one B.C. observes. Other B.C.'s ask whether it's a sin to go to the prom and debate a church doctrine that rape victims are considered impure. "Kill yourself before you ARE raped," one posts. "Bite out your tongue and choke on your own blood if you need to. (No joke, that was in Father's speech from some time ago). Anyhow, I know it sounds totally NAZI of us to

say/think/believe such things..."

That frank admission has since been deleted from a Nov. 1, 2002, message thread titled "I cannot accept rape = fall," in which other posts contend sexual purity is "worth dying for." But the sentiment, at least, seems to be supported by Moon's speeches.

"If someone is trying to invade you, you would rather kill yourself than go through the fall. At least you won't go to hell that way ... this means love comes before life," he told an audience in 1992. For at all costs, women in Moon's view must not reenact the primal wrong, the perversion Moon sees as responsible for the Fall. "There is nothing more important than the new lineage."

About the writer

John Gorenfeld's last story for Salon, "[The Dictator Who Snagged Me](#)," was about Kim Jong-Il's monster movie.

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