

Faith Breakers Confronted By Unificationists at Cult Conference in Kyoto

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Luke Higuchi, president of Survivors Against Forced Exit.

For the first time in 15 years of annual meetings, the Japanese Society for Cult Prevention and Recovery (JSCPR) was challenged at their convention on June 25, 2011 in Kyoto, Japan by a group of 40 Unification members who confronted faith-breaking professionals on their own ground. On the same day a group of 30 Unificationists made a public protest across the street from the Student Plaza building where the conference was held, according to Mr. Luke Higuchi, president of Survivors Against Forced Exit (SAFE), who was present at the conference.

The theme of the anti-cult conference was “How to Protect Students from Cult Conversion,” and featured Rev. Masaharu Takayama, a well-known forced-conversion expert, Toshiyuki Tachikake, an administrator at Osaka University, Jirou Suzuki, a board member of JSCPR, and two Buddhist clerics, Takash Buruno and Mr. Kusuyama.

When the conference registration desk opened, the 40 Unificationists registered either as members of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) or as Unification Church members and paid their \$10 fees, according to Mr. Higuchi.

Approximately 150 participants assembled in the hall, so the Unificationists were a dramatic presence in the two-hour conference, and their questions to the panelists made the presenters visibly nervous, Mr. Higuchi reports to Familyfed.org.

“The panel looked uncomfortable, and there was tension in the air,” Mr. Higuchi said. The moderator gave only one question from the Unificationists to the panelists to be addressed publicly.



30 church members stand behind a banner accusing Rev. Masaharu Takayama of unethical and unchristian behavior.



Lawyer Takashi Yamaguchi, above, snaps photos of Unificationists attending the anti-cult conference he moderated.

Rev. Takayama told the participants that he would cut short the conclusion of his speech due to the presence of the Unificationists in the hall, according to Mr. Higuchi, who explained that the last part was to be an account of his successes breaking the religious faith of Unificationists, some of whom likely became active and tithing members of his own church. Outside the conference a group of church members held a banner that said: “Rev. Takayama Apologize to Your Victims!”

Panel moderator Takashi Yamaguchi, a lawyer who serves with an anti-Unification legal association, told the audience that videography and photography at the conference was strictly prohibited, yet he took dozens of pictures of Unificationists outside the building.

“They were taking pictures of us taking pictures of them. It was a little funny,” Mr. Higuchi said. He added that he shook hands with Rev. Takayama and introduced him to a brother who had survived confinement and forced conversion by him many years ago. The same Japanese brother gave rebuttal letters to all panelists, and several of the panelists expressed surprise, according to Mr. Higuchi.

“Do you remember me? My father [who paid the deprogrammer] passed away,” the member said to Rev. Takayama. “Are you still trying to break people’s faith?”

“No, I am not doing it in a radical way, anymore,” Rev Takayama said, according to Mr. Higuchi, who added: “He was courteous, but appeared very uncomfortable.”

Find more information about the underground association of professional faith-breakers and their abuse of Japanese citizens who join new religious movements at the blog of Kazuhiro Yonemoto, an investigative journalist who has published books on the post-traumatic stress syndrome of victims of forced confinement -- <http://yonemoto.blog63.fc2.com/>

According to the International Coalition for Religious Freedom (ICRF), more than 4,300 Unification Church members have suffered faith-breaking and forced confinement since the mid-1960s. Among these victims some were sexually assaulted and at least one person committed suicide in confinement. Two panels of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations are investigating the issue.