

## Thirty-nine years ago today *The Washington Times* published its first issue

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Thirty-nine years ago today, on May 17, 1982, *The Washington Times* published its first issue. As we observe this anniversary, we take a look at the journey of the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, co-founder of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), who began [The Washington Times](#), among other media ventures, to preserve and advance freedom of press in the free world.

"People who are blessed to live in freedom know that a free press can be the strongest deterrent to dictatorship," said Rev. Moon, who fled his homeland of present-day North Korea during the Korean War and, in 1978, founded the World Media Association and World Media Conference. "More than political, economic or academic measures," he said, "the impact of the press is the most immediate on our society. This is certainly the belief of the World Media Association."

Rev. Moon established the association and its annual conference to advance the cause of world peace by championing freedom and moral responsibility in the press. He spoke of the "awesome power" of the media during the first World Media Conference, in October 1978, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. There, 38 journalists from 16 countries discussed topics relevant to "The Future of the Free Press."

Rev. Moon continued the media conferences and associated fact-finding tours for journalists throughout the 1980s, bringing together hundreds of media professionals from all over the world. In its sixth year, the World Media Conference, held in Cartagena, Columbia, convened some 600 media representatives from 92 countries.

"All of us, before we are journalists or any other kind of professional, are first human beings," wrote Rev. Moon in a message shared at the 7th World Media Conference in Tokyo in November 1984. "The first responsibility of a human being is to exercise freedom in accord with basic moral principles. For the journalist, freedom of the press must be exercised according to certain moral standards that are the common ground for all free men and women."

"This is where the importance of responsibility in the media comes in," he continued. "For this reason, as founder of the World Media Association, I emphasize and fight for freedom of the press as well as the moral responsibility of the media. Thomas Jefferson wrote, quite correctly, 'The press is the best instrument for enlightening the mind of man and improving him as a rational, moral and social being.' Jefferson went so far as to say our very liberty itself depends on freedom of the press, and that press freedom could never be limited, not even a little bit, without being lost entirely. There is a great deal of truth in this."

In 1990, the conferences culminated in the 11th World Media Conference, held jointly with the Soviet Union's Novosti news agency in Moscow, which led to Rev. Moon meeting with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

"Democracy cannot be exercised without a free press," Rev. Moon said. "And a free press cannot be truly free unless exercised with moral responsibility. I believe that a free press is a moral press. We who are media professionals take special pride in this. This is why we can say that journalists hold a special place in our society."

In 2007, The Washington Times observed its 25th anniversary with a gala event at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., where more than 1,100 leading figures in politics, culture, and journalism representing 82 nations celebrated. At the time, U.S. President George W. Bush, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, Lady Margaret Thatcher, Polish Prime Minister Jarosaw Kaczynski, and Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa were among those who sent messages of congratulations.

Former President George H.W. Bush delivered the keynote address complementing The Washington Times for challenging "prevailing bias" and thanked Rev. Moon for "his vision in launching this newspaper." Rev. Moon also spoke, delivering the Founder's Address, in which he emphasized the critical role of the media.

Today, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon continues her husband's peacebuilding legacy and media efforts with the International Media Association for Peace (IMAP), which was [launched](#) at the 2020 World Summit in South Korea. More than 520 media professionals worldwide joined IMAP to address the current state of the media, freedom and responsibility of the press, and the role of media in solving critical social and geopolitical challenges, among other industry issues.

"It has been my firm belief that the media is the guardian of freedom and upholder of the truth," Rev. Moon notably said. "There is no better way to fight totalitarian systems than by promoting free and responsible media. I echo the historical maxim, 'The pen is mightier than the sword.' In our modern day, this includes the microphone and camera as well."