

A critique on poor decision making in our European Movement

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Garrun Abrams was STF Europe Director for the past 3 years, he has now moved on but wrote this letter to explain his position on the current situation in the European movement and with STF Europe in particular:

Dear European Leaders, Youth Leaders, European Blessed Families, brothers and sisters,

As STF Director in Europe the past three years I have been very blessed to meet and work with so many wonderful people in the European Movement. However, my aim was always to offer a healthy spiritual environment so that my brothers and sisters could find their own faith in God and True Parents. There are limitations to the STF program and I made my concerns about the STF program quite clear to the European Unification Church leadership trusting that they would make the proper decisions to move the program forward.

I have waited to send this letter in order to watch how things developed in relation to decisions being made recently in the European Unification Church Movement. So much has happened these past few months and I had hoped that time would change people's perspectives and better decisions could be made about the future of 2nd generation in Europe. Now that it is quite clear that my input was mostly ignored I feel it is important that I make my view public so that there is a possibility for things to be redirected in a better direction. Given the recent events in the United States I think it is a good time for the Unification Movement in Europe to evaluate how things are done in order to avoid similar mistakes. True Father said years ago that it is time to move from a leader-centered movement and become a member-centered movement. Instead we continue to follow leaders without holding them accountable. I am writing this letter in order to illustrate how poorly decisions were made in the hope that explanations can be made to those that were involved as well as others that were hurt by those decisions.

In April 2012 the European Youth Department held a meeting in order to make a proposal about how to continue after the summer. At that time the proposal was made that Patrick Hanna would become STF director and work closely also within the youth department with the aim that he would then later take the role of European youth director after more staff could be found. This proposal was rejected without any explanation, and at that point I had no idea how STF could move forward. After having worked with Patrick the past of couple years it was clear to me that he was the most qualified person to lead 2nd generation and I could think of no one better to run STF.

After individual meetings with each member of the European youth department, President Song seemed to feel that Patrick Hanna could not take any role as either European youth director or STF director and then again the European HQ leadership (Pres. Yong Cheon Song, Tim Miller, and Jack Corley) made an attempt to fill the STF director role. They first approached a brother who had worked with STF the past three years, William Aso, and I agreed that he could do a good job but would need support. Ultimately his decision to not take the role was due to the lack of support he felt from the EU HQ leadership. They seemed more interested in filling the role than the person taking the role. It seems that the image of the EU leadership is more important than actual care for the 2nd generation they are meant to be taking care of..

Ultimately, the decision was made to hire Dale Rose as the new STF director with the thought that he would be supported as he worked under the previous STF director. My name and image was used to

assure members that I would agree with the appointment of Dale Rose as STF director and that because he worked under my leadership, STF could continue without much change. I want to make it clear that on multiple occasions, both written and verbally, I had expressed my concern that Dale Rose work with the STF program. Even before the decision was made I had cautioned that the European leadership give Dale any role in the STF structure. My view has always been that STF should be run by 2nd generation. Our movement can only move forward if 2nd generation are encouraged and trusted to lead, especially in situations where they can lead each other. I have always had great support from elder 1st generation; however, STF members can best grow when they are led by someone who has gone through the same path in life. Most importantly, the youth are the future of our movement! If we cannot encourage youth to take on more responsibility eventually there will be no one left. When will 2nd generation stop being the future of our movement in Europe and become the present leaders? They need support, encouragement, and trust.

This is not a personal attack on Dale Rose's leadership ability, but instead a critique on poor decision making in our European Movement. Having worked with STF for three years and also working with Dale among others, it was clear to me that there were those better suited for the role of STF director. Not only were those people not approached, some that were approached felt that they could not work in a structure that promotes arbitrary decision making and discourages creativity and ownership. Furthermore, the European Leadership knew why we had asked Dale to move on from the STF program and chose anyway to ask him back as Director without any discussion or input. In fact, the European leadership have no direct experience working with him and do not have any reference to what kind of leader he will be. It seems that they were desperate to fill the role of STF director and found whoever they could to fill the role. It was simply convenient for them that Dale had worked with STF and they therefore ignored the fact that he had been asked to move on.

My view is that leading STF is a difficult task, and there are few that can take on that responsibility. Dale Rose has experience with youth, but from my experience working with him, he is unsuitable for the role of STF director. This evaluation comes from my concern for 2nd generation as well as my direct experience of working with him. During his time working previously with STF he did help some, but at the same time also hurt some others. My fear is that his leadership of the current STF year could potentially do more harm than good, particularly regarding the spiritual lives of the second generation entrusted with his care. Simply put, I have concern how STF will be run under Dale Rose and whether it will be a spiritually safe environment for 2nd generation to grow and learn. Add to this the fact that STF has no other elder staff this year and no other support and I have a lot of doubt about the future of the STF program.

From the experience especially these past few months a few things have become clear to me that I feel I should express so that hopefully steps can be made to change. I have on numerous occasions expressed my concerns and it has fallen on deaf ears. None of my suggestions have been considered when brought to the European leadership. What is clear is that often leadership in the Unification Church movement is more interested in their own agenda with no time to listen to things that aren't deemed important to them. Moreover, they often make decisions without any dialogue or communication and the hiring of the new STF director show this clearly. Having worked in many organizations in the past it is clear to me that without dialogue and mutual respect, it is hard to work. That is one big reason that 2nd generation find it so hard to be inspired to work in our movement. We do not have a dynamic movement but instead a leader-centered, "yes man" culture. It is important that our leaders hear our voice and concerns; that is why I have chosen to be open with my view.

Especially given the recent events in our movement it is clear that leader's choices must be questioned and that more transparency is needed in our movement. Neither of these things are happening in the European Unification Movement. No one knows why the former Youth Department staff were asked to move on

and why new staff was named without any discussion or input from others. My hope is that the European leadership realize their mistakes in dealing with this situation and start to find a better way to work with members and 2nd generation. Currently our International President, Hyung Jin Nim is visiting 12 U.S. cities and listening to member's views, concerns, and frustration. This is the kind of leadership we need to promote in our movement. Members need to be heard and their views need to be evaluated and included. This type of leadership does not exist in Europe; instead decisions are made by leaders without input and members are asked to simply unite regardless of their view. Leaders should listen to their members before making decisions. In fact, any literature on leadership indicates that good leaders surround themselves with others that are better than them. They then listen to the advice provided by those they are working with as they are the experts in that field. Our leadership instead makes decisions despite the advice of those around them.

I hope my experience in Europe these past three years has some value to those that I worked with. So far my concerns and views have not been heard and with the current leadership I have my doubts anything will be done. My hope is that our movement can become a place where I would want to raise my family. However, in order to get there, change has to be made and now is the perfect time. I encourage everyone to ask for the truth about how and why decisions are being made. The way to fulfill Father's vision is if we are all owners of our own faith and follow leaders who are concerned about each member as though they are part of their own family. Instead we are losing more and more of our membership including many 2nd generation. The time is now to change things.

Sincerely,

Garrun Abrahams