

Hyung Jin Moon's Far-Right Gun Festival at Kahr Arms' Tommy Gun Warehouse

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Paster Hyung Jin "Sean" Moon Speaks at The Rod of Iron Freedom Festival on October 11, 2020.
[YouTube]

Election 2020 - Far-Right Gun Festival Boosts Election Conspiracy Theories

A Pennsylvania event organized by the sons of the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon featured speakers like Steve Bannon, who repeated unfounded claims about voter fraud.

During the weekend of October 9, more than 5,000 gun enthusiasts filled the parking lot of Kahr Arms's Tommy Gun Warehouse in Greeley, a small Pennsylvania town with just 1,300 residents. The group had assembled for the second annual Rod of Iron Freedom Festival, a gathering of far-right ideologues and Second Amendment activists organized by the sons of the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the controversial Korean religious leader. At the center of the asphalt lot, organizers erected a stage, and vendors, including members of the National Rifle Association, surrounded it, selling food, marketing law enforcement and citizen defense groups, and hawking Trump-themed clothes and decor.

Attendees were treated to a smorgasbord of fringe conspiracies trotted out by politicians, right-wing icons, military veterans, and religious leaders. Stephen Bannon, the former White House senior counselor and Breitbart founder, even made a special virtual appearance, in which he warned of a Democratic conspiracy to rob President Donald Trump of the election through voter fraud, "particularly in certain areas of Pennsylvania." He [encouraged](#) the crowd to watch polling places to protect against such attack, adding, "We need tough people."

"What the left intends to do -- and you're seeing it in Pennsylvania right now," Bannon told the crowd. "Use the courts, use social media, use the mainstream media to try to make sure Trump is not declared the winner that night." He said falsely that "uncertifiable" mail-in ballots would be used to "steal the presidency" away from Trump. "Look we're going to win this thing," he said. "Pennsylvania is the key that picks the lock for a second Trump term."

As The Trace has [reported](#), election officials across the country have expressed concern over how fear mongering about vote fraud, which has been repeatedly debunked, might lead to instances of voter intimidation.

Other speakers at the event similarly leaned on false or misleading talking points to energize the crowd. Pastor George Cook gave a fiery, sometimes-racist invocation thanking God for Trump's "rapid healing from a so-called Chinese virus" that he "vanquished in three days." Event organizer Kook-Jin "Justin" Moon, who founded Kahr Arms, spoke of a "1776 Take Two" if a President Joe Biden came for the public's guns. His brother Hyung Jin "Sean" Moon, who helms the Rod of Iron Ministries, alleged a global conspiracy to "[lower] the sexual age consent limit to 10 years old" and subject Americans to "Satanic communist" rule.

[NRA-backed](#) Republican congressional candidate Jim Bognet also appeared at the event. Behind a lectern styled with a "Patriots for Trump" banner, Bognet spoke about increasing funding for police departments and the unfounded threat of mass disarmament in the event of a Biden victory. Bognet's campaign did not respond to requests for comment about whether or not his campaign stood by the remarks made by the Moons and some of the festival's other speakers.

The Moon brothers marketed the [festival](#), which was free to attend, through [their businesses](#) -- an arms manufacturer and a church -- both of which maintain devoted followings. Their late father, Sun Myung Moon, garnered notoriety in the 1970s for his eccentric religious rituals, among them mass wedding ceremonies. Following his death, Sean Moon broke away from the church to start his own congregation, and refined his own controversial brand of religion centered around firearms. In 2018, just weeks after the Parkland school shooting, he drew [criticism](#) for a ceremony in which congregants donned crowns of bullet casings and blessed their rifles. Justin Moon remained in step with his brother and founded the Kahr Firearms Group, which includes the gunmakers Kahr Arms, Auto-Ordnance, and Magnum Research. Neither Justin nor Sean Moon returned requests for comment.

The size of the festival, which was confirmed to The Trace by local officials and event organizers, appears to have violated a July order from Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf prohibiting large gatherings to limit the spread of the coronavirus. But speakers and attendees appeared unbothered by the risk -- although organizers contracted with a local company to promote COVID-19 safety precautions, according to local [coverage](#), most attendees did not wear masks, and many speakers openly downplayed the threat of the virus.

Whether the event violated state guidelines is unclear. Under new event occupancy restrictions that took effect on the first day of the festival, organizers should not have permitted more than 2,500 attendees at any given time. The Trace was unable to confirm whether the venue had hosted more than the acceptable number of attendees at once, or if the 5,000 attendees simply cycled in and out of the festival grounds. But a spokesperson from the Pennsylvania Department of Health clarified that regardless "of gathering size allowed, events must follow mask-wearing and social distancing guidelines." Videos from the event show crowded festival grounds, few masks, and no social distancing.