



**UPDATE FROM THE DESK OF
ICRF PRESIDENT DAN FEFFERMAN
February 15, 2012**

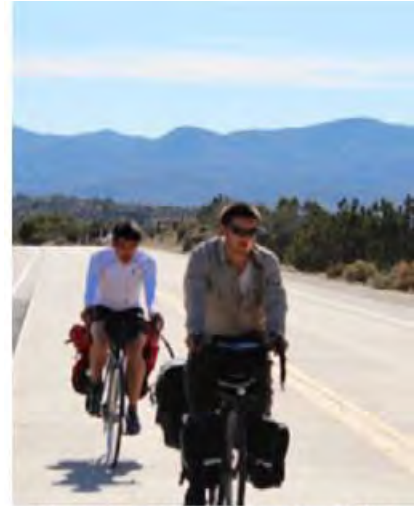
Tour de Cause Concludes. Freedom Riders Seijin Tranberg and Joshua Wildman completed their cross-country winter bike challenge for Religious Freedom on January 26 in Los Angeles. The tour concluded with a rally at the Japanese-American Cultural Center in the "Little Tokyo" area of downtown L.A. The following is excerpted from a report by Doug Burton on familyfed.org.

On a sunny day in downtown Los Angeles, John Seijin Tranberg and Joshua Wildman biked in toward the finish line of their 2,300-mile journey for victims of abduction in Japan. They had begun the Faith, Freedom and Family ride at the State Capitol in Atlanta 45 days before. Awaiting them at the Japanese-American Cultural Community Center (JACCC) in LA's "Little Tokyo" was a rally intent on bringing awareness of religious persecution of religious people around the world. In attendance were representatives from multiple religious groups gathered for the cause of religious freedom.

Mrs. Kazue Saberan, a survivor of "deprogramming," presented a moving testimony about her experiences... Luke Higuchi, president of a victims' support group called Survivors Against Forced Exit (SAFE) gave the opening speech with a testimony of his own experience of being captured by deprogrammers.

"When I was 19 years old," Mrs. Saberan said, "I met the Unification Church and the life-giving truth from Rev. and Mrs. Moon. As I was preparing to join the Unification Church in 1985, I was kidnapped by a communist group, and they kept me in one place against my will for three months. When I found the chance to run away, I did." Her words underscored a vast improvement to her life after escaping the faith-breakers. "I was married to Mr. Mansoor Saberan in 1989. I have three beautiful children who are the loves of my life. I am very proud of my family because I can feel that God is in my family every day, and I can see God's blessing in my children."

Imam Haitham Bundakji of the Orange County Islamic Society addressed the importance of religious freedom. Dr. Nicholas Bensen, a Lutheran clergyman, said he was surprised and devastated to see a democratic country such as Japan subject to criminal practices. He invoked the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said in 1963: "Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere." A message of support was also read from Congressman Trent Franks of Arizona. At various points along the tour, Seijin and Josh attracted media attention that brought awareness of the faith-breaking issue to a wide audience. Politicians, entertainment personalities, religious leaders and human rights activists joined in lending their voices to support the cause. We are truly proud of Seijin and Josh. They provide an inspiring example of second generation Unificationists finding a great way to do what they love and at the same time standing up for what they believe in.



Seijin and Josh on the final leg of their cross country tour.



Tour de Cause Rally supporters pose for a group picture at the Japanese-American Cultural Center in L.A.

Religious Freedom Roundtable. The issue of faith-breaking in Japan continues to gain attention in the human rights community. My recent presentation at the meeting of the DC-area Religious Freedom Roundtable was very well received. Hosted by Freedom House, the Roundtable is an informal, off-the-record gathering of more than 40 prominent leaders from the NGO community and mainstream religious denominations. US government participation at the most recent meeting included officers from the State Department Office of Religious Freedom and the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. I presented a brief summary of the Japanese “deprogramming” issue, announced the release of the Human Rights Without Frontiers report documenting the issue and gave details about recent victims. I also asked participants to join our upcoming “sign-on” letter about the issue, which we will be announcing soon.

Japan UPR. Our team is making plans to ensure that the forced conversion issue will be raised at Japan’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the United Nations Human Rights Council. The UPR is officially described as “a State-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfill their human rights obligations.” It is “one of the main features of the Council... created through the UN General Assembly on 15 March 2006 by a resolution 60/251, which established the Human Rights Council itself.”



Conference in Japan. The Washington Times Foundation is moving forward with plans to hold a Religious Freedom Conference in Tokyo, in April. Under the leadership of *Times* chairman Douglas Joo, Larry Moffitt is working closely with myself and other team members on the conference schedule. More on this as plans are confirmed.

Special Thanks. Our gratitude goes out to all of you who responded to our recent “snail-mail” fundraising appeal. Your support means a lot to us. Everyone... please consider helping us keep costs down by becoming a regular donor through our website, www.religiousfreedom.com.

Requests for Prayers. Finally, please remember to keep our Japanese brothers and sisters on your prayer lists. At least three members are currently undergoing “deprogramming.” Our prayer support for them can make a real difference. Please also pray for those who are recovering from the trauma of being confined and abused by their own relatives—not just the members who kept the faith, but also those who renounced the True Parents under pressure. They too deserve and need our prayerful support.

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