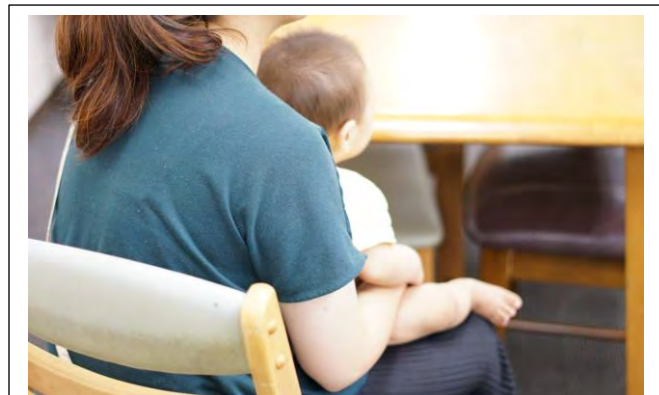


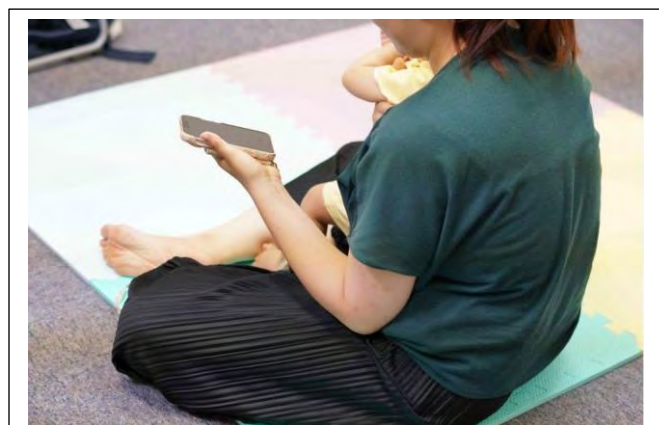
FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Fired Because the Boss Didn't Like Her Church

Knut Holdhus
August 12, 2024



Akari Kitayama (pseudonym), a woman in her 30s from the Tokyo metropolitan area

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Akari Kitayama (pseudonym), a woman in her 30s from the Tokyo metropolitan area

continued to pray for me.

After various ups and downs, I visited the church again around 2015 after a long absence. By chance, that day happened to be the day when the Holy Wine of forgiveness (for the absolution of sins) was being administered. After receiving the Holy Wine, it felt as if a weight had been lifted from my chest, and I was able to start attending church again.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. By the way, I heard that you got into trouble over something related to your faith and were fired from your job.



Shocking interview: Female young employee harassed and fired because of her religion

Originally published by the [Family Federation of Japan](#) 10th August 2024 on their [website ffwpu.jp](#).

Interviewer: Nice to meet you today. First of all, could you tell me how you came to believe (in the Family Federation)?

Kitayama: I am the second of six siblings and the second daughter. After I was born, my

mother was introduced to the [Family Federation](#), so I am considered a second-generation believer. Encouraged by my mother, I started attending worship services for children at the [Family Federation](#) from early elementary school. However, after entering high school, I gradually stopped going to church. About ten years after I stopped going to church, my father suffered a heart attack. It was a very critical situation, but at the church my mother wrote a prayer request for my father (strips of paper with wishes written on it, which are dedicated to heaven).

Suddenly, my father's condition improved, and he recovered. Eventually, he even returned to work, and the doctors were amazed at his recovery. Witnessing this miraculous recovery, my older and younger sisters, who had also stopped going to church, started attending again. Although I didn't return to church immediately, it seems my younger sister

Kitayama: Yes, I work in customer service, and about four or five years ago, I was working at a small shop in the Tokyo metropolitan area. I used to get along well with the male owner of the shop, and we had no problems working together. Initially, I felt that the workplace was comfortable to work in.

By the way, to organize my thoughts and feelings, I had been keeping a personal diary for a long time. At one point, I started bringing it to work so I could write in it during breaks, but one day, I accidentally left it at the shop. The owner found and read the diary, which included some of my complaints about the workplace. Right after that, I received a long text message from the owner about what I had written. That is when all kinds of trouble started.

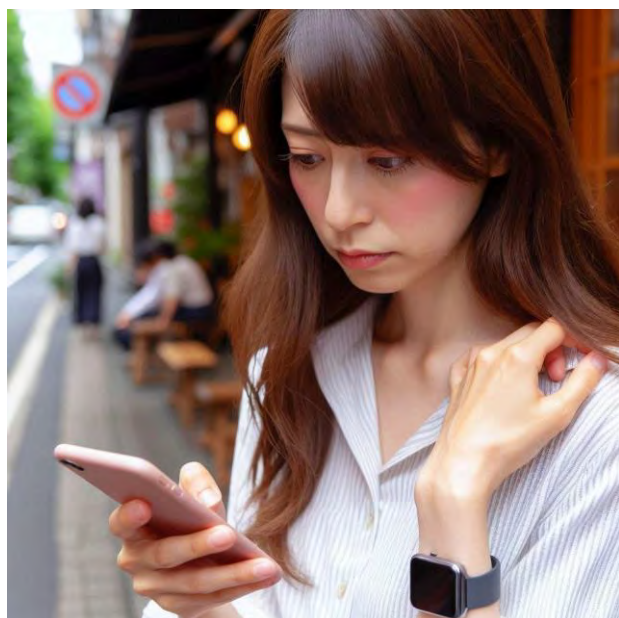
The diary also contained a lot of content related to

my faith, so the owner found out that I was a member of the [Family Federation](#). After that, through a messaging app the owner started sending me messages that were essentially a form of harassment.

Interviewer: What kind of messages did he send you?

Kitayama: For example, I received long messages about how my work attitude was bad, or that I shouldn't be in this store, or content that encouraged me to quit my job. I felt that the owner was trying to make me leave, so I decided that I absolutely wouldn't cave in and kept going to work, determined not to quit.

The owner never said anything (bad) directly to me; instead, I would always receive messages outside of working hours. It was tough, especially when such phone notifications wouldn't stop coming. At one point, I found out that the owner had told a mutual acquaintance, Ms. X (a customer of the store), "You should stop contacting [my real name], since she's a member of the [Unification Church](#)." Ms. X's husband is a Buddhist monk, and Ms. X herself is religious, so she understood me having faith in my religion. However, when I heard from her that the owner repeatedly brought up my religion, I realized that the owner wanted to make me quit because of my faith.



After reading my personal diary, the owner continued to send me text messages for about a month. During that time, we continued to see each other at the store as usual. I also went to my trade union, but eventually, I was fired for what I was told were company reasons.

Interviewer: Did the events at your previous workplace have any lasting impact?

Kitayama: I was fired from that job just before 2022, but even after the assassination of former Prime Minister Abe, I received messages from two or three mutual acquaintances (customers of the store) asking, "The owner was talking about the [Unification Church](#) - what's going on?" I had to explain the situation to each of them individually. Fortunately, it didn't damage my relationships with these acquaintances, but it was still stressful

knowing that the owner was continuing to talk about my faith to others.

Interviewer: Lastly, please tell us how you feel now.

Kitayama: When I look back at the messages the owner sent me, I still feel upset, remembering those times. I'm quite a strong-willed person, and I continued working at a new job after that trouble. But I think there are many people who, when faced with similar problems, hesitate to talk to someone or endure it without speaking up. I'm concerned that even if they're not fired like I was, more people are being bullied at work or school because of their faith.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for today!

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Mother: "Daughter's Suicide Because Of Media Bias"

August 11, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Media reports worsened relationship with daughter, leading to her suicide

Originally published by the Family Federation of Japan 10th August 2024 on their website ffwpu.jp.








Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to the interview today. First of all, can you tell us what year you joined the Family Federation, Ms. Nakata (not her real name)?


Nakata: I became a member in 2001. I was first introduced to the Unification Principle in 1988. When I heard about the "three stages of life" in the Unification Principle, namely life in the womb, life on earth, and life in heaven (the spiritual world), I thought, "This is what I have been looking for," and I began to study it in earnest. The Unification Principle was interesting, and I was happy to attend their lectures because I wanted to hear the rest as soon as possible. Then, to make a long story short, I officially joined in 2001.

Interviewer: I see. May I ask you to tell us about what happened to you after 2022?

Nakata: At the end of July 2022, my daughter, who was living with me, took her life. She was in her late 20s. Ever since she was a child, she was not very strong mentally and carried a lot of stress in her interpersonal

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relationships. That affected her health, and she suffered from physical ailments because of that. She stopped going to school in middle school and did not even go to high school, but later took exams so that she was able to get her high school diploma. She also went to a psychotherapist for a long time.

After becoming an adult, she did several part time jobs, but when she faced problems in relationships, her hands would chap, and she would get the hives. Each time she quit her job, the hives went away. This cycle kept repeating itself.



A photo taken in Gapyeong, South Korea with her young daughter (courtesy of Ms. Nakata). Photo: FFWPU

My daughter was happy to come with me when I invited her to church at an early age. Of my three children, she was the most involved in church events. My husband was not a member, and my daughter did not go to church as much after she became an adult, but she helped out when there were church events and went with me to Gapyeong, South Korea, every year, at a place considered holy by [Family Federation](#) members.

However, after the incident with former Prime Minister Abe on 8th July 2022, media reports on TV or online were very critical of the [Family Federation](#), and my daughter watched the reports all the time at home. I was very worried about her because she had just quit her job due to stress in her relationships at work, and she was very weak mentally at that time.



Negatively affected by biased media reports. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 11th August 2024.

After the 8th July incident, my daughter once asked me in a very strong tone of voice,

"How much are you in debt?!"

I had borrowed a little money for my parents' funeral, but I told her that there was nothing to worry about. She never asked me (about my finances) after that. There was also a time when I was chatting with a neighbour, who is also a [church](#) member, at the front door my house. My daughter slammed the door to her room so loudly we could hear it throughout the house.



Finding shocking messages on smart phone. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 12th August 2024.

And then, in the latter half of July, my daughter took her own life at home. When I opened the messaging app on my daughter's smartphone, I found messages exchanged with her closest friend, where she wrote things like, "My mother is donating money to the [Unification Church](#) and getting into debt," and "Is she trying to use me?" It was incredibly painful to read those words, as they showed she didn't trust me.

Interviewer: That must have been very tough for you.

Nakata: My daughter, who enjoyed going to church the most among my children, did not have any ill will that I know of towards the [church](#) before the events of 2022. She attended [church](#) events and workshops several times a year and seemed to find peace of mind in learning things from the [church](#) and interacting with [church](#) members.

Since the incident, while continually hearing the one-sided claims of those referred to as "former believers" I believe my daughter's heart was

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those referred to as "former believers", I believe my daughter's heart was deeply affected by feelings of resentment toward the church, driving her to the point of exhaustion. Right now, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of helplessness, but I think the only thing I can do is live each day to the fullest, not just for myself but for my daughter as well.

Interviewer: Thank you for the interview today.

Featured image above: Yoko Nakata (pseudonym), a woman in her 60s from the Tokyo metropolitan area. Photo: FFWPU

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