

Dallas Rally for Freedom Ride Draws a Crowd of Media and Clergy - Seijin Tranberg

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Talk-show host Ester Davis introduced Seijin Tranberg (right) and read a proclamation from Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings.

Deprogramming victims in Japan and their friends in the United States finally got mainstream media attention on January 2, 2012 as a crowd of ministers and human rights activists welcomed the “Faith, Freedom and Family Tour” to Dallas. Seijin Tranberg and Joshua Wildman parked their bikes at City Hall Plaza during their 2,300 mile bike ride across the United States to raise awareness of religious persecution of minority groups in general and Unificationists in particular. The event was covered by Fox, NBC and three other local TV stations and attended by reporters from daily newspapers in Dallas and Fort Worth.

Against a backdrop of Japanese women wearing brightly-colored Japanese *kimonos*, TV talk-show Host Ester Davis read a proclamation of welcome from Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings and served as MC for the rally. Ms. Juanita Wallace, president of the Dallas branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) told the crowd: “The Dallas branch of the NAACP stands with any group that seeks social, economic, educational or faith justice. In fighting for justice we know that often times people don’t stand up for themselves, but I am one of those who doesn’t hesitate to stand up for them, because often people need the strength of the stronger to realize that they have that potential too.”



Dallas ladies from Japan or from Japanese parents sported their kimonos to remind the Japanese victims of their support.

Bishop Harold Edwards, leader of the Church of the Living God in Dallas gave the keynote address in which he said the following: “‘Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere’ – the words written by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his letter from the Birmingham jail in 1963 – come to my mind when I consider the Dallas stopover of two modern-day Freedom Riders. Both are 22-year-old Japanese-Americans. Mr. Seijin Tranberg of Atlanta, and Mr. Joshua Wildman of Los Angeles, decided to forego spending the Christmas holidays with their families so that they could ride their bicycles from Atlanta to Los Angeles for a cause: which they call ‘Faith, Freedom and Family.’”



The bikers rode their bikes into City Plaza on day 17 of their 2,300-mile ride from Atlanta to Los Angeles.

Dedicated to Reconciling Enemies

He continued: “We should note the relevance of the peace-making work of Father Sun Myung Moon and Mother Hak Ja Han Moon of Korea, who introduced the parents of these young men to each other, and who joined them in holy matrimony in 1982. The grandparents of these young men may have been mortal enemies in 1941, but their parents dedicated themselves to reconciling former enemies and building a world of peace, and even more: One Family under God.

“Violent persecution of Unificationist members in America is a thing of the past, but it goes on in Japan, where every few weeks a young man or a young woman is abducted and forced to undergo weeks or months of psychological torture until he or she recants her faith. Yet the people of faith who survive this torture and return to the Unification Church produce wonderful families and children such as the young man with us today, Mr. Jeffrey White of Houston, and very much like Seijin Tranberg and Joshua Wildman. True love and true faith give these victims of religious persecution the courage to endure, sometimes for years until they can regain their freedom.”

Mr. Fred Jones, a Christian activist for at-risk youth, told the rally: “What these young men are doing is what youth have always done. They have led us into revolutionary changes that adults were too afraid of, or too complacent to initiate.”



Mrs. Taeko White gave her testimony of resisting forced confinement by a misguided minister in 1981,

Testimony of Taeko White

The gathering heard from Mrs. Taeko White from Houston, who survived abduction and deprogramming in 1981. She told the rally:

“In 1981, my parents hired a Christian minister and his team in Tokyo to break my faith. This man locked me up in the dark, cold basement of his church and threatened me that he would inject me with the truth. I told him to his face that there was no truth in him at all and no love. I was locked up with two other young people who said they had lost their faith in our church. But they were so sad and miserable, and they were his prisoners, too. I was never more scared in my life. Even today, whenever I think back on that time, I get goose bumps. After it was clear that my parents were not going to pay the minister many thousands of dollars he wanted as a fee, he let me go, and I returned to the Unification Church.



Mr. Fred Jones, left, praised the bike riders for taking the initiative to publicize a problem that needed to be aired.

“I never regretted that decision. My life has seen its share of ups and downs, but Heavenly Father has seen me through the night. God has blessed me with two beautiful children who are proud members of Generation Peace, the generation that is showing America the way to a better future. Seijin Tranberg and Joshua Wildman, and my son, Jeffrey White, and many kids in Dallas today have a lot in common. They have moms from Japan and dads from the United States. These three boys had grandparents who were enemies in 1941. When I married Jeffrey’s father in 1982, both he and I felt that we were standing on a bridge of peace built by Father and Mother Moon. Seijin, Joshua and Jeffrey are special young men. They are vessels of God’s love, and they know it. That’s why they are making this cross-country journey across the heart of America.

“I feel the deep heart of America today, and even more when I look at the beautiful people in this gathering, I feel the deep heart of Texas. The Freedom Riders have come to the right place to make their statement which is being heard today in Washington and Tokyo. Thank you Seijin, thank you Joshua, for loving Japan as much as I do, and for reaching out to the people of my adopted state of Texas to spread the word: friendship between nations is too small goal. Our goal is one family under God.”



Mr. Jeffrey White of Houston honored his mother for showing courage and faith during her abduction experience in Tokyo.

Mr. Jeffrey White, 24, read a tribute to his mother at the rally:

“I want to take this opportunity to honor my mom for her faith and courage in 1981. Needless to say, I was not even a spark in my mom’s eye in 1981. Neither was my sister Ashley. My mom’s eyes were on God. From what she tells me, that’s all she could think about when she was going through the deprogramming. It’s tragic but a fact that every month in Japan a young member about my age gets abducted and held against their will until they recant their faith. This must end. With the help of our U.S. Congress and the help of people of conscience in Japan, this will end.”



Bishop Harold Edwards of the Church of the Living God gave the keynote address.

Seijin Tranberg's Speech

Seijin Tranberg gave the rally a speech similar to the one he gave at the Georgia State Capitol at the kickoff of the tour on Dec. 15, 2011. Tranberg told the gathering:

“About 30 years ago, hundreds of American citizens were abducted and harassed for weeks or months in an effort to break their faith. Most of these folks resisted this cruelty, returned to the Unification Church, got married, and raised fantastic children. The people who were paid to abduct Unification Church members stopped doing it about 20 years ago after several of them were arrested and went to jail. But in Japan the abductions and faith-breaking still goes on. No one has been prosecuted. The Japanese media has refused to report this cruel phenomenon to the public.

“Thank goodness we have a free press in the United States, and thank goodness that Americans are proud to be the home of faith, family and freedom. I see all of these virtues embodied in my mom and dad. To be honest, I owe my parents for so many blessings that have come my way, especially for setting an example of hard work and for giving me an example of faith and a sense of vision.



NAACP Branch President Juanita Wallace encouraged the gathering of human-rights activists to stand up for their friends in faith who are in need of "the strength of the stronger."

“The church culture greatly has benefitted me. But thousands of my fellow believers in Japan are not so lucky as I am to be able to practice their faith freely. This is not to knock the great people of Japan, either. I love the culture and history of my mother's home country. I love both America and Japan. Religious freedom is guaranteed both by the U.S. Constitution and by the Japanese Constitution. The difference is, in Japan the law is not enforced to give all citizens due process.

“I am making this ride so that I can tell a story that hasn't been told. I want to give a voice to the saints of every persecuted religious community in the world, and there are many, I'm sure you know – Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, and new religious movements. But especially I want to honor the suffering saints in Japan who have suffered for more than 40 years almost in silence. They are victims of unfounded fear, media misrepresentation, and the greed of lawyers.



TV crews from five Dallas stations filmed the rally.

“Japan needs to do better. The Japanese government can do better, and they owe it to all their citizens to live up to their own ideals of fair treatment for all, religious freedom for all. My mother is good. She comes from a people who are good – so good, in fact, that they should be better.”

Ms. Davis the MC told Familyfed.org a few hours afterwards that the rally was a moving event for her and others. "It was such a stirring event that it's still shaking the city. It is still on the minds of the millions of viewers who saw it reported, and that's because it resonates with your spirit and makes you want to do something."