

Citizens of New Mexico Honor Freedom Riders Seijin Tranberg and Joshua Wildman in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Yoshie Manaka
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Inspired by Seijin Tranberg and Joshua Wildman's bike tour against religious intolerance, citizens of New Mexico held a press conference on Sunday, Jan. 15, 2012, in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day and highlighted the issue of human-rights violations in Japan.



The press conference, which received television coverage on KOB Channel 4, highlighted Dr. King's theme: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Rev. Jesse Dompheh of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ALCLC), received support from the New Mexico Dr. Martin Luther King Commission to speak against the injustice experienced by members of the Unification Church in Japan.

"Justice is not just for Americans, it's for all our brothers and sisters around the world," Rev. Dompheh told the rally. "Today our brothers and sisters in Japan are suffering because their religious freedom is being taken away and their civil rights are being violated."

Mrs. Reiko Araki, dressed in a *kimono*, said her friends' families are being divided by criminal deprogrammers who want to make fast money through religious intolerance and bigotry.

New Mexico State Senator Mark Boitano decried elected officials in Japan for "looking away" while their citizens' religious freedom and rights are being decimated.

Approximately 15 New Mexicans joined in the press conference and marched alongside fellow supporters of human rights to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who gave his life fighting the injustices of prejudice and racism.

At the time of the press conference, Unificationist freedom riders Tranberg, 22, and Wildman, 21, were cycling from El Paso to Las Cruces in New Mexico. They are slightly behind their projected travel schedule due to an unforeseen snowstorm in Big Spring, Texas, yet they are facing challenges with optimism.

"We were in the middle of the desert, but you would never have known it because of all the snow,"

Tranberg said. "It was crazy. We had a foot of snow. It was a record snow fall for the area."

Despite extreme weather, sleepless nights and broken bikes, they unflaggingly continue their journey. "We actually just got some support from a community up in Unification Church District 6, which includes Chicago, Ohio and Indiana," said Tranberg. "They're willing to sponsor a support driver for us. Renee Martinez, a second-generation Unificationist, followed us for some time in Texas and it was a huge blessing."

Tranberg began his cross-country tour for "Faith, Family and Freedom" as a protest to illegal faith-breaking practices. "While some may say this is for 'religious freedom,' I'd like to think of it as a fight for the human conscience. 'Freedom of conscience,' so to speak for everyone around the world," said Tranberg.

"The fact that a 34-year-old woman was abducted two weeks ago in Japan underscores the urgency of our Freedom Ride and the upcoming rally in Phoenix at Arizona State University," Tranberg told the UC Community Newsletter by cell phone. "Here we have a graduate of a law school and someone who has been active in the Unification Church for 13 years getting dragged into some basement for weeks of psychological harassment. Why? Because she wanted to marry a Korean man, because she wanted to have a marriage and children that would reflect her dream of the Kingdom of God on earth. This is outrageous.

"There is also an issue of academic freedom. This young lady, like hundreds of other Unificationist students in Japan, had to keep her church affiliation a secret for fear of facing discrimination by fellow students and faculty at her law school. That is wrong!" Tranberg said on January 18, 2012 from a stopping point on the highway near the Arizona border with New Mexico.