

Second-Generation Unification Church Believers Discriminated in Japan 3

Masumi Fukuda
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To learn about the Unification Church journalists interview... anti-cult journalists. Here anti-Unification-Church reporter Eight Suzuki (left) is interviewed by the magazine "Bungeishunju."

Because of the media campaign after the Abe assassination, some young believers had their job offers cancelled, lost their jobs, and were divorced by their spouses. [Original Article at BITTER WINTER](#)

Kiaki Kojima is another blessed child, a second-generation believer whose parents were married in a collective wedding. Her mother is Japanese and her father is Korean. She currently works as an employee for a Family Federation church. She also expressed her thoughts in her petition: "I am a second-generation churchgoer. I am deeply distressed by what I read and watch in the media day after day. My parents met and married in a 'blessed marriage' of the Unification Church. Without the church, I would not have been born. Whenever the church's dignity is denied, I feel as if my parents' way of life and my existence are also denied... I respect my parents, who speak out for Japan and for the world. Since I was a child, I looked forward to going to church on Sundays. The church members always treated me well, like family. Don't take this comfort of the heart away from us. I was really shocked to hear from the leader of Japan, Prime Minister Kishida, that 'the former Unification Church is an anti-social organization.' Please, please do not think that the information spread now by the media tells the real story of the church. I hope you will listen to both sides and come to a fair judgment."

Yoko Ueda grew up with parents who were blessed only after Yoko's birth. She currently works for a church-affiliated company. This is the statement Ueda prepared, hoping she would be able to read it as a representative of the believers.

"I am a second-generation believer, born and raised by parents who are faithful members of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (the former Unification Church). For as long as I can remember, going to church has been a part of my life. I have been observing the church for about twenty years until today. We all know that the church has flaws and problems. In fact, I think we second-generation members know better than others what needs to be fixed in our church. Of course, the church has changed a lot in the last twenty years. The change is still ongoing. I have watched my parents strive to improve their mutual love and characters through the teachings of the church. I truly respect them, and believe they have a great personality like no one else. I truly believe that it is because of the Unification Church and the Family Federation that today I have a family filled with happiness."

"What is being said and reported in Japanese society today, Ueda's text went on to say, does not represent the church as it really is. Why are some trying to dissolve a church which brings so much joy to our hearts while eliciting public sympathy for the assassin who took the life of former Prime Minister Abe? Why do you only listen to some lawyers and ex-members whose ideology conflicts with ours, but not to the voices of those who remain in the church? Are we church members second-class citizens? Are we a group of evil people comparable to the indiscriminate murderers of Aum Shinrikyo? Are we not even allowed to exist? Some churches were forced to move out of their premises, and some stores that we used to do business with stopped selling goods to us. And that is not all. Some of us have been rejected by higher education

institutions, had their job offers cancelled by the companies that made them, were forced to resign from their jobs, and even were divorced or attempted suicide. Since we are religious people, many believers grit their teeth and bear the situation, no matter how unreasonable the treatment they receive is. However, when I think of the church that has taken care of me since I was a child, and of many lovely church members, my feeling is that I cannot remain silent and do nothing about it. For this reason, I am submitting a petition signed by 23,000 believers today."

As Ueda claimed in her petition, the extremely biased media coverage of the former Unification Church has deeply hurt the Family Federation members, both first-generation and second-generation.



The recently released book by disgruntled Unification Church ex-member Sayuri Ogawa. [Masumi Fukuda](#) and [Bitter Winter](#) exposed her story as false.

"We hear from believers of our parents' generation that watching TV really makes them feel distressed, depressed, hyperventilating, and mentally tortured, Ueda said. Also, some first-generation believers feel sorry for the second-generation members, for letting all this happen to them."

"At first, Kojima told me, when I watched news that were so different from the reality of the Family Federation, I thought that they misunderstood us, that I had to clear up the misunderstanding quickly, and I wondered how I could tell the truth. So I have been on YouTube, and have been sending out information earnestly. But gradually, I began to realize that it was not just a misunderstanding in good faith. They had a clear idea of what message they wanted to convey, and were only looking for witnesses who would confirm that idea. What we, second-generation members favorable to the Church, would say would not matter."

Actually, disgruntled ex-members, both first- and second-generation, are everywhere in the media. They all use pseudonyms and are extremely critical of the church. The media present a stereotypical image of the ex-members, and manage to keep the current members invisible from the public opinion.

"But the media, Kojima said, are aware of the criticism that current active believers are nowhere to be seen in their reports, so they are actually looking for some of them to be interviewed. It seems that the believers who are on Twitter are being contacted one after another."

However, the media try to pick and choose believers fitting their agenda. They can be a little bit positive about the church. But their words and actions should express some doubts, and they should absolutely mention something negative too. Otherwise, the media would quickly cut them off, or would edit their comments. This is how they operate. Some current believers may be happy to break free of their invisibility and become visible for one moment only, even if the media would quote only one remark out of context. But this is not the reality of them.

Kojima reported that "a friend who fights valiantly on Twitter told me that even if they contact current active members, when they realize that they have a firm faith and are not wavering, they just say, 'Okay,' and hang up."

As a result of the news reports, believers are subjected to unjustified discriminatory labels such as "anti-social" or "cultists" every day. This is hate speech. Paradoxically, it is the anti-Unification-Church camp and the members of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, including attorney Masaki

Kito, who calls himself a "human rights lawyer," who consistently violate human rights by spreading hate speech.

Ueda explained it in detail. "Those who had some direct contact with the Family Federation believers and have been exposed to our doctrines would never use these derogatory labels, she said. The image of the Family Federation members circulating in our society is that believers are brainwashed robots, but in reality, they are kind-hearted and humane persons. I would ask you to consider that these labels are causing unspeakable pain to second-generation believers, who are in the midst of their sensitive adolescence, and are fundamentally denied to be who they are. Current media reports are a mixture of exaggerations, lies, and speculation. Please stop hurting the members of the Family Federation. I want people to know what the church really is."

Saito also sadly stated, "I just went overseas to do fundraising, missionary work, and volunteer for God and my fellow human beings. I have been proud of my activities, but now I feel like I have been told all I did was evil. If there have been past faults of the church, I feel sorry for them, but it is sad and distressing that the media are only telling the most negative part of the story."

Kojima also expressed her disappointment and frustration. "We did not kill anyone, and we do not fit the definition of 'anti-social' at all. So I am shocked to be called anti-social. If I were not a second-generation Family Federation member myself, after reading the media I might also have accused them and concluded I did not want to get involved with the church. However, what is being reported in the media is far from the truth, and this is very sad. I don't know what I can do now to make people understand, I am really at a loss for words."



Second-generation and first-generation members of the Unification Church at a 2013 rally in Japan

Once, reporters followed Kojima when she went to church. Whenever she went outside of the church, reporters with cameras would follow her, asking questions such as, "Were you told how to vote in the elections?", "What do you think of large donations?", and keep following her around.

"I was very eager to tell them the truth about the church, she said. However, I knew that even if I answered these questions, my answers would be cut out of the interview if I would not tell them what they wanted to hear. I wanted to talk with them and at the same time I felt I should not. This dilemma was painful."

Serious discrimination is also taking place. As I mentioned earlier, Kojima is currently an employee of a Family Federation church. Her friend, who is also an employee, lost her room because her rental contract for the apartment was not renewed. The landlord stated that she was an employee of the Family Federation, and they could not rent to a member of the former Unification Church, so the contract was terminated. After that, she visited several real estate agencies, but could not find even a room to rent. She was desperate and asked her acquaintances, "Do you know of any place where I can stay?" Soon thereafter, she was able to find an apartment she could share with somebody else, until finally she found her own place to rent.

There are also cases of students who graduated from a former-Unification Church-affiliated university in South Korea who have had their job offers cancelled by Japanese companies, one after the other.

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Second-Generation Unification Church Believers Discriminated in Japan. 2. A Biased Agency for Cultural Affairs

03/15/2023 MASUMI FUKUDA

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When dealing with the Agency, second-generation Family Federation believers felt discriminated and humiliated.

by Masumi Fukuda

Article 2 of 4. Read [article 1](#).



The Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo. Credits.

The government clearly did whatever it could to downplay the petition favorable to the Unification Church/Family Federation, while promoting the one against it. Once again, I would like to say that this was a case of discrimination. Of course, Family Federation members were outraged by this incident. Even some non-members and politically conservative netizens commented that "This is a discrimination" on Twitter.

I, the author of this article, called the Agency for Cultural Affairs both to protest and to conduct an interview. I spoke to Hiroaki Ishizaki, the head of the Division of Religious Affairs and the person who had cheerfully received the anti-Family-Federation online petition from the hands of Ogawa.

"This is unfair, I said. Why did you accept their online petition but not the Family Federation's petition hand-signed with real names? According to the media, you answered that you did it 'because otherwise the reporters would make a fuss.' Is that true?"

Director Ishizaki answered that, "I got the feeling that the Family Federation did not really want a face-to-face meeting." "This is not true, I replied. I was told they wanted to bring the petition in person." "No, this was not the case," he insisted stubbornly.

When I asked him, "An online petition should carry less weight than a hand-signed one, isn't it?" he answered, "No, for me they are the same." He then asked unpleasantly, "Why are you calling me? The Unification Church should contact me directly." He must have known that the Family Federation had decided to keep a low profile in its dealings with the MEXT, which is the very body that will take a decision on the dissolution request. I believe he was aware of this when he answered me.

Yet, this was the same Director Ishizaki who cheered and encouraged those who brought to him the petition full of pseudonyms, and told them, "I would make sure to gather enough evidence to avoid that the request [for legally dissolving the former Unification Church] will be overturned in court."

I was left with the impression that, while knowing that their position is unreasonable, the MEXT officers have already decided that, no matter what the results of their investigation will be, they will go on and seek the dissolution of the Family Federation.



The entrance of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo. Credits.

Let us listen to the earnest feelings of three second-generation believers who are active members of the Family Federation.

Yuri Saito has a regular job outside of the Federation. "Belonging to this church, she said, has been my reason for living and my joy, so before the assassination of former Prime Minister Abe, I used to tell my friends in my workplace that I was a believer."

The Unification Church has been criticized since before Saito was born. However, it seems that her friends did not have a bad image of the church. "Whenever my friends were worried about their life or needed for help, she told me, I suggested they should learn about the Unification Principle, because it might change their life. Some freely accepted to come to the church. The people I met through the volunteer work I did with my church friends also seemed to have a good impression of us, and I think we were able to build trustworthy relationships with them. But after the Abe assassination it became difficult for me to tell others that I am a Family Federation believer."



A blessing ceremony in the Unification Church, 1999. Source: [tparents.org](https://www.tparents.org).

Saito is a "blessed" second-generation child, meaning she is born of parents who participated in a collective wedding. "I went through a wild time during my school years, she reported, and I kept away from the Family Federation for a long period of time. But I came back, because I thought this was the place where I belonged. Now this place may disappear. It would mean losing my home and my family. This is why, when the idea of the petition came up, I wrote my text and signed it, hoping to show what the Family Federation is really all about, despite all the bad things that are said in Japanese society. I did not think of any disadvantage that might come to me from signing the petition. Rather, I was willing to do whatever I could do."

This is what Saito wrote in her petition: "I was born and raised as a blessed second-generation believer of the Family Federation, formerly known as the Unification Church. To be honest, there was a period in my life when I kept away from it and I too wished it would disappear. But then I told myself that I did not want to come to conclusions about the church based only on my own superficial feelings, without studying the issue more deeply. I did not want to rely on what my parents told me either. So, I started studying the doctrine and history of the church on my own, because I wanted to understand things more clearly. And I came back. That is why the idea of a dissolution of this organization is now so distressing to me. I think it may be true that in the past some in the church might have caused social unrest and trouble. It might have happened before I was born. Even so, I want to take responsibility for the future as a young believer. Maybe I will not do great things. However, the Family Federation is my family and the place that made me

strong, protected me, loved me in the time of need, even when I distrusted those around me and wanted to die. I respectfully ask you not to dissolve the organization."

Saito's generation has never been involved in the so-called "spiritual sales" the fraudulent business practices some members of the Unification Church have been accused of. Nor have they been involved in any missionary work where the true identity of the church was concealed, another frequent accusation against the movement. Nor have they ever been forced by their church to reach a quota for the donations.

They are not responsible for incidents of the past. However, because of the tremendous slander by the anti-Unification Church camp and the media, they are now concerned about things that might have happened before they were born, and even feel guilty about them. It is too much.

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Masumi Fukuda

Masumi Fukuda was born in Yokohama in 1956. She graduated from the Department of Sociology of Rikkyo University. After working for a specialty magazine and a magazine production company, she became a freelance journalist. She has reported and written about crime, Russia, and other topics. Her books include "Stalin: A Portrait of His Family" (Bungei Shunju), "Russia, an Assassination State: In Search of a Missing Journalist" (Shinchosha), "The True Nature of Political Correctness" (Hojosha), and others. In 2007, she won the 6th Shincho Documentary Award for "Fabrication: The Truth About the 'Murder Teacher' in Fukuoka" (Shinchosha).

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