



A church steeple rises proudly above the treetops and is screened against the hills in this serene photograph made in Brentwood, Tenn.

## Congressmen accuse cults of brainwashing

**Newhouse News Service**  
WASHINGTON — Two congressmen have met with justice department officials to persuade them to examine charges that some religious cults brainwash their members.

Reps. Robert Giaino, D-Conn., and Leo J. Ryan, D-Calif., brought with them authorities on the legal, psychological and ethical implications of the brainwashing charges that have been made by parents and former cult members.

Robert L. Keuch, deputy assistant attorney general for the criminal division, and several aides represented the justice department at the two-hour meeting last month.

"The meeting was requested because many parents of young-adult cult members are convinced that their children have been brought into and kept in these cults against their will," said Giaino. He described the meeting as informal and informational. The justice department had no comment on the meeting.

Among other participants were Prof. Richard Delgado, University of Washington Law School; Dr. Colin Williams, dean of Yale Divinity School, and Dr. Margaret Singer, a San Francisco psychologist.

Earlier this year, more than 40 lawmakers wrote attorney general Griffin Bell requesting such a meeting. Neither that letter nor Giaino's statement mentioned any cult by name, but the statement said

charges of brainwashing have been raised "against several seemingly religious cults with which we are all familiar."

Giaino acknowledged that the issue was a delicate one — that one person's cult is another's religion and what may seem to be brainwashing may be sincere religious conviction.

"Nobody need tell me that this is a complicated and sensitive issue," he continued. "Many parents will think that nothing was accomplished at this meeting, and many civil libertarians will condemn its occurring in the first place."

"I requested this meeting because I am convinced that our federal law enforcement officials must consider this problem in greater detail than they seem to have been doing in the past."

The justice department last year told Giaino that it had received letters from parents who claimed their adult children had been brainwashed by religious groups.

According to court cases and newspaper accounts, most of the charges have been lodged against the Unification Church of Rev. Sun Myung Moon, a self-styled prophet and militant anti-Communist.

Brainwashing first came to public attention during the Korean War. Generally, it is defined as forcible indoctrination to induce someone to give up basic political, social or religious beliefs and attitudes and to ac-

cept contrasting, regimented ideas. Chinese and North Korean Communists used brainwashing techniques on American prisoners of war.

Giaino said many parents and friends of cult members are frustrated by what they consider governmental indifference.

"Their frustration has led to such activities as kidnapping and deprogramming," he noted. "While I do not condone these actions, I am concerned about the entire situation, and I hope that justice will not assume there is nothing it can do in response to allegations being raised against the cults."

THE TAMPA TIMES, Saturday, June 4, 1977

## Cult leader found guilty of kidnaping Miami woman

**WALTHAM, Miss. (UPI)** — The director of a religious commune called the Church at Sapa was convicted Wednesday of kidnaping a 31-year-old woman from Miami, Fla., in 1975 and holding her captive on an 85-acre farm near Eupora.

Webster County circuit court judge Clarence E. Morgan Jr. sentenced John Henson to 10 years in prison. Prior to sentencing, Morgan told Henson that the restraint of an American citizen without any right whatsoever is a very serious crime.

"There is an easy and admissible way provided by law ... for restraining one who would harm himself or someone else," Morgan told Henson. "You had no authority to do that."

Charlene Hill testified she was taken against her will from Miami, where she was living with her three children, and flown to the commune where her husband had lived for three months. She said she was frequently tied to beds and chairs and beaten as Henson and others at the Church of Sapa attempted to perform a type of exorcism on her.

Henson denied the charges and claimed Mrs. Hill came to the commune on her own free will and "asked me if I'd cast demons out of her." He said he told her that he could not cast out demons, that she would have to do that. He denied practicing any form of exorcism, but he admitted Mrs. Hill at times was restrained to beds and chairs to "prevent her from hurting herself or someone else."

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