

Cults in Canada:

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"When you meet the friendliest people you have ever known, who introduce you to the most loving group of people you've ever encountered, and you find the leader to be the most inspired, caring, compassionate and understanding person you've ever met, and then you learn that the cause of the group is something you never dared hope could be accomplished, and all this sounds too good to be true - it probably is too good to be true! Don't give up your education, your hopes and ambitions to follow a rainbow."

Jeannie Mills,
Survivor-Jonestown, Guyana

Over three million young people, the majority being university and college students, have fallen victim to one of North America's most extensive social phenomena known as the cult movement.

The cult members credit the growth of cults to a spiritual rebirth and closeness to God, whereas, those who have escaped the cults claim highly sophisticated mind control techniques are the source behind the success of cult recruitment.

The most alarming information on the growing cult membership is the type of people they are recruiting.

"The kinds of people cults want are middle to upper middle class kids with a college or university education between the ages of 18-25 years old and who are going through some change in life," explained Christine Demkowitz, a former member of The Way International, a cult that can boast a following of over 40,000 members.

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The power and membership of the cults is growing daily in the United States and is now becoming a strong and well organized force in Canada. Although there are no definite statistics on cult membership, an article in Cincinnati magazine estimated Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church at about 30,000 U.S. followers; the Hare Krishnas with approximately 10,000; the Children of God and the Scientologists both with memberships in the thousands. These cults have been singled out as the strongest and most dangerous cults.

The Way International has often escaped the negativity that the other cults receive from the media despite its 40,000 membership and its definite "cultist" activities focusing on mind control. "Part of the reason is that The Way has been successful at selling itself to many as a Biological Research Center. Slick promotional brochures and colour movies paint idyllic pictures of cult members studying at Way College campuses in Indiana and Kansas, hiking on Way retreats in Colorado and New Mexico, or jogging at the

20,000 people attend - is coming up soon."

Demkowitz explained that at the Rock of Ages held in the U.S., speakers and musical bands combine their talents to make the weekend a super hype session where they get a lot of money and they get a lot of people to commit their lives to The Way International.

"It's amazing! I have seen kids go in there who just want to go to a rock festival and at the end of the week they call up their parents for money that will allow them to go on a one year recruiting program. At this point they stop going to school, quit their jobs and go W.O.W. which

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ter at The Way's Rome City, Indiana campus: "It all looks so wholesome."

Demkowitz explained the reason for the college and university student's vulnerability to the recruitment techniques of the cults. "Most college and university students are experiencing some sort of change which makes them highly susceptible to the cults." She listed the move from high school to university, leaving home, exam periods and entering the work force as periods of transition that make students highly susceptible.

"It is a very transient stage and the cult preys on that. They

is short for their one year recruiting program called Word Over the World."

Christine never gave her life to the Way International although she might have if her mother had not rescued her during her one year recruiting program.

Christine was the ideal prey for the cults. After graduating from Western University in May 1980 with a degree in physical education, Christine moved to Toronto where she got a part time job selling lottery tickets. Christine was definitely in a transient stage living in a new city, with all of its unknown surroundings, away from her friends and trying to get by on a part time job. The fact that Chris knew very little about cults added to her already high susceptibility to recruitment.

Christine said she was approached and recruited by "two of the nicest people you would ever want to meet." They introduced themselves as positive young people and after talking with Christine for a while they asked her if she wanted to go out with them for a beer that night. The girl was from Vancouver and the boy was a graduate from a Canadian University.

The following day the girl asked Chris out to a coffee house where Chris got her first exposure to the fact that her new acquaintances were involved in some kind of religious organization.

"The coffee house consisted of a couple of songs and some skits, something you might find in high school or any other church function," said Chris.

Although Chris felt a strangeness about the new group of people she was with, she could not quite place them and because they were so friendly

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zeroing in on college and university students



she had no reason to doubt them.

"They were so nice and at the worst they were harmless, no matter what I thought of them, I did not think they were harmful at all. The girl continued to call me every day. We played sports together, we went to the beach and went dancing," said Chris.

Christine began to trust the group and became increasingly involved with them. "They were so nice, they seemed to have a direction in life and they had a lot of answers to a lot of questions," said Chris.

Christine was introduced to the cult after her friends convinced her to attend a half hour lecture called PFAL (Power For Abundant Living). Christine sat through the half hour seminar that turned out to be an entire evening of songs and testimonies about how this class had changed people's lives.

"You know the old, I was an alcoholic and now that I have taken the PFAL class I am a wonderful and upstanding citizen in the community," said Chris.

The half hour lecture was actually only the first half hour

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of a 36 hour course called PFAL. "This 36 hour course is The Way's main indoctrination and by the end it teaches you how to speak in tongues. The way that The Way International teaches it, (speaking in tongues) it is definitely a mind control technique used to put yourself in a trance like state and become very susceptible to the suggestions of the group," said Chris.

"The Way International claims speaking in tongues does many things. They claim it removes doubt, worry and fear, which it does, but it removes everything else along with it," said Demkowitz.

Christine explained that speaking in tongues works like a jamming device in the cultist's mind so that if he has a problem or if he is questioning something all he has to do is speak in tongues for a while and it stops his analysis process. "When you open your eyes you forget what the problem even was," said Chris.

This is just the beginning of the cult's mind control techniques. While speaking in tongues blocks the member's ability to analyse or question problems, a low protein diet and sleep deprivation slows down the brains' ability to rationalize. Love bombing by other members of the group and peer pressure combine to force the new recruit into submission to the group.

Demkowitz says the mind control is the greatest evil in the cults. "The PFAL is the main indoctrination of The Way, the mind control is the issue. It is not a

religious question in my mind, because if you want to believe that this rock is going to give you salvation, then that is fine as long as you decide by your own free will to worship that rock," said Chris.

After Chris took the class in Toronto she went to the Rock of Ages, but before going to the festival she remembers that in three weeks she had stopped living with her sister, had moved into a house of "believers" where she was sleeping on the floor alongside the believers, had stopped looking for a job and had given up her life to serve God with the Way International. "So in fact, my whole existence was based around the Way International," said Demkowitz.

One of the interesting things that is included on the list for college is a gun.

On her one year recruiting program Chris was sent to Ottawa. "Cults are very interested in separating your connection with reality and one way to do that is to do it by separating you from your family and friends. All they have to do is

claim that God told them that I should be in Ottawa, so I went."

Chris' sister could not believe her when she was told that Chris was going to Ottawa but Chris thought that it was satan acting through her sister that caused her to question Chris' reason for leaving.

While in Ottawa, Chris took another drastic step towards the trap that had been set by the cult. She had committed herself to a four year Bible Study College which is run by The Way and trains the elite corps of Way members for leadership roles in the cult. "These people are ready to lay down their lives for The Way International," said Chris.

In preparation for the college, Chris was collecting all that was needed which was spelled out for her on a two page list. "They tell you to put names on all your clothes. Men bring boxer shorts, women bring briefs, I mean they even tell you what kind of underwear to bring with you," said Christine who explained that this was just another way to stop the member's thinking process.

The importance of extreme thought control by the cult is made evident in a Cincinnati magazine's example.

"Don't think" cultist are warned, "Satan uses your thoughts to trick you." When corps members at The Way College of Emporia were ordered outside for a late night training session several years ago, most appeared in sweat suits and tennis shoes, prepared to run. "You're thinking again," their leader thundered. "Did I tell you were going to run?" Later

the group was led to a muddy field on campus and drilled in calisthenics. "Hit your stomachs!" the leader shouted... "Stand up and run in place...Hit your backs."

One cultist recalls lying on her back in the deep mud, thinking she might someday be called on to fight communists under similar conditions. A moment later, she noticed a thumping noise behind her, like the sound of muffled drum beats. Turning her head she discovered the source of the sound: an entire section had followed the order literally. More than a hundred were standig rod-straight, pounding their backs with their fists. "It turned my stomach," she said.

"One of the interesting things that is included on the list for the college is a gun. I was looking for a gun to bring to this college. Now a rational person might ask, why would a Biblical Research and Teaching Ministry want you to have a gun?" explained Demkowitz.

The Way International claims the gun is used for a hunter training course but, it is interesting that Chris told The Silhouette that the members are trained in the three marksman positions.

While Christine was in Ottawa her mother contacted her to attempt to convince Chris to return home. Chris explained to her mother that she had a commitment to God and a certain spiritual field which she

Former members of the Moonies (Unification Church) and the Hare Krishnas had the same or very similar experiences that Chris had in the Way International.

could not leave.

Her mother came for lunch one day and although Chris did not know it, her mother had come to kidnap her so that she could be deprogrammed.

Christine said that when her mother came she had a ten dollar bill in her hand and asked Chris if she would mind leaving now because she had a taxi waiting downstairs.

When Chris entered the cab she did not realize that the cab had foreign plates, did not have a meter inside and did not have a cab stand on top. She admitted that her inability to notice these things was probably caused by her inability to rationalize.

The car did not turn down the proper street but Chris thought the driver was just taking a different route. It turned down a side street and Chris saw two joggers on both sides of the street.

"The car went between the two joggers, it stopped, both doors opened up, one guy grabbed my shoulders and pushed me down, the other guy took my mother and helped her

out of the car and into the front seat. I started kicking this guy and yelling at my mother to run," said Christine.

"When her mother got into the front seat of the car Christine knew what had happened. "I knew Satan had possessed my mother and it was not her fault that she was giving into Satan and had hired these animals. I didn't know what they were going to do with me. I was sure I was going to be raped, beaten, tied up, and possibly even killed, because, I didn't know what Satan would do to me," explained Chris.

After she had settled down a little, Chris' mother told her that she just wanted to talk to her. "This is a classic line because all deprogramming is, is a process of giving the cultist an opportunity to see things they were not exposed to in the cult. While in the cult they had been told that the newspapers, radio, and television were written by Satanic people.

Christine spent three days in a house talking with a deprogrammer and his assistants for 12 to 15 hours a day. "What deprogramming does, is it tries to get you to use your own mind to separate you from the cult beliefs and environment. They give you food and let you sleep and ask you questions like why do you need guns in The Way Corps," said Chris.

"It's a chipping away of a brick wall to get you to think for yourself," explained Chris.

Once the person begins to think for themselves they go on a rehabilitation program of rest and relaxation that gives them time to think of what happened to them and learn why it did.

During her rehabilitation program Christine had the opportunity to talk to former members of the Moonies (Unification Church) and the Hare Krishnas who to her surprise had the same or very similar experience as she had had in The Way International.

Christine has also worked with other deprogrammers assisting them in helping kids like herself.

Today Chris seems to have recovered from her experience in The Way International. She remains cautious of all cultist groups and will not talk to members for great lengths of time.

She is angry at The Way for what they did to her, but she realizes that the only way to curb their success is to educate others.

"I think public education is basically the only thing that is going to make people see the danger of cults and is going to make any kind of dent in the wall that these cults have built, financially, mentally, whatever, the cults are growing at an incredible rate.