



ARE COLLEGES DOING ENOUGH TO PROTECT STUDENTS FROM CULTS?

When colleges warn students about groups considered to be cults, are the colleges engaged in a form of religious discrimination? The following excerpts are comments from www.cultsoncampus.org <http://chronicle.com/colloquy/99/cults/re.htm>

All colleges/universities should educate their students on making healthy decisions and using their critical thinking skills - including giving them the information to be able to make a healthy decision when deciding what groups to join on campus. Just as schools warn their students about rape, drug/alcohol abuse/misuse, violence, theft statistics, they should be burdened to protect their students from spiritual abuse...If they fit Lifton's criteria, they should be called as they are seen. College students have enough stress and demands put on them, than to be inundated with the motives of these abusive groups, and it is the role of the college and university to give warning and educate their students about these groups. -- Amelia Kleymann, Community Manager, ExIcoc.Org

I applaud your efforts as I have not seen my daughter since she encountered a cult 5 years ago...the cult has legal rights to keep, I have none to get her back...The college in Boulder did nothing to print my story and the next year we get another member in the "parents of the Lost" whose daughter had been taken from Boulder...when and how do we stop this epidemic?? -- Susie Blake, parent

I consider it a moral responsibility for higher-education institutions to provide as much information to parents and students about life in these institutions. Activities of groups can be described without necessarily classifying some as cults or mainstream. Comments of students who have had experiences with these groups should be made available to new students. -- Dr. Steve O. Michael, Associate Professor, Kent State University

Cults offer a significant challenge to many of us. As university administrators we are constantly faced with the act of balancing freedom of religious expression on one hand and the safety of our students on the other. As someone who has seen first hand the damage that cults can cause, I find myself leaning towards the safety of our students. If we didn't have an obligation to protect our new university members, there wouldn't be a minimum age placed on drinking. At Ryerson we have taken a number of proactive educational steps towards bringing the issue of cults on campus to both our incoming students and parents alike. -- Frank Cappadocia, Student Programs Facilitator - Ryerson Polytechnic University

I'm sure that the A.C.L.U. will be up in arms about an action that on the outside appears to be "religious persecution". Upon further investigation, this is not a persecution, but an attempt to educate America's youth to the dangers of those that may seek to exploit or manipulate young minds. All one has to do in this sad time is mention events and places like Jonestown; Waco, Texas; or most recently, the Hale-Bopp Comet, to induce horrifying mental images of bodies covered with blankets. I wonder how many young people would have avoided these disasters if they had only had some education on the subject of cults. We will never know. -- Mark B. Morse, Liberty University

If you would like to schedule a cult seminar for your college, contact Brenda Lee, author of "Out of the Cocoon: A Young Woman's Courageous Flight from the Grip of a Religious Cult" through her website at www.outofthecocoon.net for more information.