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Cults On The Rise On College Campuses

By Carrie Adcox
Editor-in-Chief

"There can be no freedom of religion unless there is freedom of the mind." These words spoken by Thomas Jefferson are weighted now with the same intensity in which they were first spoken.

College campuses across the nation have been targeted. Students are at risk of losing their families and friends, losing their thought control, and even losing their self-esteem and self-worth.

Campuses have become deemed a "spiritual supermarket" by many organizations mainly because students are looking for acceptance, friends, and answers. Students are targeted for their vulnerability and their need for acceptance. Cults come with answers and acceptance.

At the mention of the word cult, many individuals retrace the tragic event of Jonestown and panic. Not all cults are fashioned in the same manner - notoriety through mass suicide. Cults can best be understood as a group generally with extreme beliefs, which are characterized through excessive devotion to either a leader or a cause.

Not all cults are religious. Therapy cults are centered on a single individual who has reached a state of being which some consider perfection. Members attempt to attain a social cure, becoming free of hang-ups.

Political cults are based on the conception of a perfect political doctrine conceived by a perfect leader.

This insight will become the way of enlightenment through a tumultuous world.

Economic cults promise future fortunes to their members.

Finally, religious cults usually boast a leader with a direct relationship with God. Religious cults have also been known to claim an elitist attitude towards salvation.

Most cults locate members through recruitment. Recruiters approach persons with a technique known as "love bombing." By using emotion as an incentive, recruiters use acts of love, such as instant friendship and acceptance, to lower the defenses of their recruits. Many cults have also been known to exploit the personal lives of members by using broken relationships, loneliness, family deaths, and stress to encourage participation. "Love bombing" may also lead a person to feel obligated to the members of the group.

Tactics used to create confusion have also been used by cults to secure recruits. When doubt is instilled into the recruits, the cult provides simple answers, securing new members.

Studies have proven that cults use many tactics of mind control. Cults reject former lifestyles as sinful, pushing for breaks with their family and friends. Some have even been proven to have books of the members' former 'sins' used as a means of punishment. These 'sins' were mentioned to keep members vulnerable.

Other tactics include sleep dep-

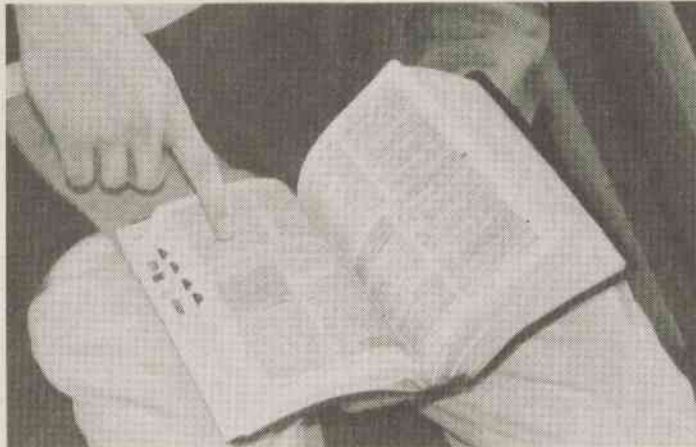


Photo by Robin Warrington

privation, peer group pressure, alienation, guilt, and even nutrition.

Students should arm themselves with facts. Cults have very similar characteristics:

- * Emphasize the ends justifies the means
- * Isolation of members, with members and society as opposites
- * Secret objectives, doctrine, and practices
- * Usually demand full-time/lifetime commitments
- * Seem too perfect
- * Overly friendly until questions are asked about doctrine, etc.
- * Ask you to recruit members soon after joining
- * Speak derogatorily about past religious affiliation
- * Claim to have "all the answers"
- * Claim parents and friends as unable to understand or help with your religious matters

Before joining any group or other religious affiliation ask the group about commitments of time or money. Inquire about recruiting practices and financial quotas. Directly ask about the relationship of the members of the group to their leader. Does this person require absolute devotion and obedience? Find out who sponsors the group. Simple questions such as these will help to determine the real objectives of the group.

It happens at campuses across the nation. No one is immune to the need to belong.

Beth Edwards, a junior transfer student from Emory University, brought the issue of cults on campus to the forefront of the administration of Methodist College. A fellow student who was questioning his salvation confronted Edwards. After asking him where he had heard such statements, the student replied producing a Bible study. Edwards instantly recognized it.

Years before, she had been a member of the cult in charge of the

distribution of the study.

After confirming the source of the study, Edwards went to the Rev. Carl King, the campus minister. A meeting later, the Rev. King called upon Dean of Students George Blanc. Together, they researched the subject of cults, speaking with other campuses.

After extensive research, they called a meeting with the Resident Advisers.

Armed with information, handouts, and videos, the Rev. King and Dean Blanc made the others aware of the many dangers surrounding cults and cult-like activities.

"We are not in a crisis. We have a subject, not a situation. That is an important distinction," Blanc stressed.

Although information is the

Edwards' recollections of her earlier days as a recruit are not uncommon. She recalls losing her family and friends. In an attempt to raise awareness to the students of Methodist College, Edwards speaks openly about her previous affiliations.

Edwards stresses several notions. From her experiences, the group stressed salvation through works. The group also stressed the separation of family and friends.

"You are told who to date, how to dress, where to live," she recalled.

After breaking free from the cult, Edwards has begun a new life.

"To not fear God is the biggest change of my life. Everything I do is about my love for God," said Edwards.

If you are seeking spiritual guidance and knowledge, Methodist

College offers a variety of sanctioned religious organizations. Gospel Choir meets every Monday night at 8 p.m. in Hensdale Chapel. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) meets every Tuesday night at 9 p.m. in the Cave - Weaver Hall Basement. Deeper Life Ministries meets every Wednesday night at 9 p.m. in the Hensdale Chapel. Christian

LYFE Fellowship meets every Thursday night at 5:30 p.m. in Dining Room C. D.O.G.s (Daughters of God, Girls Bible Study) meet Thursday nights at 9 p.m. in the Chapel. Men's Bible Study occurs at the same time in the lobby of West.

If you are feeling pressured by such a group, please contact the Rev. King at 7157. College should be an experience to remember, not regret.

"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 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 of 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..."

Jeanne Mills, Jonestown Survivor

key to success, speaking with Edwards confirms the reality of these cults.

"All of a sudden, your 'new' friends want to take you places and you start spending time with them. You begin to read your Bible with them. As you spend more and more time with them, you begin a series of 10 studies. By the third study, you are convinced that you are not a Christian unless you join the group," said Edwards.

Notes From The Dean

By Dean Blanc
Vice President for Student Life
Greetings to All.

I want everyone to know that I am both honored and humbled to have been given the opportunity to serve Methodist College and its student community as your Dean of Students.

My strongest emotions are excitement and anticipation. I am excited about the opportunity to get to know and work with a community that represents the best and brightest students that this country and the world have to offer. I am already beginning to anticipate what we will be able to accomplish as a "team" to make Methodist College an even better place in which to live, learn, and develop.

Although I have been at the job a little over a month, I have noticed that effective time management in one of my biggest challenges. There is always more to do than time to do it in. While this is not a surprising development, what is surprising is the minimal time that I have had to meet and get to know our students. If I am not careful, I could become the "Dean of Meetings" instead of the "Dean of Students."

I will not let this happen. The fact of the matter is that without your help and participation, I won't be able to do my job as it should be done. I need your input. I need to know what isn't working as well as what is working, what's broken and what's not.



Bottom Line: I need to know from each of you what we need to do to make Methodist College a better place for everyone.

To ensure that I don't lose contact with MC's greatest resource, our students, and to ensure that you have a unobstructed path to address your needs and concerns directly to me, I have decided to establish the following two programs:

Dean Hot Line

In the near future, you will notice a new fixture on the wall outside of the Student Life office. The new item will be a wall mounted suggestion box, but this won't be a typical suggestion box. The comments that you place in the slot will go to a locked box that only I can access. This, in effect, will give you "direct hot-line access" to me.

Your message will not be filtered in any way. If you wish, you can include your name and phone

number so that I can get directly back to you (within 24 hours), or you can remain anonymous. It's up to you, but in either case, I promise you that I will act to the best of my ability to address your issue.

Dean Time

As I stated earlier in this article, time management is one of my biggest challenges.

During my first few weeks at the job, there has been little time to meet directly with students. To overcome this, I've decided to establish Dean Time.

Dean Time is a simple solution to a complex problem. Effective immediately, I have asked my staff not to schedule any meetings or commitments between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. MC Students will have priority during this time period. This means that (with rare exceptions) you should be able to schedule an appointment with me during this time frame and know that I will be there for you.

I strongly encourage you to take full advantage of these two programs. Please remember that I am the "new guy" on campus and that I cannot be as effective as I should be without your support and involvement. I am asking you to choose to be part of the solution rather than a spectator to the problem.

I feel very privileged to have the opportunity to serve you as your Dean of Students.

I am looking forward to getting to know all of you better.

Sixth Tally Conference

By Amanda Garcia
College News Co-editor

There is little debate on the importance of leadership skills. Many employers seek to hire workers who are capable of not only completing the work, but also those who are capable of leading others.

With a position of leadership comes many responsibilities. Leaders are often held at a higher standard than those that they lead. When all is said and done, leaders will have to answer to the accountability and responsibility questions that are raised.

The Sixth Annual Tally Leadership Forum sought to examine some of the issues raised by being in a leadership position. The theme for the forum was, "Leadership, Technology, and Ethics: What is the right thing to do?"

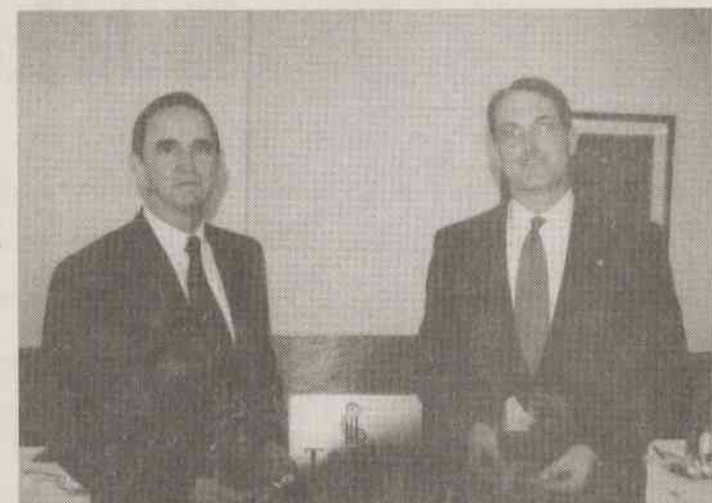
Among the topics discussed were ethical implications of the new technologies that are available to the world. Concerns such as genetic reproduction, human cloning, the digital divide, cultural imperialism, globalization, the social costs and economic benefits, and threats to individual privacy were raised.

Two central speakers took part in the forum. Dr. Jane Smith Patterson, the senior advisor to the governor for science and technology, and Reverend Bruce E. Stanley, director of field education at the Duke University's Divinity School.

Dr. Patterson has a strong educational background. She attended the colleges of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Harvard University, and North Carolina State University. She played an instrumental part in developing and putting into operation the North Carolina Information Highway.



Rev. Stanley. Photo by Jami Sheppard



Recipients of the 100% Awards. Photo by Jami Sheppard

Her expertise lies in the information technology infrastructure and how it impacts the many operations of our government, to include industry and education. She has contributed chapters to books and articles to newspapers and magazines on information infrastructure policy and applications of it in the United States, as well as in Japan and England.

The Rev. Stanley is not a new face to Methodist College. He participated in last year's leadership forum on "America's Role in the World." Originally from West Virginia, Reverend Stanley studied at West Virginia University and received his degree in history. He later then received a Master of Divinity from Harvard University and in 1982 was ordained by the United Presbyterian Church of the USA.

The Rev. Stanley has a great deal of experience with overseas humanitarian relief efforts in third countries. He is currently on the Bishop's Cabinet as director of missions and evangelism.

These two speakers addressed the Methodist Colleges students, faculty, and other members of the public on the first day of the conference in Reeves Auditorium.

The second day of the forum was dedicated to several roundtable discussions. Both morning and afternoon sessions were held and lasted about an hour and a half. Eight to twelve students discussed a specific question in the Alumni Dining Room in the Berns Student Center.

The roundtable topics centered around four general questions: (1) "Should prospective parents be allowed to use genetic technology to design their children?" (2) "What ethical principles should be used to judge the moral character of the new technologies?" (3) "How far should the process of globalization extend before its effects become undesirable?" (4) "How should we address the inequitable distribution of costs and benefits of the new technologies?"

Dr. Andrew Ziegler, assistant professor of political science and leadership, was one of the key players that coordinated this leadership conference to life.

Dr. Susan Cheek is the director of the Lura S. Tally Center for Leadership Development that sponsored the event on campus.



Dr. Hendricks. Photo by Jami Sheppard

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