

Moon Waning in Washington

Reverend Moon and the Bush Family

By [Bill Berkovitz](#)

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Despite an upcoming appearance by George H.W. Bush at the newspaper's 25th anniversary celebration, a 20+-year former Washington Times reporter says that the newspaper's survival is threatened

On May 17, former president George H. W. Bush will deliver the keynote address at the 25th anniversary celebration of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon-owned Washington Times newspaper at the National Building Museum. According to Fishbowl DC, a letter from the newspaper's President Thomas McDevitt pointed out that "The evening includes a special reception; the inaugural Founding Spirit Awards; dinner; and a Founder's Address from ... [Moon], whose commitment to the need for diverse viewpoints in the nation's capital during the Cold War era led to the launch of the Washington Times on May 17, 1982."

"You would think Bush would be given pause by a long record of behavior such as: Moon's claim to be Jesus Christ's replacement; his reputation among the Southern Baptists as a 'wolf in sheep's clothing,'" John Gorenfeld, an investigative reporter and a longtime chronicler of Moon's activities, recently reported in a post at the blog Talk To Action. "But it turns out, their decades-long association has withstood many such bumps in the road."

A history of mutual support

Over the years, Bush 41 — and family — have benefited from both the Rev. Moon's political and financial support:

* In 1996, Bush 41 was the featured speaker at a Moon-sponsored Buenos Aires banquet, for which he may have received as much as \$100,000 according to the Washington Post, to launch Moon's Latin American publication "Tiempos del Mundo" (Times of the World). "A lot of my friends in South America don't know about the Washington Times but it is an independent voice," the former president said. "The editors of the Washington Times tell me that never once has the man with the vision interfered with the running of the paper, a paper that in my view brings sanity to Washington DC."

Bush added that he was certain that "Tiempos del Mundo is going to do the same thing."

According to The Consortium's Robert Parry, "Bush then held up the colorful new newspaper and complimented several articles, including one flattering piece about Barbara Bush. Bush's speech was so effusive that it surprised even Moon's followers":

"Once again, heaven turned a disappointment into a victory," the Unification News exulted. "Everyone was delighted to hear his compliments. We knew he would give an appropriate

and 'nice' speech, but praise in Father's presence was more than we expected. ... It was vindication. We could just hear a sigh of relief from Heaven."

Parry also pointed out that "Bush's claims about the newspaper's editorial independence "was not truthful." Practically from the day it opened its doors, Parry wrote, "a string of senior editors and correspondents have resigned, citing the manipulation of the news by Moon and his subordinates. The first editor, James Whelan, resigned in 1984, confessing that he had 'blood on his hands' for helping the church achieve greater legitimacy."

The day after the Buenos Aires event, Bush accompanied Moon to Uruguay "to help him inaugurate a seminary in the capital Montevideo to train 4,200 young Japanese women to spread the word of his Church of Unification across Latin America," Reuters reported.

It was also reported in November 1996, that Carlos Menem, then the President of Argentina, told reporters from La Nacion that Bush had claimed privately to be only a mercenary who did not really know Moon. "Bush told me he came and charged money to do it," Menem said.

In February of this year, Robert Parry pointed out that "Throughout these public appearances for Moon, Bush's office refused to divulge how much Moon-affiliated organizations have paid the ex-President." While "Bush's fee for the Buenos Aires appearance alone ran between \$100,000 and \$500,000 Sources close to the Unification Church told me that the total spending on Bush ran into the millions, with one source telling me that Bush stood to make as much as \$10 million from Moon's organization."

* The Houston Chronicle reported in June 2006, that Moon's Washington Times Foundation used the Greater Houston Community Foundation to funnel \$1 million for Bush 41's presidential library. Parry reported that the newspaper "obtained indirect confirmation that Moon's money was passing through the Houston foundation to the Bush library from Bush family spokesman Jim McGrath. Asked whether Moon's \$1 million had ended up there, McGrath responded, 'We're in an uncomfortable position. ... If a donor doesn't want to be identified we need to honor their privacy.'

"But when asked whether the \$1 million was intended to curry favor with the Bush family to get President George W. Bush to grant a pardon for Moon's 1982 felony tax fraud conviction, McGrath answered, 'If that's why he gave the grant, he's throwing his money away. ... That's not the way the Bushes operate.'

"McGrath then added, 'President Bush has been very grateful for the friendship shown to him by the Washington Times Foundation, and the Washington Times serves a vital role in Washington. But there can't be any connection to any kind of a pardon.'"

* In 2001, the day before the first inauguration of George W. Bush, the newspaper's foundation sponsored a prayer luncheon that was attended by some 1,700 religious, civic, and political leaders, including the Rev. Jerry Falwell, former National Evangelical Association President Don Argue, Trinity Broadcasting Network's Paul Crouch and a host of leaders from the Southern Baptist Convention.

* Two years ago, Neil Bush accompanied Moon on a few legs of the Reverend's "World Peace King Bridge-Tunnel" tour, showing up at the Reverend's side in the Philippines and Taiwan.

In Manila, Bush attended the inaugural convocation of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), the Manila Bulletin reported. Bush met with Philippine president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo who “praised Moon for his global peace efforts and God-centered, family-centered economic and social initiatives in various parts of the world, including projects in a number of Philippine cities,” the Manila paper reported.

“Some 3,000 people, including Vice President Annette Lu, US President George W. Bush’s younger brother Neil Bush and Washington Times president Joo Dong Moon, listened to Reverend Moon’s speech at the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei,” the Taipei Times reported.

The “World Peace King Bridge-Tunnel” was described by Moon: “For thousands of years, Satan used the Bering Strait to separate East and West, North and South, as well as North America and Russia geographically. I propose that a bridge be constructed over the Bering Strait, or a tunnel be dug under it, so that it will be able to connect the world super highway starting from the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa to Santiago in Chile, and from London to New York, making the world a single community.”

* Late last year, Business Week reported (“No Bush Left Behind” October 16, 2006) that Neil Bush’s Ignite! Inc. –featuring what the company calls its “curriculum on wheels,” or COWs — received \$1 million from “A foundation linked to the controversial Reverend Sun Myung Moon ... for a COWs research project in Washington (D.C.)-area schools.”

While these items have been reported, the density of the Bush Family/Moon relationship has been basically ignored by the traditional press. Ironically, especially in light of Bush 41’s upcoming appearance at the Moon-sponsored Washington Times gala, last May, David Brooks, a New York Times columnist and a commentator on PBS’ News Hour with Jim Lehrer wrote — in a column headlined “The Paranoid Style” — that Kevin Phillips’ claims in his bestselling book “American Theocracy” that the Bush family has close ties to Moon was one of a number of “bizarre assertions” in the book.

Dire analysis from former WT insider

In an Internet essay titled “Can the Washington Times Survive?” (December 21, 2006), George Archibald, who says in his biography that he was an investigative reporter at the Washington Times for more than two decades, points out that “a festering internal civil war within the company, featuring ideological and abusive micro-management by senior TWT editors, backed by the founder’s top corporate manager at the Washington Times Corp., that has driven out the newspaper’s best people over the past five years, and continues to drive people out,” casts doubt on the newspaper’s survivability.

While praising the paper’s “feisty Commentary section” for being “the best newspaper opinion section in the country for its variety of opinion, writers who are on top of national and world stories, and originality in presenting best current views of all sorts, mainly libertarian,” and excoriating the editorial page and op-ed page run by Tony Blankley, former press secretary to Newt Gingrich when he was House speaker, for being “lame beyond belief,” Archibald writes that the “newsroom ... is in a morale slump that is so low that, as a recently retired 21-year veteran of the newspaper’s national news staff and author of the newspaper’s 20-year corporate anniversary coffee-table book in 2002, I cannot think of a worse period in the TWT newsroom’s history since the paper’s founding in May 1982 in terms of low reporter and editor morale and low productivity when it comes to really

important breaking news scoops.”

Beyond the declining credibility and morale questions, Archibald points out that the newspaper’s current management is the “main cause of the dramatic decline of the influence and respect.” The newspaper’s top management: Washington Times Corp. CEO Dong Moon Joo (who anglicized his first name to Douglas) and the paper’s two top editors — Wesley Pruden, scheduled to retire in five months, and Fran Coombs managing editor.

“Pruden,” writes Archibald “is an unreconstructed Confederate from Little Rock, Arkansas, who still believes the South and slavery were right and President Abraham Lincoln was wrong in going against the Confederate rebellion to emancipate the slaves and save the union.” Archibald also confirms that charges in the October 9, 2006, story in *The Nation* that “Coombs is a raging racist who despises blacks, Jews, and Hispanic immigrants, and looks down on women (unless they are white and have nice tits and well-shaped body),” was “reported factually.”

Archibald notes that “There is a corporate struggle under way between Washington Times Corp. CEO Joo ... and the reverend’s youngest son, Preston Moon, an MBA graduate of Harvard, who has been anointed by his father as corporate successor.” According to Archibald “Preston Moon wants to move *The Times* into profitability as quickly as possible, after decades of red ink, and boost the paper’s sagging advertising, circulation, and editorial staff in order to move the paper back into possible profitability, prestige, and a pace-setting position again.

Smearing its way into the 21st century

Has the nearly \$3 billion that he has sunk into the newspaper paid off for Reverend Moon? Given Archibald’s dire report, should the public expect the newspaper to fold anytime soon? Despite low circulation — Archibald says it hovers around the 100,000 mark on a daily basis — Moon is clearly still drawing A-listers into his sphere, as evidenced by the upcoming appearance of George H.W. Bush at the paper’s anniversary bash.

While Archibald paints a rather rosy picture of the newspaper’s past history, Robert Parry, author of “Secrecy & Privilege: Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq,” pointed out in a mid-February story that over the years “the *Times* has targeted American politicians of the center and left with journalistic attacks — sometimes questioning their sanity, as happened with Democratic presidential nominees Michael Dukakis and Al Gore. Those themes then resonate through the broader right-wing echo chamber and often into the mainstream media.”

“In 2000, the *Washington Times* was at the center of the assault on Al Gore’s candidacy — highlighting apocryphal quotes by Gore and using them to depict him as either dishonest or delusional.”

Earlier this year *Insight*, Moon’s former print news weekly — which is currently online only — reported that Hillary Clinton’s opposition research team had dug up information on her Democratic Party rival for the 2008 presidential nomination, Barack Obama that had him attending a fundamentalist Muslim “madrassah” while a young child and that he was seeking to conceal his allegiance to Islam.

According to Parry, “The *Insight* attack on Obama was framed as a heartfelt desire to test

out the credibility of the 45-year-old Illinois senator who identifies himself as a Christian and belongs to a church in Chicago. 'He was a Muslim, but he concealed it,' a source supposedly close to Clinton's background investigation of Obama told Insight. 'The idea is to show Obama as deceptive.'"

"Insight used no named sources for the allegations, nor did the magazine check out the facts about the school." The report "quickly spread to the wider audiences of Rupert Murdoch's right-wing media outlets, Fox News and the New York Post, and then into the mainstream press. To further the subliminal link between Obama and Islamic terrorism, the New York Post ran its story under the headline 'Osama' Mud Flies at Obama.'"

Fox's John Gibson picked up the baton: "Hillary Clinton reported to be already digging up the dirt on Barack Obama," said Gibson, anchor of the network's "The Big Story." "The New York senator has reportedly outed Obama's madrassah past. That's right, the Clinton team reported to have pulled out all the stops to reveal something Obama would rather you didn't know — that he was educated in a Muslim madrassah."

According to Parry, Obama had written "in his autobiography that after he had attended a Catholic school for two years, his Indonesian stepfather sent him to a 'predominantly Muslim school' in Jakarta when he was six. This inconsequential fact apparently became the basis for Insight's suggestion that Obama was indoctrinated at a radical 'madrassa.'"

Obama spokesman Robert Gibbs told the Washington Post that "The allegations are completely false. To publish this sort of trash without any documentation is surprising, but for Fox to repeat something so false, not once, but many times is appallingly irresponsible."

Howard Wolfson, a Clinton spokesman, called the Insight piece "an obvious right-wing hit job by a Moonie publication that was designed to attack Senator Clinton and Senator Obama at the same time."

Bill Berkowitz is a longtime observer of the conservative movement and a frequent writer for Media Transparency. He documents the strategies, players, institutions, victories and defeats of the American Right.

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