

Suit against newspaper alleges church pressure: The Washington Times and the Unification Church

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The former opinion editor of the *Washington Times* filed suit against the newspaper and its owner, sectarian prophet Sun Myung Moon, claiming among other things that he was coerced into attending a Unification Church event.

Richard Minitier met with one of Moon's 13 children, Preston Moon, who runs the parent company of the *Washington Times*, in September 2008 while considering the position at the paper. The suit says Minitier was "repeatedly falsely assured by (Preston) Moon, and by others, that newspaper editors enjoyed 'autonomy' and 'independence' from the Unification Church."

Minitier worked at the paper from March to November of this year. In January, prior to his employment with the paper, Minitier joined a business trip to Manhattan. He was told by Thomas McDevitt, then publisher and president, that it would be "good" for him to go. Minitier took it to mean his lack of attendance would count against him in his pursuit of the job.

They stayed at the New Yorker Hotel, which is owned by the Unification Church, and attended a peace festival and religious service held by the church. According to the complaint, Minitier felt as if he was forced to participate and "was made to feel as if he had no choice."

The complaint also cites circumstances where Minitier was asked to fraudulently sign a document stating a co-worker's son lived with him so he could continue in a specific school. Minitier also claims he was asked to work from home and not contact other employees, which prevented him from doing his job.

Minitier earlier filed a religious discrimination complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission citing several of these allegations.

A call to the *Washington Times* was not returned. A note from acting president and publisher Jonathan Slevin in November disputed Miniter's EEOC complaint, saying that "the *Washington Times* does not discriminate and does not tolerate discrimination." -*Religion News Service*