

A Key Member Of The Group Planning The Rally To Free Capitol Rioters Worked For A Fringe “Academic” Organization That Defended Violent Cults And Terrorists

Summary: Look Ahead America is a right-wing group [organizing](#) a September 18th rally next to the US Capitol Building in hope of freeing rioters arrested in conjunction with January 6th Capitol Riots. Look Ahead America believes that capitol rioters are "political prisoners." The rally has drawn the attention of [right wing hate groups](#) and has raised alerts from the [capitol police](#), sending DC into a heightened state of alert in [anticipation of potential violence](#).

One of Look Ahead America’s Senior Staff, research director [Ian Camacho](#), is also a [writer and editor](#) for the Center For The Study Of New Religions (CESNUR). CESNUR has been described as a [defender of cults](#) and the group works to combat [anti-cult efforts worldwide](#). CESNUR and its leaders have repeatedly moved to defend and protect cults who committed acts of violence. For example:

- CESNUR Leadership ran a PR campaign in order to defend terror group and cult [Aum Shinrikyo](#) after they committed a deadly gas attack that wounded [over 6,000 people and killed 13](#).
- CESNUR repeatedly defended **The Church of The Almighty God**, a Chinese cult that has been known to [kidnap](#) and [hold captive](#) people in an attempt to force them to join. When a member of the [cult murdered](#) a woman in 2014, CESNUR claimed it was part of a [“fake news”](#) campaign against the group.
- South Korean cult **Shincheonji** was the root of a major COVID-19 outbreak with the government demonstrating the cult withheld [information](#), refused to enforce COVID safety measures, and [obstructed contact tracing efforts](#). Despite the evidence, CESNUR called these charges [“fiction,”](#) claiming it was a form of religious persecution.

Camacho’s involvement in both CESNUR and Look Ahead America is especially concerning given the [frequent comparisons between](#) hard-core MAGA communities and cults. Notably a Japanese university professor explicitly compared the Trump supporters who stormed the capitol with [Aum Shinrikyo](#), of whom CESNUR was a proud, public ally. These ties between the pro-cult and right wing extremists movements are cause for concern and alarm as MAGA marches on after Trump.

Right Wing Group Look Ahead America Is Planning A Rally In Front Of The United States Capitol To Call For The Release Of Capitol Rioters On September 18th, 2021

Right Wing Group Look Ahead America Announced It Would Hold A Rally At The US Capitol At Noon On Saturday, September 18, 2021 Calling For The Release Of Capitol Rioters.

On July 30, 2021, Look Ahead America Announced It Would Hold A #JusticeForJ6 Rally At The US Capitol At Noon On Saturday September 18, 2021.

JULY 30, 2021

LAA Announces #JusticeforJ6 Rally at US Capitol for Saturday, September 18

Look Ahead America is eager to announce that our next rally will take place at the US Capitol on Saturday, September 18, at noon.

More details will follow. To learn more and sign up for updates, go to <https://www.lookaheadamerica.org/rally>.

[Look Ahead America, [7/30/21](#)]

Look Ahead America Referred To Incarcerated Capitol Rioters As “Political Prisoners,” Pushed Back On The “Narrative” That January 6th Was An Insurrection, And Called For An Investigation Into Ashli Babbitt’s Death— Reflecting White Supremacist Ideas.

Look Ahead America Refers To Incarcerated Capitol Rioters As “Political Prisoners” Being Held For “A Non Violent Expression Of Their First Amendment Rights. “We relaunched this organization from scratch six months ago. To have been able to mobilize on a national level and hold ten near-concurrent rallies across the country to #FreePoliticalPrisoners is a remarkable achievement. I am so proud of all of the brave patriots who participated in these rallies under the same threat to their rights of so many who are being held in prison now for a non-violent expression of their First Amendment rights. It required great courage participate in these rallies And as so many are still being persecuted by the FBI, denied bail by a corrupt judiciary fed lies by our Department of Justice, and while the death of Ashli Babbitt remains uninvestigated, we have much to do.”

[Look Ahead America, [7/19/21](#)]

The Executive Director Of Look Ahead America Claimed That The September 18th Rally Aims To “Push Back On The Narrative” That The Capitol Riot Was An Insurrection And Boasted That Members Of Congress Would Speak At It.



[Twitter - @RonFilipkowski, [7/30/21](#)]

Braynard Claimed That Look Ahead America Will Present “Evidence” To Demonstrate That The Capitol Riot Was Instigated By The Capitol Police, As Well As Demand That Ashley Babbitt’s Death Be Investigated. “What’s going to define it is where it’s going to take place. We’re going back to the Capitol, where it all started, on September 18th. And we’re going to push back on the phony narrative that there was an insurrection. We’re going to provide the evidence that Nancy Pelosi won’t allow to be presented at her select committee, showing that this was a largely peaceful crowd; showing that this was a crowd that was egged on in many ways by Capitol police throwing flash bang grenades into a relatively peaceful crowd. We’re going to present the evidence that Ashley Babbitt’s death should be investigated. We’re going to demand the release of fourteen thousand hours of videotape that the federal government has been suppressing.” [Steve Bannon’s Pandemic War Room Transcript, Episode 1134, [7/30/21](#)]

- **The Movement To Turn Ashley Babbitt’s Into A Martyr Unjustly Killed During The Capitol Riot Emerged From Online White Supremacist Groups.** “On the flag, a drop of blood dangles from Babbitt’s neck against a crimson Capitol dome. Variations on this flag include the Capitol stamped with a Star of David, the word vengeance written below it in a gothic font. The Babbitt flag was used to advertise an abortive “Million Martyr March” scheduled for Inauguration Day. Ever since, white-supremacist groups like Revolt Through Tradition and the National Partisan Movement have used the same image of Babbitt in their recruitment propaganda, posting flyers on light poles and hanging banners that read “Her Name Was Ashley Babbitt” from Boston to Orlando.” [NY Mag, [7/02/21](#)]

Look Ahead America Has Previously Held At Least Four Other Rallies Calling For The Release Of Capitol Rioters, And Even Filed A Complaint With The United Nations.

June 19, 2021: Look Ahead America Held A Rally “Against Political Persecution” Of Capitol Rioters In Front Of The Department Of Justice Building. “Today, Look Ahead America announced the Rally Against Political Persecution to take place at noon on Saturday, June 19, at the Department of Justice. This is a follow-up to the letter LAA’s Executive Director sent to the Department of Justice and the FBI that was sent in January: <https://www.lookaheadamerica.org/j9letter>. The purpose of the event is to highlight the political persecution of non-violent patriotic Americans who participated in the Capitol Protest on January 6.” [Look Ahead America, [5/27/21](#)]

July 17, 2021: Look Ahead America Held A Rally In Front Of A Jail In Washington DC To Protest The Arrest Of Capitol Rioters. “About 100 people from around the country gathered under the blazing sun outside the D.C. jail on Saturday to protest the arrest of those involved in the Jan. 6 Capitol riot. ‘Let them go! Let them go! Let them go!’ the crowd chanted. While MAGA hats and Trump apparel were mostly missing outside D.C. Central Detention Facility by request of the event organizers, many sported bright-red hats and carried signs with slogans such as “protests are not insurrections” and “patriots are not terrorists.’ The rally was organized by Look Ahead America, a nonprofit organization that aims to give voice to ‘rural and blue-collar patriotic Americans who are disaffected and disenfranchised from the nation’s corridors of power.’” [Washington Post, [7/17/21](#)]

- **July 17, 2021: Look Ahead America Held A Simultaneous Rally In Florida.** [YouTube, [7/19/21](#)]

August 27, 2021: Look Ahead America Held An Event In Front Of The United Nations Building In New York City, Where The Group Filed A Complaint With The United Nations Human Rights Office Against The Biden Administration For Their Detention Of Capitol Rioters. “At a press conference today at noon at the United Nations in New York, Look Ahead America and Citizens Against Political Persecution will present a joint letter to the United Nations Human Rights Committee to investigate and demand relief for the Biden Administration’s January 6 political prisoners. From the complaint: Today I write in support of basic human rights for a specific group of Americans who have been disparately and inhumanely treated by their government – singled out, imprisoned, and even physically abused – because of their political beliefs. As outlined herein, LAA has sought relief from several members of the United States government, as well as other U.S.-based human rights advocacy groups. We have been largely ignored, and human rights violations continue unabated, with no relief in sight. Those avenues exhausted, and in recognition of the United Nations’ long and prestigious history of human rights advocacy, we ask for your review and consideration of these prisoners’ plight.” [Look Ahead America, [8/27/21](#)]



Matt Braynard
@MattBraynard

At the United Nations presenting our formal complaint to the @UNHumanRights Committee over the Biden Administration's abuse of J6 political prisoner's human rights.

Read our complaint at lookaheadamerica.org/hrc.



12:44 PM · Aug 27, 2021 · Twitter Web App

[Twitter, [8/27/21](#)]

Look Ahead America Research Director Ian Camacho Is A Writer For An Italian, Pro-Cult Group That Has Repeatedly Defended Fringe Religious Movements And Terrorist Organizations

Ian Camacho Is The Research Director For Look Ahead America

As Of September 9, 2021, Ian Camacho Was Listed As The Research Director For Look Ahead America. “During the aftermath of the 2020 General Election, Ian Camacho co-led several hundred volunteers to investigate various claims of voter fraud. The group discovered thousands of P.O. Boxes disguised as apartments, suites, and units. With the help of Matt Braynard, these finds made their way into SCOTUS filings and briefings. Prior to that and with no idea of what would happen, Ian repaired machines, wrote basic training and technical manuals as a subcontractor at Smartmatic in Los Angeles, while writing and editing for Total Seminars. Previously, Capital One acquired his patent application designed to combat bank fraud and increase accountability. Ian brings his humor and passion in writing, researching, and project management to Look

Ahead America with the aim of restoring voter integrity and trust in our institutions.” [Look Ahead America, accessed [9/9/21](#)]

Ian Camacho Is Also A Writer For Center For The Study Of New Religions (CESNUR), Which Has Been Described As A Pro-Cult Organization And Its Founder And Leader As “A Persistent Critic Of Any National Attempts To Identify Or Curtail So-Called 'Cults.’”

2018-Present: According To His LinkedIn Profile, Ian Camacho Is Also A Contributing Writer And Editor For The Center For The Study Of New Religions.

Experience

Research Director
LOOK AHEAD AMERICA INC · Full-time
Feb 2021 – Present · 8 mos

- Oversaw research resulting in The Georgia Report, in which we showed that illegal votes in Georgia surpassed the margin of victory in the General Election of 2020: <https://lookaheadamerica.org/laas-voter-integrity-project-releases-the-georgia-report/>
- Wrote and calculated the statistical projections in The Wisconsin Report. Verified all cases that the Research Group including illegal registrations, NCOA, OSSRR and indefinitely confined claims: <https://lookaheadamerica.org/wisconsinreport/>

...see more

Contributing Writer and Editor
The Journal of CESNUR (Center for the Study of New Religions) · Freelance
Jul 2018 – Present · 3 yrs 3 mos
Turin Area, Italy

- Published over 200 pages worth of non-fiction, graduate level writing: <https://cesnur.net/?s=Camacho>
- Edited a 15-page academic article in The Journal of CESNUR (Sept – Oc 2019): ...see more

[Linkedin, accessed [9/9/21](#)]

New York Times: “The Center For Studies On New Religions, For Example, Have Developed A Reputation For Defending Movements Like Scientology, Often Viewed By The Rest Of The World As Cults[.]” “J. Gordon Melton, a leading expert on new religious movements, noted in 2006 that 40 to 45 new religious groups were emerging on average every year — and many scholars have pointed out that several aspects of this less conventional religiosity have percolated into the mainstream secular culture. Mr. Introvigne and the Center for Studies on New Religions, for example, have developed a reputation for defending movements like Scientology, often viewed by the rest of the world as cults, as valid religious expressions.” [New York Times, [6/15/20](#)]

Canadian Academic Stephen Kent Described The Founder And Leader Of CESNUR As A "Persistent Critic Of Any National Attempts To Identify Or Curtail So-Called 'Cults,'" Calling CESNUR "The Highest Profile Lobbying And Information Group For Controversial Religions." "The highest profile lobbying and information group for controversial religions is CESNUR (the Center for Studies on New Religions), which is based in Torino, Italy (with contacts throughout Europe and North America) under the directorship of patent/trademark lawyer and independent scholar, Massimo Introvigne. A persistent critic of any national attempts to identify or curtail so-called 'cults,' Introvigne has spoken out against what he considers to be intolerance toward "minority religions," especially in Belgium, France, and Germany." [Marburg Journal of Religion: Volume 6, No. 1, [January 2001](#)]

The Center For The Study Of New Religions (CESNUR) Opposed The Work Of Anti-Cult Movements And Organizations. "CESNUR describes itself as "an international network of associations of scholars working in the field of new religious movements." It has gained a reputation for being mostly uncritical and, in fact, supportive of movements considered to be cults by secular anticult- and/or Christian countercult professionals. Indeed, co-founded by - among others - Massimo Introvigne (Managing Director), J. Gordon Melton, and Eileen Barker, CESNUR is seen by many as an organization of cult apologists. At the very least, it has an anti-anticult stance - meaning that it opposes the doctrines, methods and goals of anti-cult and countercult organizations." [Apologetics Index, accessed [9/9/21](#)]

CESNUR: "'Cults' In General Should Not Suffer For The Crimes Of A Minor Of Them." "CESNUR does not believe that all religious movements are benign. The fact that a movement is religious does not mean that it could not become dangerous. [...] On the other hand "cults" in general should not suffer for the crimes of a minority of them. We are against special legislation against "cults", or against "brainwashing", "mind control" or "mental manipulation" (by any name). Any minority happening to be unpopular could be easily accused to own the invisible and non-existing weapon of "brainwashing", and special legislation would reduce religious liberty to an empty shell. Protection of religious liberty also requires that each group be examined on its own merits, comparing different sources and not relying exclusively on information provided by hostile ex-members. Experiences of disgruntled ex-members should certainly not be ignored, but they could not become the only narratives used to build our knowledge of a group." [Center For The Study Of New Religions, accessed [9/9/21](#)]

In 1995, CESNUR Leadership Ran A PR Campaign In An Effort To Defend The Extremist Japanese Cult That Organized The Deadly Sarin Gas Terrorist Attack On The Tokyo Subway.

AUM Shinrikyo Was An Extremist Cult That Was Responsible For The Deadly 1995 Sarin Gas Terrorist Attack On The Tokyo Subway. "Millions of commuters step out into a bright spring morning and on to one of the world's busiest underground systems. Also on board the trains: five bags filled with liquid nerve agent, left by members of a doomsday cult. The packages were leaking. Passengers felt stinging fumes hitting their eyes. [...]The culprits were Aum Shinrikyo, an obscure religious group who believed the end of the world was coming." [BBC, [7/6/18](#)]

- **Thirteen People Died And Almost 6,000 People Were Injured In The Attack.** "Millions of commuters step out into a bright spring morning and on to one of the world's busiest underground systems. Also on board the trains: five bags filled with liquid nerve agent, left by members of a doomsday cult. The packages were leaking. Passengers felt stinging fumes hitting their eyes. The toxin struck victims down in a matter of seconds, leaving them choking and vomiting, some blinded and paralysed. Thirteen people died and at least 5,800 were injured in five co-ordinated attacks on three train lines." [BBC, [7/6/18](#)]

1995: CESNUR Leaders J. Gordon Melton, And James Lewis, Flew To Japan, Paid For By Aum Shinrikyon, To Tell Japanese Reporters That There Was No Way That The Organization Could Have Conducted The Sarin Gas Attack. "As new evidence seems to implicate the secretive Aum Shinrikyoin case of terrorism, murder and kidnapping the sect's leaders have found an unlikely supporter: an officer of the American Bar Association. Barry Fisher, a lawyer in Los Angeles who said he is chairman of the bar association's subcommittee on religious freedom, traveled to Tokyo with three other Americans [including J.

Gordon Melton] --Aum paid the bill--to warn that the Japanese police were threatening the group's religious freedom. The Americans said Monday that they spent three days in Japan talking to cult officials and others, but were not permitted to visit the sect's chemical factories or its headquarters campus." [Washington Post, [5/5/95](#)]

- **J. Gordon Melton Was On The International Board For CESNUR.** "Dr. Melton is Distinguished Professor of American Religious History of Baylor University's Institute for Studies in Religion, as of March, 2011. In 1968 he founded the Institute for the Study of American Religion and has remained it's director for the last 44 years. The institute is devoted to organizing, motivating, and producing research-based studies and educational material on North American Religion, and has been responsible for the publication of more than 400 reference and scholarly texts, including multiple editions of the Melton's Encyclopedia of American Religions (8th edition, 2009). He sits on the international board of the Center for Studies in New Religions (CESNUR) based in Turin, Italy, the primary academic association focusing studies of new and minority religions." [The Religious Studies Project, accessed [9/13/21](#)]
- **James Lewis Was Listed As Chair As A CESNUR Event.** "The 2017 CESNUR Conference Co-organized by:Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), The Israeli Information Center for New Religious Movements (MEIDA), The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, The Goldstein-Goren International Center for Jewish Thought (Ben Gurion University), International Society for the Study of New Religions (ISSNR) [...]Glastonbury and Greenham Common: Holy Lands in Contemporary Paganism and Goddess Spirituality Chair: James R. LEWIS The Avalonian Nexus – Understanding Glastonbury as Arena for the Exchange of Views and Ideas Between Goddess Feminists and British Wiccans and Pagans During the 1970s – 1980sShai FERARO (Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel) The Goddess at Greenham: Re-writing Religion, Gender and Secularism in Modern Britain Ruth LINDLEY (University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom)." [CESNUR, [7/2/17](#)]

Leaders At CESNUR Defended Church Of The Almighty God, A Cult Known For Kidnappings And Killings.

The Church of The Almighty God Has Been Accused Of Using Tactics Such As Bribery Or Abduction To Get People To Convert. "The group has also been known to offer gifts like smartphones to potential followers, most of whom are unemployed. When their advances are rejected, they have allegedly abducted their targets and forced them to convert by employing beatings and coercive tactics, according to a former member who requested anonymity. The former member said the group entices men to join by providing young women as companions, allegedly stages fake exorcisms to heal the sick, and plays Taiwanese pop music in loops to brainwash their followers. The former member also said that Eastern Lightning preaches that their ultimate goal is to defeat the Great Red Dragon, which is an unobvious allusion to the Chinese Communist Party. (Attempts to contact the leaders of Eastern Lightening to comment on these allegations were unsuccessful.) [Daily Beast, [6/29/14](#)]

2002: The Church of The Almighty God Kidnapped 34 Members Of An Underground Christian Network And Held Them Captive For Two Months. "Leaders of Christian groups warn their members against the "flirty fishing" methods supposedly adopted by Eastern Lightning ladies to convert Christian men to the path of their female Christ. Lastly, of course, there's the name, which sounds more like an energy drink or AC/DC cover band than a cult. Perhaps that's why, these days, they often use the alias 'Church of the Almighty God.' [...]In 2002, Eastern Lightning kidnapped 34 leading members of an underground Christian network, the China Gospel Fellowship, and held them captive for two months. I managed to speak to an American missionary, Hope Flinchbaugh, who met one of the kidnapped Fellowship leaders while in China. According to Flinchbaugh, women from the cult seduced the captured pastors and took compromising photographs to blackmail them later if they resisted their conversion efforts." [Vice, [7/31/13](#)]

2014: A Member Of The Church Of The Almighty God Killed Woman In A McDonalds Restaurant In Eastern China... "On May 28, Zhang Lidong beat a woman to death in a McDonald's restaurant in eastern China after she declined to give him her phone number. When staff at the restaurant pleaded for him to stop, his daughter shot back, 'Do you know who we are? Mind your own business!' Onlookers called the police, who

arrived at the scene within minutes and arrested Zhang along with five others, including his son and daughter. Then things get stranger. [...] Authorities say Zhang and four others charged in the murder belong to a group called Quannengshen, which means Almighty God, though the Christian sect is most commonly known as Eastern Lightning. Zhang told authorities he had been a follower of Eastern Lightning for seven years, living off of savings he accumulated before joining the sect.” [Daily Beast, [6/29/14](#)]

...The Managing Director Of CESNUR Claimed That The Church of The Almighty God Did Not Murder The Woman, Claiming The Accusation Was The Product Of Government Propaganda. “Totalitarian regimes always blame the victims they persecute, and the Chinese regime is no exception. The Church of Almighty God (CAG), a Chinese Christian new religious movement, is the victim of massive persecution in China. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has launched a massive campaign of fake news to justify the persecution. The most infamous fake news against the CAG concerns the murder of a saleswoman, Wu Shuoyan (1977–2014), in a McDonald’s diner in Zhaoyuan on May 28, 2014. That the murder occurred was unfortunately very much real. The fake news part is that it was perpetrated by CAG.” [Bitter Winter, [9/20/18](#)]

- **CESNUR Founder Massimo Introvigne: “However, Based On Documents Either Supplied To Me Or Published By The Same Chinese Authorities, I (And Others), Concluded The McDonalds’s Murder Was Perpetrated By A Different Religious Movement, Which Was Not Related To CAG.”** “I was among the Western experts invited by the Chinese Anti-xie-jiao Association to two 2017 conferences in Zhengzhou and Hong Kong to discuss the notion of xie jiao and The Church of Almighty God. I went there with an open mind, as recognized by local governmental media. However, based on documents either supplied to me or published by the same Chinese authorities, I (and others) concluded that the McDonald’s murder was perpetrated by a different religious movement, which was not related to CAG. It venerated a different living Almighty God, one God in two persons, its two female leaders Lü Yingchun and Zhang Fan (1984–2015).” [Bitter Winter, [9/20/18](#)]

CESNUR Has Defended A South Korean Cult Which Continued To Hold Crowded Services During COVID-19, Resulting In A Widespread Outbreak Of The Disease.

Shincheonji Is A Religious Group That Is Considered A Cult By Mainstream Christian Groups. “The Shincheonji Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony — as its full name goes — was founded in 1984 by Lee Man-hee, now 88, whom it presents as the “Promised Pastor” sent by Jesus and a man uniquely capable of deciphering the Bible’s Book of Revelation. Shincheonji claims that it has more than 245,000 followers. [...] Mainstream Christian groups, many of which are Protestant, reject Mr. Lee’s teachings and call Shincheonji a cult. The Presbyterian Church of Korea claims that Mr. Lee’s views — including, for example, that Jesus is not God incarnated — are “heretical” and “anti-Christian.” [New York Times, [3/09/20](#)]

- **BBC: “The Group, Which Has 230,000 Members, Is Considered A Cult By Many.”** [BBC, [8/1/20](#)]

Shincheonji Was A The Source Of A Major COVID Outbreak Cluster In South Korea. “Illness was never accepted as a valid reason to miss services at the Shincheonji religious group, says former member Duhyen Kim. This is an organization that took roll call, he says, and everyone had to physically swipe in and out of services with a special card. Any absence was noted and followed up on. ‘The culture was, even though you’re sick you come in on Sunday. If you’re so sick you can’t come Sunday, you have to come on Monday or Tuesday -- you have to make up for the time,’ Kim says. He describes how, when he was a member, followers would sit on the floor during hours-long services “packed together like sardines. ‘The religious group -- an offshoot of Christianity -- is now at the heart of South Korea’s novel coronavirus outbreak, particularly in the city of Daegu.” [CNN, [2/27/20](#)]

The South Korean Government Claimed That At Least 60% Of Its COVID Cases In March 2020 Were Directly Tied To Shincheonji. “Lee Man-hee, the 88-year-old enigmatic founder of the Shincheonji church, is now trying to defend his group, while challenging the accusations against it. South Korea has more 4,800 cases of the coronavirus, with at least 60 percent connected to Shincheonji’s branch in Daegu, a city in the southeast. As the government scrambles to contain the epidemic, Mr. Lee and the church have been

blamed for contributing to the spread, by failing to provide a full list of its members to the government.” [New York Times, [3/06/20](#)]

- **August 2020: Thirty-Six Percent Of Positive COVID Cases In South Korea Came From Shincheonji.** “Lee Man-hee, 88, heads the Shincheonji Church of Jesus. More than 5,000 of its members became infected, making up 36% of all Covid-19 cases in the country. The authorities accuse him of hiding information about the group's members and gatherings from contact tracers. The church says Mr Lee was concerned for his members' privacy, but never hid information from the authorities. South Korea currently has 14,336 coronavirus cases, and 300 deaths.” [BBC, [8/1/20](#)]

Shincheonji's Leader Deflected Blame, Blaming COVID On “The Evil Who Got Jealous Of Shincheonji's Rapid Growth.” His tone marked a shift from the message he sent to his church members last week, in which he blamed the epidemic on ‘the evil who got jealous of Shincheonji's rapid growth’ ‘When night passes, dawn will arrive,’ he said then.” [New York Times, [3/06/20](#)]

Shincheonji Actively Worked Against COVID Prevention Measures And Were Said To Undermine The Government's Response By Opposing Mask Mandates And Withholding Information. “Some of Shincheonji's practices — secrecy, the banning of health masks, praying in close proximity — are said to have helped spread the disease among congregants. The church's leaders have been accused of deliberately withholding information about its membership, stymying the health authorities' efforts to trace and test every person who might have come into contact with someone infected with the virus. Shincheonji's founder could face murder charges.” [New York Times, [3/09/20](#)]

- **Shincheonji Leader Lee Man-Hee Was Arrested For Withholding Information About The Groups Meetings, Undermining Contact Tracing Efforts, And Embezzling \$4.7 Million From The Group.** “Lee Man-hee, 88, heads the Shincheonji Church of Jesus. More than 5,000 of its members became infected, making up 36% of all Covid-19 cases in the country. The authorities accuse him of hiding information about the group's members and gatherings from contact tracers. [...] Mr Lee is also accused of embezzling 5.6bn won (\$4.7m; £3.6m) and holding unapproved religious events.” [BBC, [8/1/20](#)]

A Former Shincheonji Member Pointed Out That Members Were Expected To Come To Service Even If They Were Sick. “Illness was never accepted as a valid reason to miss services at the Shincheonji religious group, says former member Duhyen Kim. This is an organization that took roll call, he says, and everyone had to physically swipe in and out of services with a special card. Any absence was noted and followed up on. ‘The culture was, even though you're sick you come in on Sunday. If you're so sick you can't come Sunday, you have to come on Monday or Tuesday -- you have to make up for the time,’ Kim says. He describes how, when he was a member, followers would sit on the floor during hours-long services “packed together like sardines.’ The religious group -- an offshoot of Christianity -- is now at the heart of South Korea's novel coronavirus outbreak, particularly in the city of Daegu.” [CNN, [2/27/20](#)]

In 2020, CENSUR Released A White Paper To Correct “Facts From Fictions Against Shincheonji” And The Spread The Novel Coronavirus “The name of Shincheonji (a name meaning “New Heaven and New Earth”), Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (in short, Shincheonji) was known in the West only to a few scholars of new religious movements before February 2020, when the church was accused of being largely responsible for the spread of COVID-19 in South Korea. In March 2020, the authors published a first White Paper (Introvigne, Fautré, Šorytė, Amicarelli and Respinti 2020) distinguishing facts from fiction in the accusations against Shincheonji. The repression of Shincheonji in South Korea has now escalated to what can be described, without exaggeration, as an attempt to suppress a religion, close its places of worship, arrest its leaders, and scare members so that they will leave the movement out of fear of losing their jobs. A second White Paper, dealing with the persecution, is thus necessary. We will, however, summarize in this introduction some essential points about Shincheonji discussed in the first White Paper, and add some further general comments.” [CENSUR, COVID-19: Scapegoating Shincheonji in [South Korea, 2020](#)]

CENSUR Entertained Different Reasons Behind COVID Spread In Daegu, Deflecting Blame From Shincheonji. “On June 22, the City of Daegu sued Shincheonji and Chairman Lee seeking damages of KRW

100 billion (US\$82.3 million), more than two-thirds of the city's total virus-related spending of KRW 146 billion (The Korea Times 2020b). Parenthetically, on June 26, Shincheonji announced that 4,000 church members who had recovered from COVID-19 will donate the much sought after plasma including antibodies to the virus, noting that the monetary value of this plasma is much higher than the sum Daegu is claiming from the church (San Francisco Examiner 2020).[...] There are several possibilities, and there were clusters of infections in Daegu outside Shincheonji. For example, in January, in connection with the Year of Tourism event, 1,100 Chinese students visited Daegu (Ryu 2020). A cluster of infection developed in a club in the city, where three young people in their 20s were infected (JoongAng Ilbo 2020). Probably, there were "hidden" clusters as well, with asymptomatic or non-tested patients (MBC 2020). Health authorities clearly stated that Patient 31 was not the first person to be infected with COVID-19 in Daegu (Yonhap News 2020)." [CENSUR, COVID-19: Scapegoating Shincheonji in [South Korea, 2020](#)]

Hardcore MAGA Communities And Trump Devotees Have Often Been Described As Cult-Like.

Hardcore MAGA Communities And Trump Devotees Have Often Been Described As Cult-Like, Including By A Professor Who Directly Compared Them To The Japanese Domestic Terror Organization CENSUR Is Connected To.

A Japanese University Professor Compared Trump's Actions Which Spurred The Capitol Riot To That Of Aum Shinrikyo's Leader Stirred Up His Followers Prior To Their Terrorist Attacks. "In February 1990, a man named Chizuo Matsumoto, also known as Shoko Asahara, the founder of a religious cult called Aum Shinrikyo, ran for election to the lower house of Japan's parliament. His high-profile campaign attracted much media attention after he ordered his followers to move their certificates of residence to his electoral district so they could vote for him, and used gimmicks such as having his young female followers dance at his rallies while wearing elephant hats. He also resorted to a range of dirty tricks, such as taking down the election posters of his rivals. Confident he would win, Asahara suffered a humiliating defeat. He then claimed there was vote-rigging, saying some votes had been "replaced." He went so far as to allege a conspiracy involving "state power" and "Freemasons." His followers accepted his statements without question. The way Trump and his supporters are ranting about election fraud and conspiracies, without presenting any evidence or facts to support their claims, have disturbing similarities to the way Asahara and his followers promoted fantasies about his failure to win at the ballot box." [Nikkei Asia, [1/19/21](#)]

A Former, Deprogrammed Cult Member Wrote A Book Describing Trump's Devoted Base As A Cult Claiming Trump And His Followers Both Display Classic Cult Characteristics. "The term "cult" gets thrown around a lot to describe the intense passion of Donald Trump's followers—but is it accurate? For Steven Hassan, a former Moonie turned cult expert and author of *The Cult of Trump*, the answer is decidedly yes. Trump, he holds, has all the characteristics of a cult leader, and his followers the qualities of a cult, from the all-consuming devotion to a single malignant narcissist to the daily consumption of "alternative facts" to immunize them against cognitive dissonance (a.k.a. reality)." [Vanity Fair, [1/21/21](#)]

- ***Vanity Fair*: "Trump, He Holds, Has All The Characteristics Of A Cult Leader, And His Followers The Qualities Of A Cult, From The All-Consuming Devotion To A Single Malignant Narcissist To The Daily Consumption Of "Alternative Facts" To Immunize Them Against Cognitive Dissonance"** [Vanity Fair, [1/21/21](#)]

Vanity Fair Writer Jeff Sharlet Compared Trumpism And MAGA Ideology To Gnosticism, A Heretical Catholic Dogma, Claiming Trump Appealed To His Followers In A Religious Manner That Created Fervent Devotion And Shunning On Opposition. "That's what's drawn Jones here, to the CenturyLink Center in Bossier City, Louisiana, two weeks before Thanksgiving. Like many of the president's 14,000 followers waiting for the rally to begin, Jones believes that Trump is on a mission from God to expose (and destroy) the hidden demons of the deep state. To attend a Trump rally is to engage directly in the ecstasy of knowing what the great man knows, divinity disguised as earthly provocation. [...] Gnosticism, which dates at least to the second century A.D., is the path Christianity did not take, its texts destroyed as heretical, its ideas

mostly forgotten until the 1945 discovery in Egypt of 13 ancient books in a sealed clay jar. Or maybe not so much forgotten as woven over the centuries into countless conspiracy theories, the deep-seated belief that there exist truths they—there is always a they in gnosticism, from the bishops and bureaucrats of the early church, coastal elites of the ancient world, to the modern media peddling fake news—do not want us, the people, to perceive.” [Vanity Fair, [6/18/20](#)]

- ***Vanity Fair*: “He’s The Chosen One To Run America”:** **Inside The Cult Of Trump, His Rallies Are Church And He Is The Gospel**” [Vanity Fair, [6/18/20](#)]

Washington Post Writer Ann Hornaday Described The Capitol Riot As The Moment **“The Trump Cult Took Fandom Out Of The Simulacrum And Into Real Life.”** “All of those impulses came to a disgusting, deadly head on Wednesday, when the Trump cult took fandom out of the simulacrum and into real life. They brought assault weapons and pipe bombs with them, but it turns out they were mainly there for trophies and bragging rights. They might have imagined they were starring in an action thriller, but it turned into a farce and, finally, a tragic, treasonous horror show. Meanwhile, Trump’s cast of thousands awaits their next stage direction from a deranged director with no intention of leaving the stage. Ugly people, indeed.” [Washington Post, [1/08/21](#)]