

The Family International - Revenge Against Religious Sect

The Family - Revenge Against Religious Sect February 9th, 2007 - Two decades after a Christian religious sect officially renounced adult-child sex in response to allegations of sexual misconduct, a new British documentary Cult Killer is reviving questions. The sect, known as The Family International, and commonly known as The Family, was founded in the late 1960s with thousands of members around the world. In January 2005, Ricky Rodriguez, the one-time heir apparent to The Family, fatally stabbed his former nanny and then shot himself dead. He left a chilling videotape alleging that the sexual abuse he had suffered as a child at the hands of members of the group was too much to bear. [...]

Since Ricky's death, others from his generation in the group have become more vocal about their suffering. Celeste Jones, who left the group in 2001, said that when she was 5 and 6, I also was subject to sexual abuse adults teaching me mainly to fondle them. [...]

It's hard to refute that Rodriguez grew up in a sexually charged atmosphere. The group, founded under the name Children of God, promoted a strange brew of biblical prophecy and sexual freedom. In 1978, the Children of God was formally dissolved and a new group, The Family of Love, with a new organizational structure, was formed. In recent years, this name has gradually been shortened to The Family. Its charismatic leader, Moses David Berg, once said: I practice what I preach! And I preach sex, boys and girls. Berg died of natural causes in 1994. As a child, Rodriguez was idolized as a prophet in the sexual revolution, and was the subject of a manual the group published on child-rearing, The Story of Davidito. Many of the pages were full of sexual photos and suggestive captions, mostly written by Berg. One read: God created boys and girls able to have children by about the age of 12 years of age. My God! Now he's going to advocate childhood sex. Some of the pictures show Rodriguez with Angela Smith, the woman he killed. [...]

A former member of The Family who left in 1988 says that he was never told about these new policies as a child, and that the atmosphere in the communal home where he lived had not changed by the time he'd left. Sexual contact was part of that group, the former member said. At about 5 years old, I experienced being matched up with another child and she was about 16 years old. Yet current members of The Family insist they've never experienced any abuse in the group. They say they are engaged in fundraising and charitable activities around the world. [...]

Stephen Kent, a sociology professor at the University of Alberta, said the reality of The Family's past was more complex. An expert in the group, he said, There's no indication that the widespread abuses that went on in The Family in the 70s and 80s and in, into the early 90s goes on now. However, he said, many of the perpetrators of the early abuses are still in positions of leadership. For instance, Paul Pelloquin, a member of the group as far back as the 1980s, was identified in 1995 court documents as an alleged sexual abuser.

Yet, he was recently in charge of an outreach program in Africa for The Family, and his photo also appears prominently on The Family's Web site. [...] ones, who left The Family, says she has vivid memories of Pelloquin. He was one of the main ones I remember that I had to perform fellatio on, or he would masturbate himself in front of me and I had to watch, she said. Efforts to reach Pelloquin for comment were unsuccessful. [...] This is a summary extract from the full article as it appeared on ABC News, Feb 2, 2007