



- WELCOME & MISSION STATEMENT
- GROUP PROFILES, LINKS & INFO
- CULT GROUP CONTROVERSIES
- REL. MOV. COURSE MATERIALS



[ THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS PAGE ]

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## Cult Group Controversies

◀ HOME

◀ SITEMAP

◀ GLOSSARY

◀ FEEDBACK

◀ SEARCH

◀ ABOUT US



The Religious Freedom Page

Religious Broadcasting

### Cult Group Controversies:

#### The Anti-Cult Movement

Our coverage of the Anti-Cult Movement begins with the identification of major organizations and links to their web sites. Each link has an annotation that seeks to highlight important information about the organization and/or contents of the web sight. Over the next several months we'll first be adding a much more comprehensive set of annotated links to anti-cult organizations. This will be followed by the development of short profiles of the major organizations and their leadership. We hope you'll check back frequently and offer your suggestions for content to cover on this page.

J.K. Hadden (06/24/99)



- Introduction
- The Brainwashing Controversy
- Conceptualizing "Cult" and "Sect"
- Conceptualizing "Anti-Cult" and "Counter-Cult"
- The Anti-Cult Movement
- The Counter-Cult Movement
- Links
- Bibliography
- Other Resources



#### Major Anti-cult Sites

- [American Family Foundation](#)

With the bankruptcy filing of Cult Awareness Network, the American Family Foundation is the most influential anti-cult organization in the U.S. They publish *The Cultic Studies Journal*. The site also highlights the various outreach programs of the group which include education about, study of, and assistance for those involved in, groups determined by AFF to be cults. The group was founded in 1979. They offer information packets about the various groups by mail for a fee. <http://www.csj.org>

- [Cult Awareness Network](#)

CAN was recently forced into bankruptcy by a court decision requiring it to pay damages to a deprogramming victim. The organization's logo, files, post office box and other assets were purchased by a member of the Church of Scientology who then turned the organization over to the control of the Scientologists. The [New Cult Awareness Network page](#), run by the Church of Scientology, focuses on promoting religious freedom and unbiased information about new religious movements. In a sense, it is now an "anti-anti-cult" group.

<http://www.cnn.com/US/9612/19/scientology/index.html>

<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org>

- [Margaret Singer's Home Page](#)

Margaret Singer is a favorite speaker and often cited 'expert' of the anti-cult movement. She was often called in to testify in trials over conservatorship where she often succeeded in convincing the court that cults practiced "brainwashing" and mind control techniques that could only be countered if the individuals were forcibly removed from the group. Recently courts have rejected the "brainwashing" theory of conversion under pressure from academics, but Singer continues to dominate anti-cult literature and theory. The [The Margaret Thaler Singer Foundation](#) is a site that is currently under construction, but should provide additional information and insight into Mrs. Singer's activities.

<http://www.singer.org>

<http://www.irsociety.com/singer.html>

- [Rick Ross Home Page](#)

Mr. Ross is a deprogrammer or 'exit counselor' deeply involved in the anti-cult movement. Mr. Ross was involved in the court case that drove CAN into bankruptcy. He has been featured extensively in the media on programs like 48 HOURS. The site, while comprehensive and helpful in understanding Ross's own theories, is extremely slow to load as it contains extensive sound and graphics capabilities. Rick Ross is a highly visible entrepreneur who has carved out quite a niche for himself as a self-proclaimed expert and counselor to families desperate to retrieve family members from new religions. His past has been called into question by the Church of Scientology which has uncovered evidence of alleged mental instability and an attempted robbery conviction (*The Cult Awareness Network: Anatomy of a Hate Group*).

<http://www.rickross.com>

- [Steve Hassan Home Page](#)

Hassan is a former member of the Unification Church who has turned apostasy into a profession. Hassan is devoted to saving the world from "destructive cults" and "abusive mind controllers." His entrepreneurial tendencies are baldly evident on his home page. He has recently created the [Resource Center for Freedom of Mind](#) to further his cause. The Center for the Freedom of Mind provides information about "mind control" in cults based on Hassan's own writings. It rejects deprogramming in favor of exit counseling and provides links exclusively to anti-cult sites. Claims of 3,000 destructive cults in the U.S. are terribly exaggerated. His books include *Combatting Mind Control*.

<http://www.freedomofmind.com/>

<http://www.fom.org>

- [Ex-Cult Archive](#)

Site contains little substantive information, but links together significant anti-cult resources. By no means comprehensive of anti-cult activity, this is nonetheless the best available resource for the novice interested in becoming familiar with anti-cult materials on the Internet.

<http://ex-cult.org/>

- [F.A.C.T.Net 3 Home Page](#)

The site was built by Scientology apostates who have done battle with their former group both on the Internet and the courts. Lately they have taken some legal hits and the vast archive of material is not present at this site. Click on the name Lerma

near the top and it will link you to lots of other anti-cultists. The FACTnet site does include links to current news articles pertaining to cults as well as links to the cults themselves.

<http://www.lightlink.com/factnet1/pages/index.html>

- [Trancenet](#)

This site is managed by a non-profit California Corporation and focuses on Transcendental Meditation and groups associated with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Little else about the group's affiliation can be determined from the information they provide, but they are definitely an anti-cult group despite their claims to "unfiltered information."

<http://www.trancenet.org/index2.shtml>

- [Cult Awareness and Information Centre - Australia](#)

This site is run by Jan Groenveld, a former member of the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormon faiths, who has gathered his information primarily from parents with kids in cults. Groenveld maintains that cults use influence and mind control to obtain and retain converts. This page turns up repeatedly on virtually any search for anti-cult sites or for cults in general. Groenveld has compiled many links to other anti-cult groups but does not represent an organization himself.

<http://student.uq.edu.au/~py101663>

Also available in this site section:

- [Introduction](#)
- [The Brainwashing Controversy](#)
- [Conceptualizing "Cult" and "Sect"](#)
- [Conceptualizing "Anti-Cult" and "Counter-Cult"](#)
- [The Counter-Cult Movement](#)
- [Links](#)
- [Bibliography](#)
- [Other Resources](#)

Go [back](#) to the top of this page.

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