

Dr. H. Newton Maloney

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February 16, 2016

Members of Knesset
Kiryat Ben-Gurion
Jerusalem, ISRAEL
9195016

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am H. Newton Maloney, Senior Professor of Psychology (Ret.) from the Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

It has come to my knowledge and to that of the academic religious community in the United States, that a law is being considered in the Knesset regarding the supposed "Handling of Harmful Cults." This law causes great concern in view of the manifest violations of the reights of religious organization, the generalities inherent in the proposed law's language, and the abuses it would perpetuate in Israeli society.

I attach to this letter my Curriculum Vitae. I have been researching the subject of religion and so-called "Cults" for over 40 years and have written substantially on the subject. A copy of my list of publications over that time period is appended to this letter. I have appeared as a judicially approved expert in various proceedings and various United States courts. I was present as a researcher, writer and witness during the 70s and 80s when Dr. Margaret Singer's Mind Control theories, arose, were espoused and were utterly rejected by all relevant courts, organizations and entities. I continue to be utilized in United States courts as a legitimate and approved expert in the field of religion.

Respectfully, I believe, as do others in the community of religious libertarians, that circumstances in society have unfortunately given rise to your proposed draconian and harmful law, those circumstances are completely unrelated to the minority religious groups which will potentially be subject to this poorly conceived legislation.

This letter, however, is intended to address only the specific circumstances of some of the sources publicly identified as justifying this legislation: Margaret Singer and Rick Ross. I am familiar with the work and acts of these two Americans, and as an expert in the field of religion and religious liberty in the United States, I humbly tender the information herein and my opinion for your consideration.

This law, per my understanding, is based on recommendations of a committee of the Ministry of Welfare and that they are relying on specific

proponents of the thoroughly discredited “Brainwashing” Theory from the 1970s and 1980s in the USA – namely Dr. Margaret Singer and Rick Ross. “Religious brainwashing” per se could be viewed as a manufactured reality. It is nothing but the invention of an uniformed and bigoted minority used to spread anti-religious sentiment about new religions.

The supporters of this law promote the same theories used by anti-religious deprogrammers to justify kidnapping members of various faiths in the United States (including Jews and Christian as well as new religious movements) and beating them into renouncing their faiths, a criminal practice that has resulted in criminal convictions and multi-million dollar judgments against individuals in the former United States anti-religious movement. By 1987, even the American Psychological Association had rejected these theories as unscientific. And even in recent years a Federal Court and Appeals Court has rejected this spurious theory.

In the 1980s, psychologist Margaret Singer, a self-proclaimed “authority” on New Religious Movements, used a brainwashing theory developed from older 1950s articles regarding Korean War prisons in order to hire herself out as an “expert” witness in civil damages cases against minority religions. No religious minorities were exempted from her expansive opinion that the brainwashing theory applied to the voluntary participation of persons in new religious movements.

Singer’s theories were soon debunked by the scientific community:

- On May 11, 1987, the Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility for Psychology of the American Psychological Association (APA) formally dismissed Singer’s notions of coercive persuasion after she and several of her associates had submitted a report and formed a task force within the APA on “deceptive and indirect methods of persuasion and control” by minority religions.
- The APA Board stated that “In general, the report lacks the scientific rigor and evenhanded critical approach needed for APA imprimatur.” The APA Board warned Singer and her cohorts not to imply that the APA in any way supported the positions she had put forward. (*Id.*)

Nevertheless, since it was lucrative to do so, Singer continued to assert the opinion that newer religions “brainwashed” their members. The scientific community responded quickly to definitively debunk the “religious brainwashing” theory.

- In May 1989, the American Sociological Association, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and individual sociologists and psychologists (including members of an executive council of the APA), reiterated the APA’s position in an amicus brief to the Supreme Court of the United

States. They argued that Singer's theories of religious brainwashing have "no scientific validity," and noted that "to the extent that the [theory of coercive persuasion from minority religious practice] can be said to have any empirical foundation at all, that foundation is so methodologically inadequate to be worthless."

After the APA's rejection of their findings, Singer and her disciples were prohibited by courts from testifying as experts concerning their discredited theories of "coercive persuasion" and "brainwashing" by religious minorities exercising their faith.

- In 1988 Singer and her theories were rejected by the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, which noted that the plaintiff in the case had "failed to provide any evidence that Dr. Singer's particular theory, namely that techniques of thought reform... have a significant following in the scientific community, let alone general acceptance."
- Out of work by virtue of these rejections, Singer and an associate responded by filing two lawsuits against the APA and several social scientists for allegedly trying to run them out of business. The first suit was dismissed as having no merit. The second lawsuit, asserting defamation and conspiracy, was dismissed under a California law prohibiting baseless, vindictive and harassing litigation.

The written opinion of the representatives of the American Association of Psychology on Margaret Singer's task-force Report on Deceptive and Indirect Methods of Persuasion and Control, which she worked on for 5 years and was supposed to be the ultimate work to prove Mind Control exists:

- Dr. Catherine Grady: "[the techniques used by cults per the report] "are not defined and cannot be distinguished from methods used in advertising, elementary schools, main-line churches, AA and Weight Watchers". "It's all unsubstantiated and unproved newspaper reports and unresolved court cases. It's not evidence."
- Jeffrey D. Fisher, of the University of Connecticut: "[the report is] unscientific in tone", "biased in nature" and "sometimes (...) characterized by the use of deceptive, indirect techniques of persuasion and control - the very thing it is investigating". "At times, the reasoning seems flawed to the point of being almost ridiculous". "[The part on the history of "cults"] reads more like hysterical ramblings than a scientific task force report".
- Professor Benjamin Beit-Halahmi: "What exactly are deceptive and indirect techniques of persuasion and control? I don't think that psychologists know much about techniques of persuasion and control, either direct or indirect, either deceptive or honest. We just don't know, and we should admit it.

Lacking psychological theory, the [DIMPAC] report resorts to sensationalism in the style of certain tabloids". "The term 'brainwashing' is not a recognized theoretical concept, and is just a sensationalist 'explanation' more suitable to 'cultists' and revival preachers. It should not be used by psychologists, since it does not explain anything".

And finally, the official memorandum of the APA stated that it "thanks the Task Force in Deceptive and Indirect Methods of Persuasion and Control for its service but is unable to accept the report of the Task Force. In general, the report lacks the scientific rigor and evenhanded critical approach necessary for the APA imprimatur."

Respected sociologists and experts in religion have also closed the door on what was perceived to be a biased and archaic view. As stated by Dr. J. Gordon Melton (Distinguished Professor of American Religion, Baylor University; Founder of Institute for the Study of American Religion, and author of *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Belief and Practice* (2010)), in his expertise *Brainwashing and Cults: The Rise and Fall of a Theory*:

Since the late 1980s, though a significant public belief in cult-brainwashing remains, the academic community-including scholars from psychology, sociology, and religious studies-have shared an almost unanimous consensus that the coercive persuasion/brainwashing thesis proposed by Margaret Singer and her colleagues in the 1980s is without scientific merit. To date, no one has come forward to refute the arguments, especially those advanced by Dick Anthony a decade ago, nor has the situation that Perry London found concerning articles providing an empirical base for the theory been reversed. *Through the 1990s, it has been difficult to locate any scholar in the English-speaking world who has been willing to attempt a defense of it, and even Singer herself has appeared to back away from her earlier position.*

Other leading experts in the field, including me, share Dr. Melton's view. Acceptance of Singer's theories – which were also adopted and espoused by Rick Ross to justify his acts of criminal deprogramming – completely ignored the papers by the American Sociological Association, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the American Psychological Association, as well as a host of independent experts refuting any scientific evidence of religious brainwashing even though all of this material was available to him.

Today, this theory is not taken seriously by any academic researcher in the United States and Europe that I know of. Therefore, my surprise as above.

Thus, in the United States, the "debate" in which the Knesset is now engaged about whether *any* religion "brainwashes" its adherents, was concluded

and relegated to historical commentary as an incident of prejudicial hysteria brought on by a quack psychologist.

As to Rick Ross, please be advised that he has for many years, essentially been *persona non grata* in the United States. In 1994, Ross was hired to kidnap a young adult man, Jason Scott, and "deprogram" him to abandon his Christian beliefs. Ross and two hired thugs held Scott captive for nearly a week to forcibly attempt to change his religious views. He was later arrested and prosecuted by authorities in the United States for this crime. Thereafter, a federal jury held him culpable for kidnapping and violation of the young man's rights, and awarded damages against Ross and his co-conspirator – the former Cult Awareness Network, of \$4.8 million.

When Ross attempted to have the judgment against him vacated, United States District Judge John C. Coughenour refused, and concluded:

"Finally, the court notes each of the defendants' seeming incapability of appreciating the maliciousness of their conduct towards Mr. Scott. Rather, throughout the entire course of this litigation, they have attempted to portray themselves as victims of Mr. Scott's counsel's alleged agenda. Thus, the large award given by the jury against both CAN and Mr. Ross seems reasonably necessary to enforce the jury's determination on the oppressiveness of the defendants' actions and deter similar conduct in the future."

Ross also claims he acted as a behind-the-scenes "consultant" to the government during the Branch Davidian tragedy at Waco, Texas in which many persons were killed when government agents became inflamed by Ross's rhetoric. Dr. Nancy T. Ammerman, a visiting scholar at Princeton University's Center for the Study of American Religion, was one of the outside experts assigned by the Justice Department to evaluate the conduct during the siege of the Branch Davidian compound by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) and the FBI. In her September 3, 1993 report on the tragedy to the Justice and treasury Departments, Dr. Ammerman was particularly critical of the government's consultation of Rick Ross and the Cult Awareness Network.

In their attempt to build a case against the Branch Davidians, BATF did interview persons who were former members of the group and at least one person who had 'deprogrammed' a group member. Mr. Rick Ross, who often works in conjunction with the Cult Awareness Network (CAN), has been quoted as saying that he was "consulted" by the BATF... "The Network and Mr. Ross have a direct ideological (and financial) interest in arousing suspicion and antagonism against what they call "cults." These same persons seem to have been major sources for the series of stories run by the Waco newspaper, beginning February 27. It seems clear that people within the "anti-cult" community had targeted the Branch Davidians for attention.

Although these people often call themselves "cult experts," they are certainly not recognized as such by the academic community. The activities of the CAN are seen by the National Council of Churches (among others) as a danger to religious liberty, and deprogramming tactics have been increasingly found to fall outside the law.

Thus, instead of providing constructive advice, which might have defused the situation and, in the end, saved lives, CAN and Ross exploited tensions to further their own anti-religious agenda. In the end dozens of men, women and children died.

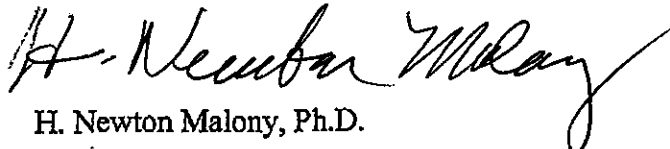
Despite these disasters, Rick Ross continues to attempt to profit from spreading lies and hatred against minority religions and continues to hold himself forth to the press and public as an "expert."

Because Ross has thrust himself into the public eye, his background has been subjected to examination, revealing facts that perhaps begin to explain his conduct. On December 22, 1974, Rick Ross and an accomplice attempted to commit burglary by kicking in the door to a building in Phoenix. They were caught in the act by the Phoenix Police and arrested. Ross was 22 years old and employed as a bill collector for a credit bureau. He pled guilty to Conspiracy and was sentenced to 10 days in jail and put on probation for one year.

Before this probation period expired, Ross was once again arrested and this time charged with Grand Theft by Embezzlement. On July 23, 1975, Ross robbed a Phoenix jewelry store and stole diamonds and other precious items with an approximate retail value of \$100,000. Ross and his accomplice, a store employee who had conspired with him to commit the theft, both pled guilty to the charge and Ross was convicted of Conspiracy 2nd Degree to Commit Grand Theft, a felony. Ross spent 6 weeks in Maricopa County, Arizona, jail after his arrest and was later given a suspended sentence of 4 years, fined \$1,100 and placed on probation.

In sum, the views of Dr. Margaret Singer or Rick Ross have been thoroughly discredited and rejected by all legitimate academics, associations, courts and governments. I respectfully submit that you should not rely upon any assertions, opinions, writing, or comments from either. I further respectfully urge that the researchers of the Knesset Information Center confirm each of my statements herein to your satisfaction.

Sincerely,


H. Newton Malony, Ph.D.

cc: Mr. Haim Katz, Minister of Welfare and Social Services
Mr. Eliezer Yavlon, Director General of the Ministry of Welfare and
Social Services
Eyal Yinon, Legal advisor of the Knesset;
Mr. Yariv Levin Legal advisor of the Government
Mrs. Efrat Sharabi, Unit for the Handling of Victims of Cults
Speaker of the Knesset, Mr. Yuli Edelstein

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