Twitter Thread by Shanteehee



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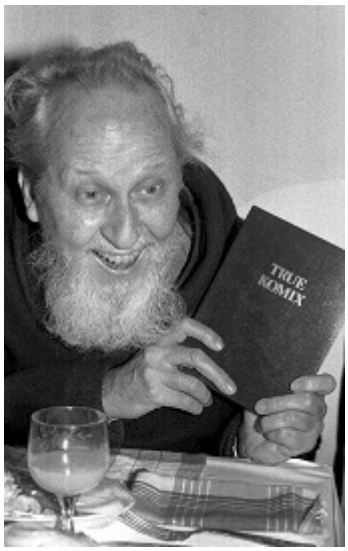
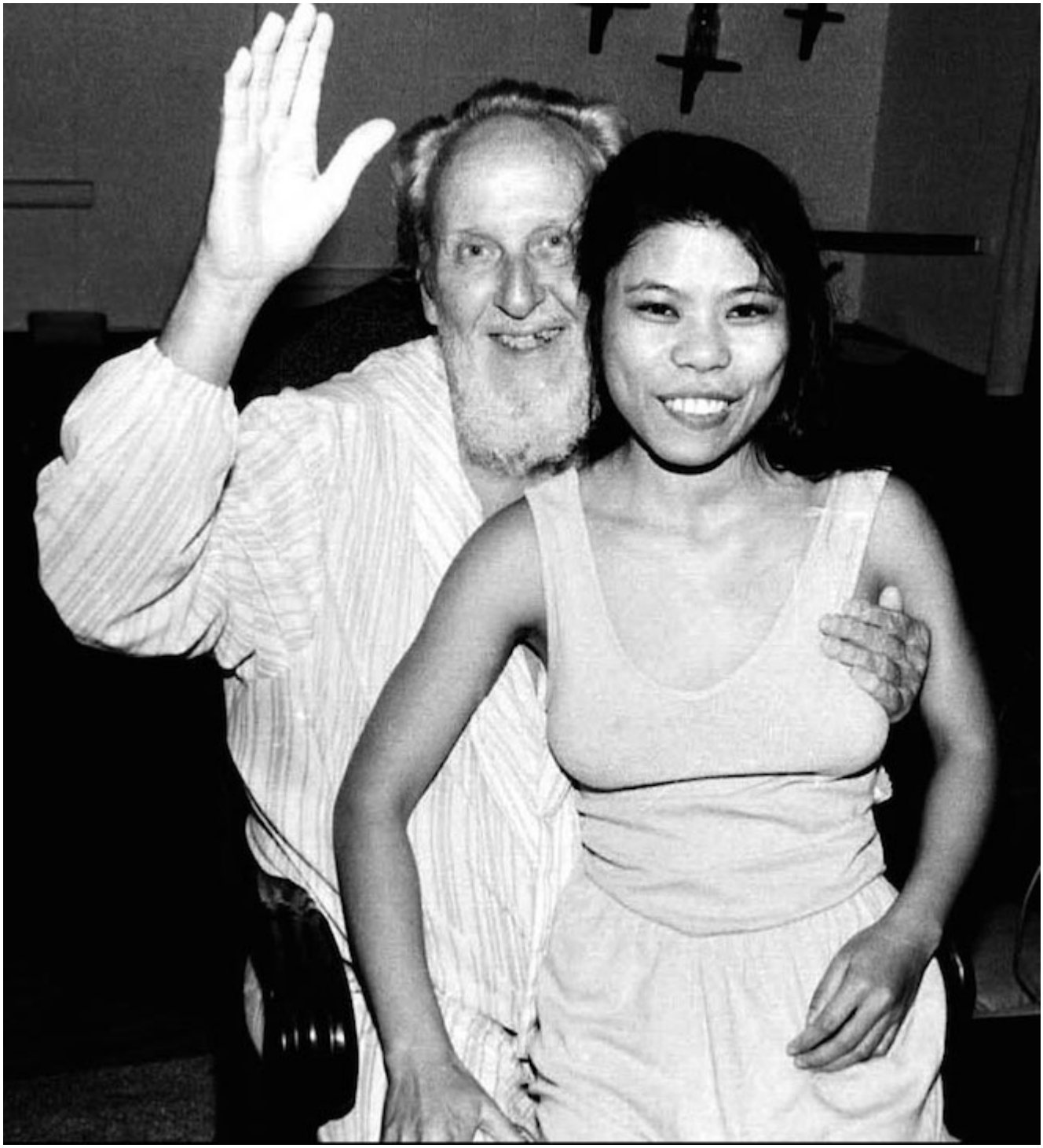
This thread is a foray into the cult called The Family International (formerly Teens for Christ and then Children of God), founded by David Berg in Huntington, California, in 1968. It now has dealings all over the world, including (worryingly) India.



If you haven't watched the documentary Children of God on Netflix, I highly recommend it. It is a good primer on the way the cult operated. However, I will summarise the leader's (lovingly called Dad by his followers) bizarre world view here.



David Berg believed that Jesus was love, and love was sex. Members were encouraged to give themselves to anyone who wanted them as a way of worship. They lived communally in different "Family Homes", and it was typical for one woman to bear several children from different men.



Members were encouraged to recruit people to the cult with a method called "Flirty Fishing". As the name suggests, this was basically religiously sanctioned prostitution, used to grow their flock. More about this here: https://t.co/GhjD5ZWPOs



David Berg would write what he called "Mo's Letters", richly illustrated combinations of instructions to his followers on recruitment methods like Flirty Fishing, & bizarre feverish rants on his sexual fantasies, often involving minors. This is the cover of one of them.

THE STORY OF HEAVEN'S GIRL!

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A lot of pornography, even child pornography, was videotaped by members. (The Family denies this, but there is video evidence). Children were made to perform strip teases often, and were frequently present in the audience when adults were performing.

This Vice article contains a quick list of the cult's teachings and their bizarre pornographic propaganda comics, which I will not screenshot here, because I don't want my account reported for obscenity. Read at your own risk. https://t.co/V5ubyIKqO8

Sexual relations were not confined to adults. Sexual relations with children were not only allowed, but encouraged. David Berg, the founder, married his follower Karen Zerby in 1970, and became step father to her son, Davidito. The story of Davidito is a tragic one.

His mother Karen & a member called Angela Smith would sexually molest him when he was a toddler.Their actions were recorded in a Family child rearing manual. Davidito lived a tortured life, and ended up killing his abuser Angela Smith, & subsequently himself, in 2005.

Zerby outlawed sexual relations with minors in 84. (Whether this was followed or not,I don't know. My guess, & the reports of ex-members, say that it was not. Family homes were prime ground for exploitation.) After Berg's death in 94, Zerby took over & still heads the cult today.



Family Homes existed (apparently still exist) all over the world, including India. Members & children often shifted countries frequently. Here are members pictured singing to Indian President Ali Ahmed, & with Rishi Kapoor & Indira Gandhi in the 70s. More:https://t.co/cX5WdDtCR4

Remember that Karen Zerby, the current leader of The Family, is an alleged child molester/paedophile, and has not served time for her crimes. Her current location is unknown. Many members who committed horrific abuses against minors are missing/in hiding today. So who funds them?

In 1997, the Family Care Foundation was set up by Grant Montgomery, 3rd in command in the Family.The foundation denies any ties to The Family. However, a look at their board members says otherwise.Angela Smith,Davidito's abuser, was also on the board until she was killed in 2005.

FCF claims to work for the upliftment of the underpriveleged all over the world. Their dealings in the States have come under scrutiny. "At least two members..accused of (child) sexual molestation went on to start charities funded by the (FCF)." https://t.co/1shFSt7KNv

Ex-members allege here that some of the funds raised by the FCF are siphoned off to current Family members, particularly those in hiding because of accusations of abuse.

https://t.co/QiwIUw6TtZ

There is much more than meets the eye when it comes to the Family Care Foundation: A California-based "public benefit" corporation (EIN 33- 0734917), the Family Care Foundation (FCF) was created and is run by members of The Family International to further its goals and secret agenda. The Family Care Foundation is not endorsed by the US National BBB (Better Business Bureau) due to failure to meet requirements for transparency and accountability — standards readily achieved by all reputable charitable organizations. The Family Care Foundation exists to attract tax-exempt charitable donations for financing ventures run by the secretive Family International sect. Its members now operate a series of charity fronts around the world, presenting themselves as Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) workers or a loose-knit fraternity such as The International Fellowship of "Independant" Christian Missionaries. As a rule, representatives of these charity fronts do not divulge that they are in fact members of The Family International for fear of being linked to their notorious past/present. They seek out donors who are unaware of their true affiliations, and solicit donations, often through their umbrella organization the FCF. The FCF in turn funnels back the funds to members of The Family International, while writing them off as external costs in order to benefit from tax exemptions. Such creative bookkeeping is considered abuse of privileged charity status by watchdog organizations. And what donors may be financing unawares by giving through the FCF should be a cause for their concern.

Many donors have stopped donations after finding out who the FCF are.

https://t.co/r18hA1bt3U

They have even come under fire in Cambodia.

https://t.co/5mLW7fItV7

Now we come to the FCF's projects in India. They run projects in Goa, Bangalore, Coimbatore, Vizag, and Hyderabad. These are just the listed projects on their website. My research shows that have offshoots in other cities as well.

https://t.co/Xb9cS5pKrO

Grant Montgomery, the founder of FCF, is married to the daughter of Arthur and Becky Lindfield. Art and Becky are long time alleged Family members/top leadership, and allegedly co-writers in an explicit instructional manual for Flirty Fishing.

Montgomery and the Lindfields often visit India on FCF work. In fact, the Lindfields are the managers for one of the FCF's programmes in India. Read this from an ex-member forum about how the FCF are a front for The Family.

https://t.co/ZLro71JBAA

A defense here could be that the Family has abandoned most of Berg's teachings. However, cases of horrific abuse in Family Homes keep popping up, even after the outlawing of child abuse in 84.

https://t.co/PatfTuwiQw

Who are the project managers in India? I have learned that two are confirmed Family members from an ex-member site, but I will not mention names.If you do a little cursory research, you will learn more.Have a look at each of the Indian FCF projects here:

https://t.co/tlYRKkavpM

A school started by the FCF in Bangalore that educates children from slums came under fire in 2012 when a female attendant there branded seven little girls with a hot knife. https://t.co/EEvjoPynsP

Some alleged members have even started home(s?) for orphaned children in Goa, that are often visited by foreign missionaries who entertain the children. A certain Bollywood star's parents are also reportedly Family members, and do work with children in Tamil Nadu.

Here is an archived forum from 2005 about how the Family is growing in India.

https://t.co/ZcaH25yr37

I do not claim that abuse happens in any of these programmes by the FCF. For all I know, the local coordinators could have no clue about The Family and are doing excellent work for the underpriveleged. I have no doubt that many children have benefited from these programmes.

I merely want to start a conversation about how India as a country is so lax about granting visas to missionaries with very disturbing pasts, and how foreigners are given easy access to children, especially children whose parents don't know enough to ask the right questions.

This thread came about after I read of the new Chinese female Jesus cult that is making inroads in Nagaland. We allow the crazy fringes of foreign evangelism like Mormonism, Scientology, and God knows what else into the country with open arms.

Shouldn't we scrutinise more closely exactly WHO is being given access to our children (and they are OUR children), when we know that they come from impoverished backgrounds where any help is welcomed without suspicion? Shouldn't we being taking care of our own?

The faces of OUR children are plastered all over the website of a charitable front for a cult with a horrific past. This isn't about Christianity as a religion, because mainstream Christianity would be taken aback by its teachings.

If the local coordinators do not know about The Family, does that not say how lax our regulations are about where charity money comes from and where it goes? And if anyone brings this up, they are derided as bigots and crazed conspiracy theorists.

I'm not sure if this is going to make any impact whatsoever, but I hope it makes some people think about what is potentially going on in our country under the guise of welfare programmes, and who we're letting in.

Adding to this thread. https://t.co/TZkJOrrRg2

> I have goosebumps. While trying to find video material on The Family International in India, I found this video made 5 days before I made my thread. It is various testimonies of Indian ex-members of the TFI's Deaf Friendship Club. https://t.co/SvSZEwXMY5
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> — Shanteehee (@shanteehee) September 4, 2020