

# **Moon ceremony causes a Capitol uproar**

Rev. Sun Myung Moon claims Messianic role at congressional reception

**By Sheryl Gay Stolberg**

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**WASHINGTON -- As a shining symbol of democracy, the U.S. Capitol isn't ordinarily a place where coronations occur. So news that the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the eccentric and wealthy Korean-born businessman, donned a crown in a Senate office building and declared himself the Messiah while members of Congress watched is causing a bit of a stir. One congressman, Rep. Danny Davis, D-Ill., wore white gloves and carried a pillow holding one of two ornate gold crowns that were placed on the heads of Moon and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, at the ceremony, which took place March 23 and capped a reception billed as a peace awards banquet.**

Davis, for the record, says he held the wife's crown and was "a bit surprised" by Moon's Messiah remarks, which were delivered in Korean but accompanied by a written translation. In them, he said emperors, kings and presidents had "declared to all heaven and earth that Reverend Sun Myung Moon is none other than humanity's Savior, Messiah, Returning Lord and True Parent."

This week, after reports of the event had surfaced in the online magazine Salon and various publications, Capitol Hill was in full-blown backpedaling mode, as lawmakers who attended struggled to explain themselves.

"I remember the king and queen thing," said Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, R-Md. "But we have the king and queen of the prom, the king and queen of 4-H, the Mardis Gras and all sorts of other things. I had no idea what he was king of."

Others, such as Sen. Mark Dayton, D-Minn., insisted they were duped and had no idea that the reception was connected to Moon. Dayton said he attended because a constituent was being honored. He left before the crowning.

"I never saw Reverend Moon present during the time I was there," he said. "I did not stay for any formal program."

At 84, Moon cuts a curious figure in Washington, where he mingles with the city's power elite by dint of his dual roles as religious leader and media mogul. He owns The Washington Times, which bills itself as a conservative alternative to The Washington Post, as well as United Press International, the wire service. As a conservative, he claims close ties to President Bush and the Republican Party. Renowned for officiating at mass weddings, he received an 18-month prison sentence in 1982 for tax fraud and conspiracy to obstruct justice.

**Moon has claimed to have spoken in "the spirit world" with all deceased U.S. presidents, Jesus, Moses, Mohammed and others. At the March 23 event he said, "The founders of five great religions and many other leaders in the spirit world, including even Communist leaders such as Marx and Lenin . . . and dictators such as Hitler and Stalin, have found strength in my teachings, mended their ways and been reborn as new persons."**

Moon's Unification Church has many branches, including the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace, which held what it called an Ambassadors for Peace awards banquet in the Dirksen Office building on March 23. Lawmakers were told that "exemplary leaders from across the nation will be honored with the 'Crown of Peace' award for leadership in reconciliation and peacemaking."

An initial invitation, sent to all members of Congress, stated that Moon and his wife would also be present and honored for their work. But follow-up letters, including one provided by Dayton, mentioned only the peace foundation and simply told each lawmaker who was being honored from his or her state.

Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., who attended but said he didn't stay for the crowning ceremony, said the invitation was similar to countless requests he receives to honor local constituents. In this case, he said, a black bishop in his district was among the award recipients. "That's a big deal," he said. "If you've got a bishop coming to be honored, you've got to show up."

Some Republicans who attended the event, including Bartlett, said they did so mainly to salute The Washington Times. "I'm a conservative," Bartlett said. "I'm delighted that we have a middle-of-the-road paper in Washington."

This article contains material from other wire services.