

Victims' group wants WU to fire instructor

By Kristin McGrath

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The Survivors' Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP) is determined to eliminate a rabbi from Washington University's faculty. Rabbi Mordecai Magency, a psychology and religious studies instructor at both Washington University and Webster University, was accused of seducing patients while working as a psychotherapist in the 1980s.

The complaints filed against Magency seventeen years ago claimed that he broke a state law by having sexual relationships with four women while providing them with therapy services.

SNAP's involvement in the situation began when one of the victims informed them that Magency was affiliated with Webster and the University and that his name had been appearing in the schools' course listings. SNAP has taken the position that teaching psychology courses is a violation of the agreement he signed in 1987 when his license to practice psychology was revoked.

Magency taught several courses at Washington University in the spring and summer of 2003 and is currently teaching Psychology and Religion through University College.

According to Barbara Dorris, a local director for SNAP, the network's mission encompasses the punishment not just of priests but also of all religious authority figures, despite what its name may suggest,

"We support people who have been abused by clergy-all clergy-not just priests," said Dorris. "We will investigate anything in the support of survivors."

According to Dorris, SNAP's determination to have Magency removed from the faculties of both universities is partially an effort to support his victims.

"There were numerous victims abused by this man," she said. "He was exploiting the patients and the patients' families."

Although the alleged actions did not occur in Magency's capacity as a rabbi, Dorris feels that SNAP's involvement is imperative.

"Our concern is that [while] teaching, he's around vulnerable people," she said. "Many girls living away from home for the first time are seventeen to eighteen years of age, and when they need to talk to someone, they go to someone they can trust. That person is often a rabbi. This allows the pattern [of abuse] to repeat itself."

In a written statement to the Webster University Journal, Magency insisted that his role as an instructor did not violate the agreement he made when the State Committee of Psychologists (SCOP) suspended his license.

"I scrupulously followed the guidelines of SCOP for the years that my license was under review and then some," he stated. "I have never violated the smallest part of any agreement

with SCOP, and this includes my teaching at Webster and Washington universities.”

Looking back to what transpired seventeen years ago, Magencey expressed regret, adding, “My errors of judgment were inexcusable and I sincerely regret those errors to this day.” Magencey also revealed in his statement to Webster that he had undergone psychotherapy in order to “deal with the problems that led to [his] behavior.”

Susan Killenberg McGinn, director of University Communications, issued a statement saying that Magencey is a part-time, adjunct instructor at University College and that any issues concerning the status of Magencey’s license must be resolved between Magencey and the attorney general’s office.

Dorris said that SNAP has not been contacted by Webster or the University regarding any action they may be taking against Magencey.

According to Dorris, this case serves as a reminder that sexual abuse is often impossible to predict.

“Most people want to believe that a molester is a dirty man hiding in the bushes,” she said. “But often the case is that they’ve charming and charismatic. They may do wonderful things. They may help people. They may counsel hundreds of women, but if one of those women is in trouble, we feel that is one too many.”