

Applying Anthropology to Courtroom Work

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Abstract

Anthropology is continually expanding its parameter. As a consequence, the twenty-first century will see the sub-discipline of applied anthropology coming to the fore as more and more anthropologists contribute their expertise to problem-solving in the non-academic world. An example of this burgeoning approach to doing anthropology is the work of one anthropologist, over a two year period of time, for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, as an expert witness in a lawsuit brought by a women who charged she was terminated from her job because of her religion.

Introduction

In 1994 I received a letter from a Mr. George Allen (all names have been changed for reasons of confidentiality), an attorney for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), stating that I had been recommended to him by a former colleague of mine from the University of Denver, and several other recognized authorities in my sub-field of alternative religions, or as they are commonly called, cults. The recommendations were made on the basis of my having been engaged, at that time, in over seventeen years of ongoing research in New Religious Movements (NRMs), New Age religious and secular movements, and a non-paid position of "Cult Resource Person" for the Public Relations department of the university, and the fact that my dissertation research and fieldwork involved a particular alternative religion called Wicca, or Witchcraft. My position with the public relations department required that I handle any and all inquiries directed at the university from police departments, television stations, newspapers, and any other group, organization, or individual requesting information about alternative religious activity. At one time it was known that over five hundred such groups existed in Colorado alone, hence the need for an informational source. Because of my ongoing interest and continuing fieldwork among these many groups I contacted Mr. Allen at the Denver Regional Office of the EEOC and informed him that I would be interested in learning more about his problem.

Background History of Wicca. Basic Principles and Doctrines

The practice of the Old Religion, or witchcraft, the term that was applied to it when Christianity became

the ascendant religion, is probably as old as humankind. Archaeological research going back over 50,000 years shows purported evidence of hunting and fertility magic performed by our ancestors in order to ensure the survival of the group. As time moved on and populations grew and perforce began to opt for a sedentary lifestyle, magical practices were expanded to include agricultural and earth-centered rituals because although agriculture could assure a more consistent source of vegetable matter for food, it was still chancier than gathering/ hunting. However, with the rise first of Judaism, and later Christianity and Islam, these practices, and the honoring of multiple deities, was forced underground, culminating in Europe, between the 14th and 17th centuries, in the Witch Craze, in which thousands of women, and a few men, were burned at the stake, hanged, or tortured to death at the behest of the Inquisition. It was the Church's way of consolidating its hold over the minds and spirits of the population at large.

The Church's efforts were more successful in urban centers than in the countryside where the "Pagani," pagans, or peasants continued to practice the fertility rituals of the Old Religion to ensure good crops at planting and harvest times. Wise-women and -men were also consulted by the Pagani for help when illness struck either humans or livestock. These individuals, now called shamans by some, generally followed seasonally oriented, nature- or earth-centered ritual practices of their ancestors. Because the church was not successful in stamping out many of these practices, they became Christian rituals, such as the Franciscan blessing of animals to protect them from harm, and the blessing of the family automobile. Another pagan carryover is the placing of flowers on graves (Finucane 1396:164).

In the 19th century a resurgence of interest in paganism and witchcraft took place among the intellectual elite of Europe (Weber 1974,1976). In the 1960s the United States first became aware of what was to become generally known as "The New Age." Non-western religions and philosophies were suitably altered to appeal to Western ideas of religion.

Witchcraft ("Wicca" had not at this time caught on as the new name), included in this latest new religious revival, had previously been transmitted from one generation to another through the oral tradition for two reasons: 1) the peasant populations which still performed these rituals were largely illiterate; and 2) the Church had been successful in demonizing its practice. Therefore, since no reliable documentation apparently existed outside of highly biased Church records, Wicca was reinvented. Now anyone with the price of a book could go to any occult shop and learn how to become a modern witch (Adler 1979, 1386; Wittig 1971).

Three names are prominent among the "reinventors:" Gerald Gardner, Aleister Crowley, and Alexander Sanders. From the teachings of these three men arose a multivariate, modern synthesis of what today is assumed to be the Old Religion. These variations reflect distinct regional and localized practices, all of which can be identified as modern Witchcraft or Wicca. (Adler 1979, 1986; Melton 1982, 1986).

Modern Wicca has one Law and three basic tenets. The Law itself, said to be thousands of years old by believers, is "An ye harm none, do ye as ye will," was coined by Aleister Crowley around the beginning of the 20th century. All Wiccans promise to follow the Law.

The three basic tenets are: 1) the law of reincarnation (borrowed from Buddhism in this century); 2) the law of retribution (what one does will return threefold to the person; and 3) the law of cause and effect (Magick) [the 'k' is added to distinguish it from stage magic or illusion].

Following these tenets is not mandatory; only the Law itself is mandatory. As a result, any witch who does not believe in reincarnation cannot be forced to believe in order to remain a witch. The third tenet is also optional, as many covens or circles do not practice magic(k), ceremonial or otherwise. And because a witch promises to harm none in her or his practice of the Craft, they do NOT perform human or animal sacrifice,

celebrate the Black Mass, desecrate cemeteries or religious symbols, nor perform magic(k) or cast spells to injure or kill others. They are not Satanists, despite repeated attempts by misguided, misinformed, or uninformed individuals to brand them as such. Wicca, Witchcraft, the Craft, is a benign, earth-centered religion, of whose many focuses are preservation of the environment, healing, and equality of the sexes.

Modern Witchcraft is a religion that honors as its supreme deity a goddess, or the female principle of life, and sometimes, a god, who is the consort of, but never superior to, the goddess. In the case of the lawsuit that had been filed in Federal court the plaintiff, or Charging Party, claimed she was a practitioner of Celtic Wicca, one of the many variants of the Craft.

EEOC vs. Abraham Medical Center

On September 30,1990, Judith Reedlaw received a telephone call from the Director of Nurses of Abraham Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska, telling her that she was discharged from her nursing position because the Director had been informed that Ms. Reedlaw was a witch. Up to, but not including, the day of her discharge her performance of her duties had been considered satisfactory (documentation submitted as evidence). The formal charge of discrimination filed on May 17, 1991, stated that the Charging Party (CP) "wear(s) a religious collar since I am an ordained minister." On June 3, 1991, the Denver Regional Office of the EEOC acknowledged receipt of the complaint and four days later a formal inquiry was launched against Abraham Medical Center pertaining to religious discrimination in the work place. Over a period of several months letters were exchanged between attorneys for the Commission and the medical center. During this exchange the government attorneys advised the medical center and its attorneys that under the Non-Retaliation Requirement in Section 704(a) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, employees might be asked to testify, assist, or participate in any manner in an investigation without fear of reprisal from the employer. In answer, the medical center's attorneys took the position that it was a religious organization within the meaning of Section 702 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and therefore, the EEOC had no jurisdiction over the institution. However, because they did not want to prejudice Section 702 they would comply with the commission's request for information. The Commission replied that the medical center was

not a religious organization under Section 702 because its primary purpose was secular, despite its affiliation with a particular religious group. The gist of the information they supplied was that the CP was terminated because it was discovered, and she readily admitted, that she considered herself to be a witch involved in witchcraft, devil worship, and cultism. One of her patients on the psychiatric ward discovered that she was a witch. This patient claimed to be a victim of cult abuse and became terrified of the CP. It was also stated that the medical center did not consider witchcraft a religion.

In a rebuttal statement dated April 17, 1992, CP stated she did not tell her supervisor she was a witch; her supervisor told her; that she wore a clerical shirt and collar to work for almost two weeks before her discharge; and she never spoke of her religion to her patients in the psychiatric ward, but did give a business card to a patient who asked her about her clothing.

The situation began to become cloudy when the attorneys for the medical center revealed that the CP had legally changed her name to Reedlaw, and wrote on her coffee cup in the staff lounge, "Reverend Doctor J.R.," although she admitted she had not been ordained in any recognized seminary or similar institution. In addition they stated that organizations in the Omaha area, particularly the Cult Awareness Network, that dealt with cult abuse, were familiar with her and her husband's activities.

On May 5, 1993, after months of continuous exchanges of letters and documents, a determination was finally handed down by the District Director of the Denver Regional Office of the EEOC that Judith Reedlaw had been unlawfully discharged from her job because of her religious affiliation, and that the matter would now be considered for adjudication in Federal court. On May 19, the attorneys for the medical center, in an immediate counter-move to prevent the case from coming to trial, offered to make a cash settlement with the stipulation that CP would not be rehired. On May 20, the offer was rejected by Reedlaw, and a counter-offer was submitted which was immediately rejected by the medical center, who withdrew its offer of settlement. On June 25, 1993, the medical center was notified under Section 706(b) of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, that further conciliation efforts would be futile or non-productive and the United States Government in the office of the

EEOC was prepared to file formal charges of religious discrimination in the workplace.

It was not until a little over a year later that I received the letter requesting my assistance as an expert witness for the government. The first meeting with the government attorneys took place in Denver in October 1994. Attorney George Allen, with whom I was to work for most of the case, began by explaining why I had been contacted and who had recommended me. After these preliminary remarks Mr. Allen began to query me about my background, publications, fieldwork, general knowledge of New Age Movements, including secular (militant groups), religious and non-religious groups, and surprisingly, pseudo science and pseudo archaeology, as well as a number of non-traditional healing techniques. Apparently my answers satisfied him and he handed me a summary of the lawsuit up to that time, asking me to take it home, read it, and then contact him to let him know what my decision was. Before I accepted the summary I informed him that if I should find anything detrimental to the government's case, or that they had no case, I would not hesitate to say so, and that under no circumstances could I, or would I, alter my findings to conform to the charges. Mr. Allen said that all he wanted was an objective evaluation that took neither side.

The Work Begins

It took no more than reading the first few pages of the summary to realize that both parties to the litigation had no idea of Judith Reedlaw's beliefs. Troubling, too, was the fact that the summary was vague despite the legalese involved. I called Mr. Allen, explained the problem, and asked him to send me further documentation to assist in my evaluation. I repeated that I was not judging the information, simply trying to evaluate it. He agreed to send me more material and a few days later I received a more detailed and comprehensive file of documents. Among those documents was a notarized statement by the CP in which she described her cultural background, education and work background, religious beliefs, and the incident leading up to her dismissal.

Judith Reedlaw (CP), was a 35 year old woman who is now a registered nurse living in Omaha, Nebraska. At the time of the incident she had less than a year to go before receiving her nursing degree. As was required by her program she was doing a practicum as a student

nurse practitioner in psychiatric nursing care at Abraham Medical Center. According to her affidavit she had been wearing a clerical collar and shirt to work for the two weeks prior to her dismissal, had written on a coffee cup "Rev. Dr. J.R." and apparently had handed an ambiguously worded business card to a psychiatric patient. However, she was unsure which patient had complained about her, which, added to her different appearance from the other nurses, resulted in her termination. It was not until I received this file that I began to perceive what would be a very interesting case I immediately notified Mr. Allen that I would be willing to act as an expert witness in this instance.

Analysis of the File Documents as Reported to EEOC

Although Ms. Reedlaw claimed to be Wiccan her opening statement was sexist in what is purported to be a non-sexist religion. She stated, "I believe that god is all things to all men." Either she was unaware of the patriarchalism of this statement or was insensitive to the spiritual aspirations of those women who embrace Wicca as their religion. A second statement, "A witch is trained by one of the 100 teachers, to every generation there is exactly 100 teachers." This statement has no basis in fact, and appears to be a pseudo-myth created by CP's husband who claimed he was one of those hundred teachers, and who, incidentally, initiated her into his coven.

When questioned about her name change and the jewelry she wore, she denied they had any significance. However, as is well known in anthropology, a name change takes place in many cultures when a person goes through a rite of passage - and these names are very significant and secret; only a very close friend or relative may know this name. It was obvious to me that Reedlaw's use of her new name revealed a flaunting of her power name before others, as she was secure in her knowledge that no one would have any idea what the name meant. It was only when she knew my anthropological background and the linguistic analysis I did on her name that she admitted she had not told the truth about her name.

The jewelry she wore: a silver pentacle (star enclosed in a circle), silver earrings with Wiccan symbols, silver rings with similar symbols, and a silver ring on the index finger of her right hand (her power finger) were all significant, and all denied under oath.

Next came a totally unexpected light spot in what seemed to be turning into a very dark picture. When asked about the "Intuitive Arts Foundation," she stated that it was "a sort of Omaha Ghostbuster" headed by the Reverend Doctor Leon Reedlaw, her husband, who was an ordained minister in the Universal Life Church (ULC). He also held degrees of Doctor of Divinity, Doctor of Metaphysical Science, as well, from the ULC. He was also a Licensed Religious psychologist, but refused to say where he had been licensed, or who had licensed him. Ms. Reedlaw could not verify his licensing. According to her statement his work consisted of occult investigation: i.e., hauntings, poltergeist activity, exorcism, and so on, education and rescue (both unspecified), intuitive counseling, licensed soul clinic, and occult training.

Finally, and what would prove to be the weakest point of the lawsuit, was the troubling statement about her education and degrees. Before her final conversion to Wicca Ms. Reedlaw had an excellent traditional educational background, having received a B.A. in the Humanities, and was at that time working toward a degree in nursing. But it was her claim to a "doctorate" received from the ULC, as seen on a coffee cup and her application for employment with Abraham Medical Center that I was sure the attorneys for the medical center would lean on heavily.

Despite the fact that the ULC has won several tax related lawsuits with the I.R.S. and was, at the time of this case, accredited by the State of California, it is nothing more than a diploma mill, selling "degrees" for a price through the mail, although it is said to be possible for a "student" to take some course work in class in California. As corroboration of this I am also an "ordained minister" of the ULC. Clarification is necessary at this point.

During my fieldwork in the early 1980s many of my Wiccan informants were talking seriously about establishing "churches" in Colorado. At the time it was not difficult to apply for the tax-exempt status this confirmed. A meeting place had to be established and regular meetings or services scheduled. Usually applicants claimed their own homes as churches. In order to attract those individuals who were leaving the more structured, mainstream churches ministerial status lent an aura of authenticity and permanency to the new "churches". Since traditional seminary attendance required many years of training and study, many of

these people took a shortcut, and applied for ordination in the ULC. In order to test the ease with which this could be done I wrote a letter stating my "sincere desire" for ordination (words supplied me by my informants), enclosed a one dollar bill, and in a very short time received my certificate of ordination, plus a wallet size card attesting my new status. In addition I began receiving a newspaper from them which continued for a number of years. Of special interest in that newspaper were church advertisements for the various ecclesiastical offices one could apply for, after paying a suggested fee specified as a donation. Although nowhere was the Roman collar or vestments advertised many of the photos in the newspaper showed ULC clergy people (both women and men) wearing the collar and shirt.

Ms. Reedlaw's certificate of ordination was signed by her husband, Dr. Leon Reedlaw, who she claimed was her ULC teacher, and Kirby J. Hensley, president of the ULC. No classroom time was required. Her degrees of Doctor of Divinity and Doctor of Religious Humanities, were signed by Hensley. Again, no class work was required and only two books were to be read. No dissertation or any other term paper was required.

In my opinion, under the circumstances just described, I could not call Ms. Reedlaw, Reverend Doctor, because "none of her degrees from the ULC are worth the paper they were printed on." With these closing remarks I submitted my report to Mr. Allen. I did not think I would hear from him again.

The Fieldwork

Ten days later I received a telephone call from a Mr. John Brandon, who was the supervisory head of the legal department for the Denver office of the EEOC. He had read my report and requested that I be a member of the team being put together to try the case in Federal court. I agreed and in a short while I was on my way to Omaha to interview Judith Reedlaw, her husband, and their coven of witches.

Before leaving I contacted several friends in the Wiccan community who were residents of Omaha and asked for information on Reedlaw and her group. Although familiar with the Intuitive Arts Foundation through a newsletter it published, they were hazy about the founder(s). They thought the coven practiced some form of Celtic Wicca, based on some writings in the

newsletter. This was new information for me as it was not mentioned in any of the documents in my possession. This was to be the key to the kind of questions I would be asking in the initial interview. Fortunately, my library contained several volumes on the Celts (Champion et al 1984; Sharkey 1981; Hope 1987; Glass Koentop 1991). Celtic Wicca is one of the many variant forms of modern Wicca. Rich in oral tradition, ancient Celts rarely used a written language, although recent archaeological finds indicate some form of a very simplistic writing system was present, though apparently known only to and used only, by the priests, priestesses, and scribes.

Unlike their Greek and Roman counterparts, the Celts worshipped no set pantheon of gods. More than 400 names of deities survive, indicating that each tribe probably had its own cult figures, i.e., local deities. Common threads exist, however: groves and springs were set aside as sanctuaries, human heads, considered to be a supreme source of spiritual power, and images of animals, such as boars and bulls, were held sacred, and a caste of priests and priestesses, known as Druids, performed religious rites. Bards passed on myths and legends of the Celts through the oral tradition utilizing poetry, music and song, and story-telling.

The foundation of the Celtic religion was in the form of the sacred Five, i.e., the Triple Goddess in her three aspects of Maiden, Mother, and Crone, (the Earth aspect); her consort, the Solar Mate or Sky Deity of Light (the Sky aspect); and the god of the Underworld, or Lord of the Regions of the Dead (the Underworld aspect) (Hope 1987:66, 183-130). Almost all ancient religions we are aware of share these tripartite aspects of an Upper, Middle, and Lower World. The Celts also believed in reincarnation, or the transmigration of souls, and that this concept was not, in their cultural world-view, limited to the human species (Hope 1987:31). As trees were considered sacred, a form of tree calendar was used that specified feasts and sacred days in the Celtic year (Glass-Koentop 1991).

Methodology

The opening sequence of questions were data-gathering in intent in order to establish the identity and background of the informant. After the pertinent data had been recorded questions were then asked randomly and some were repeated in order that no set

pattern of questions could be anticipated, and in order to clarify previous answers. Some were the result of open-ended questions: answers to prepared questions suggested other questions that had not been previously considered.

Our first meeting took place in a conference room reserved for us by the EEOC. I learned that I would not be allowed to take photographs. Also, her husband, whom I was to interview the second day of my visit, had backed out. Nor was I allowed to interview the other coven members. When I attempted to explain the seriousness of this omission she stated she was only trying to protect the others in the group. I acceded to her wishes and used the remaining three days of my trip to do a more comprehensive and in-depth interview with her. It wasn't until later the true reason for the change came out. Mr. Reedlaw had a secret he did not want exposed, and he had threatened the other coven members with a "Sanction," a sort of psychic interdiction, against anyone who spoke with Ms. Reedlaw's team. She was indeed, on her own.

How She Became a Witch

Ms. Reedlaw stated that her initial religious experience before becoming a member of the Wiccan religion is as follows: she was born and raised as a Roman Catholic, became dissatisfied with its teachings, began exploring other mainstream religions, and finally converted to Judaism, where she changed her name for the first time, taking what she said, "was a more Jewish-sounding name." She has retained both the first and second name she adopted at that time. It wasn't until 1980 when she met Leon Reedlaw, who was to convert her to what he called Celtic Wicca, a small subdivision of Wicca, that she felt and thought she had finally found a religion she could be comfortable with. She was initiated after about a week of study, in the Wiccan fashion, on one of the Eight Great Sabbats, or holidays Wiccans traditionally celebrate, and at which time initiation is appropriate. She stated that as far as she was aware, neither her parents, nor anyone else in her family was Wiccan, yet she claimed to be a "Famtrad," i.e., her tradition is passed in an unbroken line from parents to children. Ms. Reedlaw considered herself a Pagan, but then went on to say that a Pagan is a person who believes in more than one god, which was in direct contradiction of her earlier statement that she believed in one god, in the form of the tripartite goddess. Theologically speaking this might be considered hair-

splitting, but surprisingly, her approach is correct for it is axiomatic that all paths lead to one god regardless of the path chosen, or the name or names used to identify the deity or deities. This is one of the philosophical fine points the lay-person with a Sunday school or catechism class education is unaware of, fails to grasp, or is not trained to grasp.

The next set of questions was designed to test her knowledge of the history of witchcraft, symbols, ritual paraphernalia, healing practices, and knowledge in general.

When asked to explain the meaning of the "Witches Pyramid" she stated she had never heard of it. The Witches' Pyramid consists of four cornerstones: 1) a virulent imagination; 2) a will of fire; 3) rock-hard faith; and 4) a flair for secrecy (Huson 1370:24). Not all Wiccans, especially non-Gardnerians as she claimed to be, might know what the Witches' Pyramid is but I was not disturbed by this lack of knowledge as the interview was an attempt to gather preliminary information about her beliefs.

Another set of questions addressed ritual paraphernalia, and it was here that we began to establish some foundation for her belief system. She was also very knowledgeable in how to perform certain rituals, i.e., casting the circle, invoking the quarters, use of the athame (ritual knife), the Chalice, singulum (cord), water, incense, and the Pentacle.

When asked what the significance of the passing of the coin was she drew another blank. Supposedly, in the Middle Ages witches were said to pass a particular coin from hand to hand to alert other witches of the next Sabbat. Today, of course, the telephone has taken the place of the coin.

In an attempt to ascertain her general knowledge of the principle figures in modern Wicca, she was able to identify Gerald Gardner, knew a little about Aleister Crowley, but said she had never heard of Alexander Sanders, founder of Alexandrian Wicca. She also stated she had never heard of nor read the works of early twentieth century Egyptologist, Margaret Murray, who claimed to have discovered an organized witch-cult in the Middle Ages.¹ Ms. Reedlaw's answers were not unusual considering she had not been exposed to any but one small community of witches in Omaha. Lack of general knowledge does not indicate a lack of faith.

When I asked how witches heal she said she did not do any rituals to heal anyone. However, she did state she was currently taking a class in something called "Healing Touch" (HT), but did not seem to be aware that a certain amount of ritual preparation, as she described the preparatory procedure, was necessary to put the "healer" in the right mood to conduct a so-called healing, not only in HT but in Therapeutic Touch (TT), which this sounded similar to, and was described as a technique that unruffled the aura through the application of balancing energy. Therapeutic Touch is a controversial pseudoscientific "alternative healing method" invented by a Hungarian horse trainer to relieve muscle pain in horses that has not been scientifically validated through the empirical method (Krieger 1979:4-8). However Ms. Reedlaw stated that HT goes beyond TT. It is not Wiccan and does not involve Wiccan healing. Apparently she was unaware TT is also non-Wiccan.

In recounting how she went about using HT she described it as using energy to heal, to affect another person's energy by aligning the Chakras: Hindu, Buddhist energy centers in the body, (similar to the technique used in TT), and unlike TT sometimes touching the patient. She also stated some HT therapists used crystals and color therapy in their practice as do some TT practitioners. She also said that she does not do HT or TT without a patient's permission (permission is also necessary in TT), and considers both techniques part of her nursing function, rather than Wiccan identity. When I asked her if she used psychic energy to ease pain she replied this was a grey area, sometimes, yes, and sometimes, no. Grey area again when I questioned her on whether HT works with the terminally ill, and she responded that TT works more often, but did not elaborate. Ms. Reedlaw did not, and does not, apparently, make the connection between TT and HT with the ancient technique and belief in the efficacy of the laying on of hands by certain people that was supposed to cure disease. One need only to have watched certain televangelists in recent years to realize the practice has not died out.

At this time I again changed the direction of the questions and asked her what steps are taken to become Celtic Wiccan. Her response was that one witch could not initiate another into Celtic Wicca. Only one of the hundred could do this. Preparation consisted of one week of informal training and initiation takes place on a Wiccan holiday. When asked

how many levels there were in Celtic Wicca (some Wiccan covens recognize as many as six degrees of rank), she replied, "Only one," although earlier she said there were celebrants, who were not initiated members of the coven, initiated witches, and the High Priestess. In answer to the question if there was a central witches registry she answered in the negative. I asked this question specifically because several anti-cult organizations claim there is such an office. To my knowledge, no such registry exists, or has ever existed. This is typical of the scare-tactics anti-cultists use to frighten the uninformed and gullible public. In answer to the question of an American leader of witches, her reply was that no such person existed in Wicca as Wicca is an individual religion.

When asked if she had ever worn jewelry such as a Pentacle, crystals, moons and stars, in the form of necklaces, earrings, bracelets, rings, or amulets, while caring for patients, her answer was "Yes," and when asked if any comments were made, she answered, "No." However, she made the unsolicited statement that at one point she wore a star on her forehead, and when asked about it by patients, told them it was part of her belief system, and apparently did not elaborate on her answer. Asked if any of her nursing colleagues wore religious symbols such as a cross, crucifix, or star of David, while caring for patients, she again answered, "yes," and stated that nothing was said about it.

I changed direction again and asked her if she had ever been treated for mental, emotional, or psychiatric problems, and she said she had not, but that on December 12, 1977, she had been arrested at a pro-life sit-in and put on six months probation. Although her recollection of other dates was vague, this date seemed to stand out in her mind, but she refused to discuss the circumstances of the arrest.

Then I asked her to define metaphysics, as she had a Universal Life Church doctorate in that field. Her answer was garbled and vague. She stated that it was anything that does not deal with the physical world and included parapsychology, extra-sensory perception (ESP), and is not directly related to Wicca. A minimal dictionary definition of, "the study of being (ontology), and often, the study of the structure of the universe, that branch of philosophy that systematically investigates the nature of first principles and problems of ultimate reality," would have been more to the point.

The next set of questions I put to her concerned Satanism. Did she, or her coven-mates, perform ritual sacrifice of animals or humans, desecrate cemeteries, churches, or religious symbols, perform the Black Mass, or cast spells to injure or kill others? Her answer to all of these questions was a resounding "NO!"

At this point I began a new series of questions and we discussed the circumstances surrounding an incident in which a number of children were removed from an informal summer/ play-school Mr. Reedlaw operated sometime in 1987 or 1988. Here she again became very vague about dates and circumstances. Although she claimed they were never told of the charges filed against them she said that the Omaha police and representatives of the Child Protective Services raided their home and removed all the children there for two days, placing them in foster care, along with Mr. Reedlaw's son. When I expressed my amazement over the placing of day-care children in foster homes instead of returning them to their parents she ignored my comment. Instead, she went on to say that the officers claimed the house was a mess, and then stated she thought someone had reported them for Satanism because she and her husband were seen carrying knives (their athames). This was a puzzling incident; based on my knowledge of the many varied Wiccan rituals, ritual paraphernalia are never carried around in public. When a ritual is finished the tools and paraphernalia are put away, out of sight, to be taken out again only in performance of a ritual. I wound up this group of questions with one asking if the day-care center had to be licensed in Omaha. She replied that she had no idea.

Finally, in order to obtain a better grasp of the beliefs Ms. Reedlaw held I brought the questions back to Celtic Wicca. I was particularly interested in discussing early and recent influences on Celtic Wicca, and here again there appeared to be a dearth of information or knowledge.

Three very strong influences on Celtic religion were; 1) early Druidism/ Pre-Bardic tradition, pure though obscure version, very little is known of this tradition; 2) Christianized Bardic version from the tenth century on. It became a bastardized version of the original; and 3) new Age-Christianized-Gnosticized version that emphasized the Dualism of Light and Darkness, Good and Evil. In this latest version nine metaphysical or occult laws form the tenets of the current system. They

are: 1) Law of Rebound; 2) Law of Three Requests; 3) Law of Challenge; 4) Law of Equalities; 5) Law of Balance or Equipoise; 6) Law of Summons; 7) Law of Polarities; 8) Law of Cause and Effect; and 9) Law of Abundance. (Hope 1987:218-221). According to Hope these are the Nine Laws a student must thoroughly acquaint her/himself with before proceeding along the path to initiation in Celtic Wicca. Ms. Reedlaw was familiar with only three of these tenets.

Putting it Together

On the basis of this first series of interviews I was able to formulate a tentative opinion that this particular form of Celtic Wicca that Ms. Reedlaw followed appeared to be a syncretic amalgam, or variant, of several different Neo-Pagan, New-Age approaches to the divine or supernatural, with a very large local overlay. This kind of variation is usually found among very small, and sometimes isolated, groups of believers which rarely, if ever, constitute a circle or coven of, at the very outside, more than one hundred individuals living in the same geographical area. Realistically, such small groups usually number no more than fifty individuals at the height of its local popularity. Ms. Reedlaw claimed that at one time her coven consisted of fifteen people, but at the time of our interviews there were only four members. I had no reason to doubt her. In the final analysis of the coven population it came down to two members: Ms. Reedlaw and her husband. The other two left the coven because they were fearful of having to appear in court, and because of the sanction Mr. Reedlaw had imposed on them.

Despite the many inconsistencies in her statements, Ms. Reedlaw appeared to be what she claimed to be—Wiccan, although of a very naive and superficial order. Comparatively speaking, she had a Sunday-school knowledge of her religion. This is not meant to detract from her sincerity, because at all times during the interview she came across as sincere in her beliefs, being secure in the knowledge she did possess.

In mid-January, 1995, I filed a "Report of Expert Testimony" with the EEOC which included copies of my field notes, audiotapes, and recommendations for handling the lawsuit, focusing on three strong areas: 1) Wicca is a religion; 2) Ms. Reedlaw practices the Wiccan faith; and 3) Wicca does not involve Satanic Practices.

Two weeks later Mr. Brandon called me to give a sworn deposition on my findings. I agreed. I intended to use a relatively unknown government handbook issued to military chaplains entitled, "A Handbook for Chaplains: Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups." printed in October, 1987, which specifically recognizes Wicca as a legitimate religion. I believed I was now prepared to meet with the attorneys for the medical Center.

In early March 1995, I met with the attorneys for both sides and the deposition-taking commenced. All appeared to be going well for the government's case when a new twist came to light. Quite unexpectedly we were informed that Mr. Reedlaw was a fugitive from justice according to a warrant from the State of New York. Although this had no bearing on our case it would not go down easily in court.

Mr. Brandon called Ms. Reedlaw and set up an appointment for me with her and her husband. I returned to Omaha a week later and was again stonewalled by Ms. Reedlaw. Mr. Reedlaw refused to cooperate again and, in fact, had taken his son and disappeared. Ms. Reedlaw claimed she had no idea where they were. I returned to Denver and reported this latest development. I contacted friends in the Wiccan community in New York City and ask for their assistance. They portrayed Mr. Reedlaw as a sleazy character, "always on the look out for a fast buck", unemployed most of the time, living off the earnings of various women, a blot on the Wiccan community, a maverick. It was believed he was not a true Wiccan but someone who had jumped on the New-Age bandwagon in order to make an easy living. I made one more attempt to contact Mr. Reedlaw and the last two members of the coven and failed. I would have to work extra hard to keep the focus where it belonged, and that was Ms. Reedlaw.

In late April the Omaha attorneys returned and my deposition was taken, leaving out any mention of Mr. Reedlaw's legal difficulties. Negotiations dragged on and finally I received a notice that a trial date had been set for October 1996. What had once appeared to be a simple case of discrimination in the workplace was taking six years to adjudicate. In the meantime Ms. Reedlaw had found employment elsewhere, Mr. Reedlaw had come home, and the Omaha coven had dissolved.

In October 1996, I returned to Omaha with the team of EEOC attorneys. A few minutes after we arrived the attorneys for the medical center requested a conference and without further ado stated they were prepared to accede to all of Ms. Reedlaw's demands -a courthouse-steps- settlement, as it is termed, had been reached. Ms. Reedlaw would be reinstated in her old job and compensated for the loss of time and damages, a six figure settlement. Later, one of the attorneys for the medical center said they had submitted copies of my deposition to two other scholars with expertise in matters of the occult and both had concurred with my findings and urged settlement. We shook hands and the next day I returned to Colorado. Like John LeCarre's spy "...who came in from the cold ", anthropologists cannot for very long separate themselves from their chosen profession and the world they study.

Notes

1. Modern anthropologists and historians now say no such organization existed except in Murray's mind. There is no evidence, historically or archaeologically-speaking to support her claim.

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