



## Trapped in a cult

Physically abused, told they would die at 12 and banned from school: 'Real-life Kimmy Schmidt' twins reveal what life was like inside controversial Children of God sect  
As children growing up in a controversial religious sect, they spent every day 'paralyzed by fear'.  
They were physically abused, banned from school and told they would die as martyrs aged 12.  
But now, twin sisters Flor and Tamar Edwards, 34, have escaped from The Children of God cult and are both living and working in California - one as a freelance writer, the other as a yoga teacher.

They have opened up to ABC's Nightline about their lives inside the sect - which blended free love attitudes with preparing for the second coming of Jesus - and their transition to the outside world.

'I didn't know what a movie theater was,' said Flor. [...]

The Children of God cult was founded by former pastor, David Brandt Berg, in Huntington Beach, California, in 1968, and has frequently been at the center of physical and sexual abuse claims.

Former members include actress Rose McGowan, actor River Phoenix and his brother Joaquin.

Speaking to Nightline, the twins, who joined the group aged just five with their family while they were living in Los Angeles, said they and their 12 siblings were physically abused as youngsters.

'[Children] would be getting spanked really young. My little sister was like six months old which, you know, you don't get spanked at that age,' said Flor, adding that she was never sexually abused. During their childhood, Flor and Tamar were reportedly shut away from mainstream society, banned from going to school (meaning they could not read until aged nine) and kept in tiny living quarters.

They said they were taught 'everything was evil', including education, politics, money and music. Indeed, the sisters only heard chart-topping songs for the first time after escaping from the cult.

'The apocalypse seemed really scary,' she said. 'The whole Earth burning in the lake of fire, they had a whole agenda of what was going to happen like a lot of religions do, so it was terrifying.'

In 1994, Berg's death led to the sect breaking up. Flor and Tamar said they found their new life in the outside world difficult to adapt to - and still struggle to go out drinking or meet someone new.

(Source : <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3104015/Physically-abused-told-die-12-banned-school-Real-life-Kimmy-Schmidt-twins-reveal-life-like-inside-controversial-Children-God-sect.html>)