

The childhood is destroyed, say former
Twelve Tribes member Christian Reip

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Translated from the German

The children of the Bible-based Twelve Tribes cult are thrashed with willow rods on the palms or buttocks and also on the soles of their feet. Witnesses have previously confirmed beating allegations. The film from journalist Wolfram Kuhnigk showed how the children were beaten.

"I was beaten daily."

Former Twelve Tribes member Christian Reip now shares for the first time on radio about his experiences. About half a year ago, a hundred police in cooperation with the Youth Welfare Office removed 40 children from the parents of the

controversial Bible-based Twelve Tribes cult. The parents want them back because they feel they were treated unfairly. To outsiders, its hard to judge what is now best for the children.

Christian Reip is 18 and is a former member of the Bible-based "Twelve Tribes" cult. For him life was a nightmare in "Twelve Tribes" Klosterzimmern. "I was beaten every day at school. If one could not quickly perform mental arithmetic, or a student is not sitting at his/her desk or is day dreaming then they must go into the next room. The teacher has described this nicely: "You fell in the dirt and you must take a shower."

Our "teacher" struck us with a willow rod on the buttocks or palm, says Christian. Toddlers also received beatings to make them docile.

Once the child is born, the immas (moms) wrap the baby in cloths and secure it with

safety pins so that the baby cannot move. The child's will is broken at an early age.

The "Twelve Tribes" community prevents independent thinking.

Several times a week everyone gathers in a large room to rehash and obey the teachings of the "Apostle" Elbert Eugene Spriggs. Even the little ones must listen attentively for hours. Christian has endured all of this for years.

He was born in the Twelve Tribes community and has spent his childhood - or what was supposed to be his childhood. Actually childhood and youth doesn't exist in the community. They are destroyed. "The children are forced to be little adults."

Independent thinking and individuality are undesirable, says Christian.

All female community members must wear unattractive baggy trousers and loose fitting blouses. All men wear their hair long, and tied into a ponytail. Women also have long hair.

Eventually Christian could endure no more torture, and so he left the "Twelve Tribes" to live with his sister. I was told that Satan possesses the world and that it was evil. One finds salvation only in the community. Christian's brother still lives in the community. The rest of the family, his parents and his other three siblings, have left the cult.

"When one leaves the community, they don't know how to cope, how to behave or how to dress. You don't know where to go. You have no money, no car, no apartment. You are penniless. One should not be able to make it out here."

The community doesn't want its members to succeed living in the world should they leave the community.

My year in Swabia

The drama of the "Twelve Tribes"

The Twelve Tribes sect doesn't give its members the tools they need for life in the world, he continues.

The floggings create psychological pressure to conform to the standards of Elbert Eugene Spriggs - the cult leader.

The Twelve Tribes community makes its members dependent on them for everything.

Therefore, the authorities made the correct decision and removed the children when the police raided the German community.

In the community Christian did not receive a high school education.

Now he barely gets along in the world.

Although he has left the sect, they are never far from his thoughts. The traumatic experiences run like a red thread through his life. For the community, I am dead, but they are always in my thoughts.