

[Former Ronald McDonald Turns Vegetarian Activist](#)

Category : [March 1991](#)

Published by Anonymous on Mar. 02, 1991

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"I want to apologize for participating in helping to brainwash North America's young people into doing something that I know now to be contrary to the purpose of life." For almost four years, starting in 1978, Geoffrey Giuliano played Ronald McDonald for McDonald's of Canada and the Marvellous Magical Burger King in the Northeastern United States. Both are performing clowns whose purpose is to enhance the image of the two largest worldwide fast-food (hamburger) restaurant franchises. He made appearances for Burger King in medieval attire, singing, dancing and doing magic tricks. As Ronald, he made commercials and personal appearances and opened new McDonald's restaurants, presenting the "Ronald McDonald Safely Show" for kids.

Ten years later, he was watching TV when he saw an anti-smoking ad starring the man who played the rough and tough, macho Marlboro Man. This actor, having sold cigarettes all his life, was diagnosed with emphysema, a severe lung disease caused primarily by cigarette smoking. The similarity in their two situations inspired Giuliano to create a non-profit show starring himself as "an antimaterial, kind of a spiritual Ronald McDonald" who would teach kids vegetarian, nonviolent values and morals while entertaining them with magic, music and fun.

Born in Rochester, New York in 1953, Giuliano did bit parts in movies and commercials as a child. He became a member of Equity and played many roles through the years - a courtier in the Elizabethan Court (at Studio Arena), Mr. Goldstone in "Gypsy" (at a dinner theater in St. Petersburg, Florida) even Buddha (in London) where he appeared in "Siddharta" with Who guitarist Peter Townsend. In 1978, he graduated from New York State University with a masters degree in acting, a wife and two kids, huge student loans to pay back, and a desperate need for a job. Despite his credentials, the only audition he could get was for the Marvellous Magical Burger King.

"It was the only opportunity that presented itself to me. My beliefs were mine. If

the whole rest of the world wants to kill a cow and eat it, then let them do it as long as I don't participate. That's how I justified it."

After a successful stint as the Burger King, he was hired over 600 other clowns to represent McDonald's of Canada. He enjoyed a \$50,000 yearly salary, a chauffeur-driven limousine, a private chef, a penthouse office with a personal secretary. People asked for his autograph. After two years of this, he quit.

"I was doing a safety show for kids, when I found a memo that said 'The purpose of the Ronald McDonald Safety Show is to increase the awareness of McDonald's goods, services and products.' I thought to myself, 'Wait a minute pal, I thought the purpose was to help children.' That was the end of it. I let it go."

Geoffrey Giuliano loves children. He can make them smile. Ronald McDonald made regular visits to the terminally ill children at the Children's Hospital in Toronto. On one visit, a nurse said, "Oh don't go in there. He's too far gone." And I said, "Well, if he's so far gone and deep in a coma, what can it hurt?" So I went in and I tweaked his nose and I did a little magic trick and I whispered in his ear and I grabbed his hand, and I swear to God, he came out of his coma, and he smiled. It was unbelievable."

"I would do shows. All the shows were free. And there were kids there that never got to see any shows. They'd run up to me and they'd cry and they'd laugh...the children were wonderful. That's what kept me going. I knew the company [had ulterior motives], but I felt I was doing something good."

New Life Begins

Giuliano met his guru in 1980 at a Hare Krishna temple in Toronto, in the middle of his McDonald's career. Deeply impressed with the purity and devotion of "this little Indian sannyasin," he took initiation and was accepted as a disciple by His Divine Grace B.H. Mangalniloy Maharaj of the Sri Chaitaniya Gaudiya Math, who gave him the name Sriman Jagannatha Dasa Adikari. His wife, Vrinda Rani, also took initiation. Together, they are raising their four children as vegetarian Hindus.

Geoffrey Giuliano today is the author of several successful books about contemporary music personalities. "I live in a great big mansion that I bought with the proceeds from one of my books on George Harrison. I have a real, separate temple building which was designed and built as a temple, with installed Jagannath, Lord Chaitaniya, and Gopal Krishna deities - quite large. Also, I have beautiful Lord Ganesh camphor lamps that are about two feet high on either side of my altar. I'm very orthodox. The only books I read are religious Indian texts. I feel that more than living in my house, I'm a temple president presiding over a country ashram."

Secure in his own life, Giuliano feels the time is ripe to fulfill his guru-given mission and teach the vegetarian way of life that has given him energy, stamina and perfect health. He wants to create a new show and tour the school system, using the expensive training he received from Burger King and McDonald's to sell vegetarianism instead of meat.

"There is nothing to counteract the millions of dollars that McDonald's spends on the 'Ronald McDonald Appearance Program' - brainwashing the youth of the world to eat meat. I want [my show] to be as big-time show business as possible, for the right reasons this time. I'm willing to come right out in the open and say, 'I'm a converted white Hindu. I feel that people should be as nonviolent as possible. And I feel that eating meat is unhealthy, unnecessary and very, very wrong.' I want to purify myself and quit this world, forever. And if I can help somebody else, that's the only reason I'm doing this Ronald McDonald business."

"I very sincerely would like to apologize to all HINDUISM TODAY readers and to all of the vegetarian parents who may be having a tougher time now making their children understand the necessity and the urgency of a nonviolent, vegetarian diet because of some of my actions." He saw it as a way to take care of his family and to make children happy. "Overall, I'm sorry that I did it and now I have to make amends by speaking out against what I did."

On the other side of the dinner table: "My wish for all the meat-eaters is that they will grow to understand that they can live healthier, happier, holier lives by not participating in the senseless slaughter of innocent animals and that they're giving up a whole world of wonderful food for something which is dead and can only fill them with sorrow and disease ultimately."

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