

# Actress Leah Remini Escapes Cultish Church of Scientology After Years of 'Thought Modification'

Actress Leah Remini has severed ties with the Church of Scientology, a source with knowledge of her decision said on Thursday, making her one of the most high-profile members to quit.

Remini, best known for her role as Carrie Heffernan in the CBS sitcom "King of Queens," issued a statement following press reports that she had decided to leave the church.

"I wish to share my sincere and heartfelt appreciation for the overwhelming positive response I have received from the media, my colleagues, and fans from around the world. I am truly grateful and thankful for all your support," Remini said.

She did not address Scientology directly, but the source told Reuters that Remini's statement was her confirmation that she had left the church.

The *New York Post* broke the story early Thursday that Remini was leaving the Church of Scientology after "being subjected to years of 'interrogations' and 'thought modification' for questioning leader David Miscavige's rule," citing an unnamed source.

Remini's representatives would not comment on the New York Post article. Representatives for the Church of Scientology did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The actress, 43, has spoken publicly in the past about being a member of the Church of Scientology, which was founded in 1954

by science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard and has attracted several Hollywood stars including Tom Cruise and John Travolta.

The organization describes its practices as a religion and believes man is an immortal being whose experience extends beyond one lifetime.

But some observers – including media mogul Rupert Murdoch – liken it to a cult. Critics think the group coerces followers to think like they do, and they accuse Scientologists of harassing people who seek to quit.

The church came under fresh scrutiny last year when actress Katie Holmes suddenly divorced Cruise, with whom she has one daughter. Although there was speculation that Holmes had rejected Scientology, neither she nor Cruise addressed a split over the faith.

In an April 2001 interview with CNN, Remini said she “finds solace in her steadfast practice of Scientology,” and jumped to the defense of the religion.

“If somebody is going to get turned off about something because of what they read or heard, then that person’s not smart enough to even enter a church,” Remini said to CNN.

Other notable former Scientology members include director Paul Haggis, who spoke out in detail about his experiences with the church in a New Yorker article in February 2011.

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