

***Kathaleen Heney Sato,
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I joined the Unification Church in 1969, at the end of my first year of college. When I look back over the past 40 years, there were many deep experiences with God and True parents. However, the time I spent as a missionary in Africa had the greatest impact on my life of faith.

I will always be deeply grateful to True Parents for the precious experiences I had there.

I arrived in Cameroon, West Africa, in 1975, at night, not speaking even a word of French. I managed to get through immigration, after the Immigration Officer finally realized I really couldn't speak a word of French. He just waved me on. A strange feeling of being "home" came over me. I was alone, but I didn't feel afraid. The presence of God and True Parents were with me.

Several months later, when my visa expired for the second time, the founder of the private school (College Bilingue de la Reunification) where I worked went to the Department of Labor to help me get a residence card (a gray card). The Secretary of Labor argued with him that he had no reason to give a residence card to me on the basis of teaching English. They had many native Cameroonians who were qualified to teach. I was asked to leave the office while they talked in private. I prayed hard for a miracle. A short time later, I was called back in and told I would receive a gray card, in a month. I asked why the secretary had changed his mind. The founder of the school said "Because I said you are a missionary, and I wanted you to teach the children and give Sunday Service."

When True Father planned to speak at Yankee Stadium in 1975,

everyone prayed hard for its success. I remembered Rev. Ken Sudo telling us during our missionary training that he once wrote True Father a letter and offered his life. I, too, wrote a letter to True Father, offering my life for the success of Yankee Stadium.

We had no telephone or radio, so we didn't receive the news until a couple of days later. We heard from headquarters that the event wasn't completely victorious. I was a little uneasy, waiting each day for my life suddenly to end. However, nothing happened. After a week or so, I had a dream. In the dream, I appeared as a small child standing beneath a huge tree with the sun shining down through it. A voice spoke words of comfort to me: "You are still so young." I felt God had accepted my heart as an offering and left me on earth to grow spiritually.

Margot Kindler, my fellow missionary, who was still struggling to stay in the country, met a man who said he came to Cameroon to buy and sell timber. We, who were very naïve and inexperienced, never questioned his motives. He promised her a secretarial job in his company. Soon afterwards, he said he needed to leave the country because something had gone wrong with his business, and he had lost all the money. Margot also needed to leave the country to renew her visa. They ended up leaving on the same flight to Gabon (a neighboring country), where she would renew her visa, and he would connect to another flight back to America.

Margot was scheduled to return three days later, which was a church Holy Day. That evening I went out to catch a taxi to the post office to check for mail from headquarters. I crossed the street to wait for a taxi. A jeep suddenly pulled up, and the door swung open. The man inside asked me if I were Kathaleen Heney (my maiden name). I was amazed that he knew my name. He told me to get in with such a strong authoritative voice that I felt compelled to obey him. He told me he was taking me to the police station. I had no time to tell anyone where I was going.

When we arrived at the police station he started yelling at me in French telling me that Margot, the German missionary, was aiding the Mafia. I was so nervous it was hard for me to speak in coherent French. I kept trying to tell him that she was innocent. They pulled out five passports of the person we had known as a businessman. The officer explained that all the passports belonged to the same person. He was working for the Mafia.

We were clueless that he worked for the Mafia. I promised to bring the German missionary, Margot, to the police station when she returned. After what seemed like forever, they let me go. My spiritual son, George Tegha, arrived at the station just in time to escort me back to the center. Margot arrived later that night, but the station was closed. That was one of the longest nights I spent in Cameroon. I went through the whole scenario of the jail environment. There were no prisons for women, and there were no meals in prison unless you knew someone who could deliver them to you. There were no trials, no lawyers, and no court cases that I was aware of. The decision was in the hands of the person who did the interview. They either believed you or not. I told my German sister, "I will go to prison with you if they don't believe you are innocent." She said "Don't do that; there won't be anyone to bring me food."

The next morning we went to the police station. They tried all different kinds of tactics to get her to confess to the crime. The police even beat up a former member in front of her to frighten her. Finally they released her.

The man from the Mafia never re-contacted us. It was a miracle how God and True Parents had protected us. However, for several months, wherever we went we learned that the police had visited before us and questioned our friends and contacts. All of them testified to the police that they believed we were innocent, even without us saying anything to them about our situation. They believed that we were truly missionaries and nothing else.

I was willing to spend the rest of my life in Cameroon serving the people and being a representative of True Parents. However, in 1982, I received a telegram from the World Mission Department telling me to come home. I surrendered to the request with a sorrowful heart. However, I left having offered the best years of my life to a country, to its people, and to the beloved members — having loved them with my whole heart even more than my spouse.