

Generation Peace Academy at Puerto Leda, March 2018



From March 1st to March 9th the Generation Peace Academy came to Puerto Leda in Paraguay to learn about its history and inherit the unchanging heart of a missionary. Project Leda started around the year 1999. After a 40-day workshop with True Parents in Olimpo, Paraguay, the Japanese National Messiahs were told to go to Leda, an immense area of land that True Parents purchased that is larger than New York City in the Chaco Region of Paraguay. The area Leda is in is extremely rural and under developed with little to no means of transportation. The missionaries were told to create an example of an ideal community with sustainable food development. They started with a barren land with a few dilapidated buildings and created a magnificent facility.



Arriving in 3 aluminum motor boats, the 17 GPA members and GPA mom, Rossio Olson, along with their Leda guide, Mr. Sano, stepped onto the shore after a 3-4 hour ride up the Paraguay River through the rain. After walking down the muddy roads to the dormitories the group were shown to their rooms with bunk beds and air conditioning (brothers in one room and sisters in another), and the showers. The air and climate in Paraguay is very hot and humid since it is summer time for them in March, with December-February being the hottest times of the year. The buildings that are the dormitories, lecture hall, showers, and dining hall are all beautiful, white walled buildings with tile roofs and surrounded by many trees and flowering shrubs.



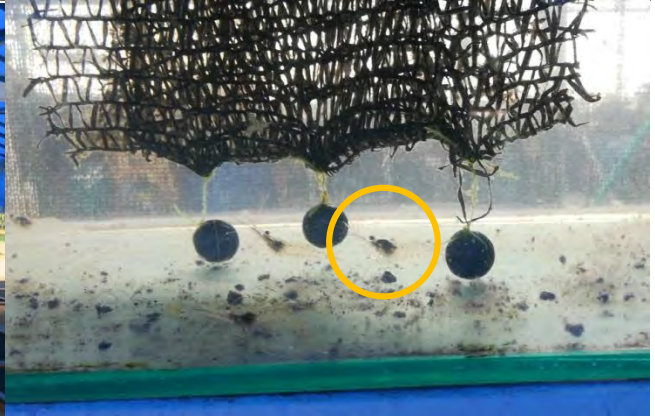
At Leda there are around a dozen Japanese National Messiahs working and maintaining the facility and its projects. All are over the age of 70 and are always keen on finding younger generations interested in helping and even living at Leda. While the GPA group was visiting there were three Japanese 2nd generation who are there for 3 months, one American 2nd generation from Virginia, and a 1st generation brother from North Carolina who was visiting Leda for the third time. There are also Paraguayan church members who come to help with projects and local natives who are hired to help with the many different jobs.



One of Leda's main goals is to become the main place where sustainable food resources are developed for the world. Through years of trial and error they have cultivated the land to raise taro potatoes, fish farms for raising pacu fish, raising cattle, pigs, and even beekeeping. The most recent project they are researching is raising large shrimp using the salt water naturally found underground.

Also, the assortment of wildlife and vegetation at Leda is immense, unique and exciting to observe.







The first full day was spent receiving an overview of the purpose of Leda and getting a tour of True Parents' house and most parts of the facility from the back of a pickup truck. The Japanese elders had prepared a full week schedule for the young GPA youth to try and test out several different activities. Day two was pacu netting and palm tree cutting. In the morning everyone trekked to one of the nearby fish ponds, were given life vests to wear, and were instructed to grab sections of a large net. Climbing down into the water the net was dragged through to the other end where the large, plate sized fish were collected then later gutted by the youth. In the afternoon there was palm tree cutting using an axe. The Japanese National Messiahs explained that before they could build anything they had to cut down the trees so everyone was challenged to cut down one tree each to experience what it was like pioneering the land. Our demonstrator made it look so easy...





Day 3: Travel to “Pig Land”. Far off in another part of the Leda property is the area where they raise free range pigs. Due to the rains the roads were muddy or flooded so we all took the small boats halfway there then walked the rest of the way, including wading through thigh deep water. At Pig Land there were all sorts of pigs of various colors and sizes, including tiny little piglets. We all had a chance to feed them corn kernels as they hungrily gathered around. One of the 2nd generation helpers working there captured a couple piglets for the GPA members to hold. Some of the brothers and sisters also attempted to capture a piglet of their own with Francis, the GPA group’s leader, who was able to capture a hefty young pig much bigger than a piglet.

After a walk back through flooded roads, a boat ride and taking showers, we all had the opportunity to ride horses. After each person had a turn, many jumped on again with more confidence and were even taking the horses for a run.





Day 4 and 5: Early in the morning we gathered into the small boats again and cruised up the river to the village of Esperensa to do a service project and spend the night. The village is one of several that the Leda group helps to support in the Chaco region through service projects, providing jobs at Leda and constructing school buildings in the villages. In Esperensa the houses and buildings are mostly made of wood so Leda built them a concrete school building many years ago next to the two story wooden school building they had. There is no running water and very little electricity in the village. When we arrived at the shore we were greeted by an entourage of excited children in their school uniforms. Going to their school they welcomed us with a song and we also sang them a song and taught them "You are my Sunshine". After introductions we were shown which classrooms we would be sleeping in then began cleaning and sanding the 2-story school building in preparations to paint it. This took all day and part of the next morning. We also got to experience playing with the village children, bathing in the river and using mosquito nets for sleeping. For our final farewell the GPA group performed dances, music and sang songs for the children and teachers.







During the last couple days the GPA group transplanted, harvested and washed taro potato roots and went fishing on the Paraguay River. They also learned part of the process for raising baby pacu fish as they sorted them by size from the fish farm ponds. On the day of departure the GPA group boarded the Aquidaban Ferry that comes by once a week to ferry passengers and goods to a town a day's travel south on the river where the group will then take a bus back to Asuncion. Traveling by ferry is another adventure in itself. Before leaving, the GPA youth gave a letter of gratitude to the Japanese elders, each expressing how grateful they were for the care they received and the amazing foundation that was created. The youth shared that they are truly inspired to inherit the elders' same faithful and unchanging heart to Heavenly Parent and True Parents because of their example and dedication at Leda.



