

The Difference Generation Peace Academy Made for Me

Katherine Lincoln
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Lincoln (left) and fellow GPA participant, Kailey Teo, (center) spent time with the Joshua House orphans in Georgetown, Guyana. The orphanage is run by the Accra's, a Unificationist family living in Guyana.

My name is Katherine Lincoln. I am an 18-year-old second-generation Unificationist from Omaha, Nebraska. My parents are Mark and Yoko Lincoln. My father is from Omaha, and my mother is from Osaka, Japan. From childhood I was a very active swimmer, but I also enjoyed playing many other sports. Violin also occupied my time for many years. After high school I faced the decision to go to college or attend Generation Peace Academy (GPA). At the end of the summer after attending the Blessed Culture and Sports Festival, I decided to take the next year off to attend GPA. I made this decision so I could be with other young adults of the Unification faith.

So, my year-long gap year started out awesome. I was stoked to live with a bunch of other like-minded people. It was really something new. Whether it was going overseas, fundraising or learning the Divine Principle, no matter what our days consisted of they were always jam-packed. But it wasn't always so great throughout the year. There were instances when I questioned my faith and said, "Seriously, why the heck am I even here?" In those times it was miserable. I started to question everything I've ever done in my life. "Why did I abstain from drinking again," or "why did I go to church all these years?" Looking back now, I can value those intense situations of doubt instead of wanting to break down, because I see the value in testing your faith. I began to own the reasons why I practiced certain habits, even though I may not have truly understood the reason before.



Katherine Lincoln, 18, attended the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Seonghwa (Ascension) Ceremony, in September 2012, at the CheongShim World Peace Center in Gapyeong South Korea.

One of the most stressful situations that made me question my faith the most this year was during a fundraising day in Charlotte, North Carolina. In the "Bible Belt" I often ran into Christians who demanded my submission to Jesus, or someone prayed over my head hoping that I would find the truth. I always kindly accepted their heart and moved on. However, there was one-day that was challenging. Near the end of a long conversation with a lovely Christian woman in a Wal-Mart parking lot, I noticed a large, middle-aged, white man stomping toward me. At first I thought, "Oh he's going to kick me out, I better

start wrapping it up.” But after the first words came spewing out of his mouth, my stomach sank – he wasn’t there to kick me out. “She’s in a cult!,” he shouted. I calmly stood there attempting to swallow everything that came at me. “Don’t buy anything from this girl, she’s a heretic, and she hates Jesus.” After a couple of minutes it became unbearable. Tears swelled up in my eyes. The woman began to comfort me and ask if all of this were true. I immediately explained that I believe Rev. Sun Myung Moon has come to bring people back to God. I knew that this man standing there had his own opinion, and that I wasn’t going to change his mind about anything, so when he addressed me after I replied to the woman, I said something he believed. He made himself known as a Christian from the beginning, so I knew his faith in the Bible and Jesus was strong.

I usually refrain from arguments, but in this case I really felt like I had something to say and that I could convey my response respectfully. I brought up the quote stated in the Bible many times that says to “love your enemy as yourself.” I kindly asked if this was an instance where he was able to practice this commandment from Jesus. The expression on the man’s face changed instantaneously. He immediately apologized for his anger and said that I was right. I felt very peaceful, but still very sad. He shook my hand and walked away. This scenario was also a reminder to me of how deep the Christian faith is and why it deserves much respect. As a church that focuses on the unification of world Christianity I believe I was able to understand in a more practical way what that really means. Through experiences like that I was able to start to affirm what I believe rather than just abide by the rules. It was an emotional time for me, but I was able to leverage those emotions and take off for a new experience.



As part of the Generation Peace Academy curriculum, Lincoln (third from left) kicked off the first day of fundraising with her fundraising team in the beginning of September 2012. The heavy rain called for some ponchos.

This year on GPA more than anything else has taught me how important it is to trust. Growing up in Nebraska in a smaller church community, a lot of us consider ourselves to be very individualistic. We get things done on our own, us small-town people and me especially as an only child. I never really let anyone help me and very often took my parents’ support for granted. I thought I had it all figured out for myself, which led me to think that I could do it all on my own, even fundraising. It wasn’t until late in the year that I concluded that fundraising doesn’t happen without God, which led me to truly believe that neither does anything else. I was able to go out there and want to be there. I wanted to brighten peoples’ days just because I could. Once I could see these people as God’s children, it all made sense. I had been told all my life to include God in everything, but it never resonated with me. But this lesson wasn’t something that a sermon or morning service could have truly instilled in me. It was one of those many things in life that experience just has to teach you.

When I look back on this year, another major thing I learned is that I don’t need to become someone else, or become what I think would please others but simply to be someone God can work through. I learned there is a way to be myself and to be a Godly person, and that not everyone has to be the same. I learned to bring God out of the limitations I built in my mind and let Him work. Many limitations were built after the experience in North Carolina, but I victoriously freed myself from those thoughts and was able to love all sorts of people. This limitless mindset can be applied with anything in my life now, not just fundraising. Recently, I’ve thought about things such as tithing and witnessing through these new eyes, and I am able to see such things from a transformed perspective. I want to have this mindset, always.

I’m truly grateful to God and True Parents for creating a program where young adults can explore everything, from meeting people in countries around the world to encountering the inside of the heart. I see finishing GPA as just the start for me, not a stopping point along the way or the end where I think, “I’m good to go.” It’s the beginning of a journey of putting into practice what I learned and discovering more and more about God in my life. I would say I know very little about faith and trusting God, but I’m grateful that I was guided to the right path to begin my mission. Among all the practical things I learned this year; it’s most exciting to know that through God’s boundless power my future is bright as long as I can continue to practice faith.