

A New Generation at the Washington Monument Rally

Michael Balcomb
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Sun Jin Moon reads Hak Ja Han's address

On September 17, 2016, over two thousand people gathered at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. to celebrate the 40th anniversary of True Parents' groundbreaking Washington Monument Rally in 1976. Among those in attendance were many of the veterans of the original rally, standing together with their children and grandchildren.

The events of the day were organized in the spirit of the original rally, but as the day drew to a close, it became clear that the calls to action were being directed to a new generation.

Initiatives for Peace



As families and youth from around the country began gathering on the National Mall, a group of over 30 Generation Peace Academy (GPA) participants, boy scouts, and youth came out early to start off the day's activities on an altruistic note, picking up litter along the neighboring streets and inviting passersby to attend the rally. Mari Curry, Vice President of FFWPU USA, and Melissa Manor, a local youth ministry leader, sent them off to "serve the nation by serving the capital" and in so doing ground the day in a spirit of public-mindedness.

Generation Peace Academy participants also turned out in force for an afternoon Peace Road event, biking around the length of the National Mall to raise awareness about the rally. Andrew Love, pastor of the New Hope Family Church in Bowie, Maryland, emceed the Peace Road event.

To represent building the Peace Road in real time, a group of children assembled a Peace Road puzzle. “The kids are going to create more peace right in front of our eyes, one piece at a time,” said Pastor Love. “Imagine a world where there’s a road that connects the entire world. Imagine packing up your car and driving from here to Kiev. We’re living in a time where people are talking about division and boundaries and walls, but we’re saying, ‘No, we’re all one global family.’ That’s the heart of Peace Road.”

Former congressman John Doolittle remarked, “God raised America so we could have freedom of religion and preach that to the world. We are the only country in the world that proclaims that God is the source of our rights, although it doesn’t always feel like that right now. That’s why we want to have this symbol of unity, the Peace Road, as we celebrate this great country of America.”

Robert Cunningham and Sachika Iwamoto, participants of the Generation Peace Academy (GPA), also shared their personal stakes in the Peace Road, describing their experiences abroad doing peace work and seeing a dire need to unite people around the world.

We Remember

As the Peace Road riders made their way back to the top of the National Mall, Teresa Ferrete, National Program Director of CARP America, took to the stage to welcome everyone in attendance.



Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Continental Chairman of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) in North America gave the opening remarks, thanking everyone for meeting at the monument and exhorting all to make the most of the opportunity we now have to guide America back to God in the years leading up to 2020.

“This is a special place, made sacred and holy by those who have come here over the years to make a public commitment of faith for America,” he began. “Today, it is easy to feel that this country is lost and confused. We are in the middle of a presidential election, and some people are saying we have no good choice to make. But it is not too late. True Parents came to America to teach us that everything can be set right when we choose God’s way. In just a few years, we will reach the 400-year anniversary of the landing of our pilgrim fathers on the Mayflower, and True Parents are encouraging us to make a new movement for faith and to lead America to live for the sake of the world and for God as a true elder brother to all nations.”

Dr. Kim also recognized the veterans of the Washington Monument Rally, over 50 of whom were present at the event. To travel back to the spirit of 1976, the crowdlooked back on the Washington Monument Rally with a historical documentary and also had the opportunity to revisit True Father’s passionate words

as Archbishop George Augustus Stallings, Jr., Co-Chairman of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) read an abridged version of “America and God’s Will,” the speech originally delivered by True Father at the 1976 rally. The reading reminded everyone that the vision and hope in True Father’s message is as relevant today as it was 40 years ago. The closing call of “America must rise up today!” drew inspired applause, as True Father’s message rang loud and clear in Washington, D.C. once again.



Neil Salonen, who had introduced True Father to the stage at the Washington Monument Rally in 1976, today introduced the keynote speaker once again: True Father’s daughter and President of FFWPU International, Sun Jin Moon.



“It is especially meaningful to be here on these historic grounds, where many great leaders have spoken and changed the course of history,” began Mrs. Moon. “We gather here to remember True Father’s words and hear True Mother’s message, but most of all, we are here to revive True Parents’ message to build a world of harmony and peace. True Parents’ mission is to uplift this blessed country and raise her up to be a champion of God’s will and unifier of the world. All the issues True Father highlighted four decades

ago still plague this nation today. It is overwhelming and breaks our hearts to observe the nation losing its way, yet True Father's speech is a roadmap to guide us toward the restoration of a nation. I urge you to practice *Hoon Dok Hae* with this message and work to bring his mission back to life."



She proceeded to share True Mother's message for the day's occasion, which conveyed True Mother's urgent concern for the reality of today's world, the destiny of this nation, and the role of people of faith to unite and transform the world. "Today, just as on that memorable evening 40 years ago, we have gathered to ask the most important question: What is the Will of God, our Heavenly Parent, and True Parents for America?" True Mother urges everyone to recognize that "God does not have a magic wand that simply transforms this world. It is time for us to live and work to love, care, serve, and harmonize together as one family under God."

Forgiveness and Healing

The program featured several demonstrations of healing and reconciliation that even against the highest odds and amid the deepest hurts, peace is still possible.

In an Interfaith Water Ceremony, local youth of different faiths, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, came together, each holding a glass of water representing their faith's central teachings and love for all humanity, and pouring it into a central vessel, symbolized the vastness of God's heart and love for humanity as one family, transcending the barriers of religious identity.



A Bridge of Peace Ceremony was also held. Ella Byrne and Denneze Nelson, representing Valencia Mohammed, both mothers of children lost to violence, walked across the stage to unite in an embrace at

the center, demonstrating their willingness to overcome the distances of heart created by violence, prejudice, and misunderstanding. This moment of reconciliation featured raw accounts of these mothers whose children were assaulted and killed, and who have chosen to end the cycle of violence through forgiving the unforgivable. To conclude the Bridge of Peace Ceremony, the Revs. Jesse and Tanya Edwards and the Revs. Michael and Zena Sykes offered prayers for reconciliation and healing.

Four Years of Hope

For the final portion of the day's activities, our focus turned forward to our collective work in the four years of hope ahead: creating a world of peace, starting from the family. Crescentia DeGoede, Director of the Blessing and Family Ministry (BFM) in America, offered a call to action, not only to those present but to the world, to take a stand as families and receive the Marriage Blessing, a tradition set by True Parents to center marriages and families on God.

"The Marriage Blessing offers the opportunity to reawaken a truer love, and we are aiming to support one million Americans in receiving the Marriage Blessing by 2020," Crescentia declared. "We have initiated a Marriage Blessing movement in this nation, and all of you are a part of it."

Throughout the event, performances were offered by Sergeant Elizabeth Quinones, singing the National Anthem; Rev. Wintley Phipps, renowned gospel singer and pastor; and Unificationists Matthew Hill, Raoul Joseph, and the New Hope Family Church band. During the last, most poignant notes of Rev. Phipps's "Amazing Grace," the sun broke through the grey clouds that had hung over the Capitol building all day long to reveal a beautiful sunset, and Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of FFWPU USA, took the stage to offer the following call to action:

"Now we are making a commitment for four years toward 2020. You heard our goal, to bring one million Americans to receive the Marriage Blessing, but as I see you all here today, I ask, why not two million, or 10 million? Why not let the spirit of God come down on this nation and raise it as the champion it is destined to be?"



Just like in 1976, we have a lot of work ahead of us. This is just the beginning, and reaching out to share the vision doesn't mean reaching far. If you feel called to create substantial change in this nation and the world, take the time to connect with those who are close to you, share True Parents' vision for marriages and families, and be God's hope for this world. In the immortal words of True Father, "Rise up today. Tomorrow may be too late."