

2-Day Project Phoenix Workshop in Arizona Promoting Intergenerational Unity

Richard Buessing
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Project Phoenix, an organization promoting intergenerational unity among Unifications, held its latest workshop in Arizona this past May. In total, 50 participants joined for the two-day retreat. This time, there were more young Unificationists than older ones. Both generations shared from the heart, allowing the tears to flow and impacting one another through a series of talks, exercises, testimonies and reflections. Many participants shared that the weekend event helped to bridge the gap between adult children and their parents and to heal pain from past hurts.

Mark and Mariana Boitano, a father-daughter team from Albuquerque, did the honor of emceeding the event. On Saturday, Sam Orman filled in for David Young to lead the main activity. (David, who normally leads Project Phoenix activities, was spending time with his wife Rika and their new baby). To start, Sam discussed the “games” that people often play in relationships and explained that these games actually keep people from the connections they truly desire. He shared about the importance of being in tune with our thinking patterns and the effect that our thoughts have on our relationships. A number of the participants expressed appreciation for the unique concepts and the chance to learn more about this critical area of human interaction. “It was a great opportunity to step into a space of vulnerability and courage,” said one Unificationist who attended the weekend event. “I appreciated the opportunity to look at the games I play in my life and to share some of my story to hopefully impact someone else.”

The next morning began with a discussion called Honoring the Generations. Led by Benito Rodriguez and Mark Anderson, the room divided into two groups. The young Unificationists went into a nearby room while the young-at-heart Unificationists stayed in the main room. Then, both groups answered questions about how each generation views the other. It was a moment of honesty, as both the good and the bad were acknowledged.

This exercise was followed by an activity called Through Our Lens. In moments of true vulnerability, four people, David Burgess, Bonne Deshotel, Kym Guntermann and Jonathan Golden, expressed the struggles and challenges that they faced and overcame in their lives. Next, participants were invited to share their own experiences with family members. As one person remembers, “Everything felt heartfelt and raw. I was able to open up things that were inside that I usually struggle telling people.” Many people had never shared with this level of honesty before. As the tears flowed freely, everyone experienced the common element of their humanity.

Through this process of listening and sharing, people experienced the presence of God lifting their spirits. Some reported a new perspective and desire to keep the energy of the morning flowing.

After this intense, emotional morning, the group took a much-needed lunch break. To lighten the mood, everyone let loose in a game of fishbowl. Next came an exercise called Community Weaving, where people spoke openly with one another about their needs. As people shared their needs and listened to the needs of others, they realized that many resources already exist within our own community to serve Unificationists.

The final activity of the afternoon was called Going Deeper. A mother-daughter pair shared in the front of the room by answering questions about how they see each other. This exercise led to tears as the pair worked to heal their relationship.



Dinner provided an opportunity to get to know other participants and digest the experiences of the day. After dinner, participants shared in their family groups about what they had gained from the weekend. This was followed by other members of the group verbalizing their appreciation and acknowledgement of each other. As each group member shared, hearts opened to feel the positive impact of this interaction.

In his reflection of the weekend, one participant said, “This was a seminal opportunity to find personal space for renewed intention and vulnerability. This led us to a healing point and a new beginning. I am deeply grateful.”

Another participant agreed. “Project Phoenix is a beautiful place and space, where we can experience the love of true brothers and sisters, no matter our age differences. Through meaningful activities and deep sharing it was possible to gain great insight on how to overcome previous blocks in relationships, whether it be with ourselves or other meaningful people in our lives. [Project Phoenix is] a much-needed project in so many communities.”

Project Phoenix plans to hold a follow-up meeting in Arizona to organize ongoing activities in the local area. If you would like more information about Project Phoenix or would like to show your support, check out their [website](#). If you would like to host Project Phoenix in your community, send a message to projectphoenixusa@gmail.com.

