

## GPA 2017's First Days Overseas traveling to Peru, the Philippines, and Paraguay

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We've begun our annual overseas service module, traveling to Peru, the Philippines, and Paraguay to engage in outreach and altruism in each of these nations for three weeks. Read the first blog posts and reflections from the Paraguay and Peru GPA teams below.

### Paraguay – Contributed by Shingo

Hello, world—my name is Shingo, and I'll be writing in this blog about our faith-based youth program called Generation Peace Academy (GPA).



Currently we're in South America. We'll be in Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, staying at the local Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) center for the first bit of our three-week stay, taking part in service projects, community outreach, and witnessing as well as the many other activities that I will be writing about on this blog. I forgot to mention that I will not be the only person blogging, and it will be more of a turn-based blog. I will be covering today, and then my partner Sanae will be writing the scoop tomorrow, and after that I'll write, etc.

### Days 1 and 2

It's 9:30 p.m., and we're on our flight to Paraguay from Peru (we had flown the day before to Lima and from there to Asunción). There are about twenty of us clumped together, and we're all excited to finally go to Paraguay. Fatigued from the previous day, we pass the time by talking with each other and falling asleep during the movies playing throughout the flight.



We finally arrive at the Asunción airport around 4 a.m., and as we wait to get visas, we practice a dance that we'll be performing for the Paraguayan community. We're all tired from multiple layovers, but we put 100 percent-effort into this dance practice. I don't partake of it, but as I keep watching, I feel a sense of peace. Throughout our heavy schedule, the times that we don't do anything special and just enjoy each other's company are the moments that I enjoy the most. Nothing special, just dancing and laughing, having a good time.

We finally get our visas and pass through customs, claim our luggage, and take our first picture as “the Paraguay nation.” (GPA has three “nations” this year, three big teams named after the country they're performing service in: Peru, Philippines, and Paraguay.) We head out of the airport and to the CARP center. We settle in and have breakfast around seven and receive a warm welcome from the participants of CARP. We then have a little gathering in the courtyard of the center and introduce ourselves, telling our names and talking about our dreams. Through the CARP members' words, I can feel that they have a very deep heart for God and True Parents. Each one of them was really desperate to find the truth, the real meaning of life. They put their education on hold and pursued a life of faith.

We play soccer with them on their home turf, a short GPA vs. CARP game, and we lose twice: 2 to 0 the first, then 1 to 0 the second. After that we have a lecture from the national director of Family Federation about the history of Paraguay. Listening to his lecture, I can feel that he really loves True Father. He worked for him, sometimes as his driver and as a security guard.

We eat dinner and listen to a testimony given to us by the national messiah of Paraguay. He is of German descent and was chosen to start a community. He really went through a hard time to start a community in Paraguay. He applied for a visa, but was rejected multiple times. He was able to persevere and finally got a visa to build what we essentially are staying at. Without him, we might have gone to Nepal again this year, but because of him, we're able to go to this country for the first time and really expand our minds and hearts and have a whole new, wonderful experience as GPA. I'm very grateful for him to have worked hard and not given up on his mission. I've been here only one day, and I can feel that God has a lot in store for me and the rest of GPA, even if we don't see or understand it right now.

## **Peru – Contributed by Tsugusato and Yuka**

### **Day 1**

Bienvenidos al Perú! Welcome to Peru!



On February 20 in the late afternoon of Peru, GPA arrived at the Lima airport and were greeted by Omar, a first-generation Peruvian Unificationist. Immediately after exiting the airport, the GPA members entered onto the streets of Lima and were astonished by the change of environment surrounding them. Everything from the way the vehicles drove so closely to each other to the number of pedestrians pacing back and forth seemed so different to us Americans who have never been to Peru before. Our eyes moved in all directions taking in every detail of our surrounding and catching any difference that we could see with the states.

Our home for the next week-and-a-half will be the main church in Lima. When we arrived at the church, Oscar gave us a quick tour of the building and introduced us to some of the children and mothers of the Lima community. They welcomed us into their church with a warm and bright smile, making us feel like family. The love from the Peruvian mothers didn't stop there; they made us an amazing Peruvian dish using chicken and potato as well as a juice made out of purple corn.

Our first night in our overseas country ended with so much love and excitement for the next day.



Hasta mañana amigos! See you tomorrow, friends!

### Day 3

Hola! Es otro hermoso día aquí en Perú! Hello! It's another beautiful day here in Peru!



Today we visited another beautiful part of Peru named Comas. We have a church center there, so we met many more of our fellow Unificationists. Oh, and most importantly, we went started our outreach initiatives for the first time as "Peru Nation!" Our main goal was to invite people to the church center to listen to a Divine Principle lecture as well as testimonies about the value of pure love. So, in the beginning we were all feeling nervous, but when the teams met up afterward and talked about their experiences, everyone seemed to enjoy it. Everybody we talked with was so kind and took the time to listen to us with only a few exceptions. The initial time for the lecture to start was 3:00 p.m., so our group leader, Tolik Kazak (who we call "Tolik-hyung) encouraged us to pray and set the proper atmosphere to receive the people who would come.



By the time 3:00 p.m. hit, it seemed that no one was going to come. We all wondered whether inviting people to the meeting had actually helped and if our first day of witnessing would be a failure. Then Omar started to play holy songs (Unification hymns) and we all started to sing. I believe we sang the whole song book, and it felt as if the singing was bringing people in. By 3:45, there were 17 guests. The guests were all really receptive to what we had to say and it was nice to see them nod their head when Omar was giving his lecture. Young-Joo and Shogo both gave amazing testimonies. After the meeting was finished we took a group picture and mingled with all the guests. Playing with the children was also really fun and they loved riding on our backs. It was a successful day of outreach in Comas! We will be back soon! Look forward to tomorrow's witnessing event in Huaycan!



Nos vemos más tarde amigos! See you later!

#### **Day 4**

Buenos días a todos! Good morning everyone!



Today is the second day of our witnessing event. This time we traveled to Huaycan. It took us about two hours to get there due to the traffic in the morning. We arrived at the one of the church centers on the higher level of Huaycan and the view was just spectacular. The mountains were beautiful and the scenery around was just so amazing.



Since there were two church centers, one on the higher level and one on the lower level of Huaycan, the group split up with three teams going to the higher level and the other teams going to lower level. Reaching out to the people in Huaycan was really nice. Most were very patient and took time to listen to us. The pastor of the Huaycan church was telling us that whenever she went out witnessing by herself, no one would want to listen to her but since GPA had come with such a strong and bright spirit, people were starting to listen. We were happy to hear that but also happy that we made a change in one of her outreach experiences!



“People were really receptive and listened to us till the very end. Also, our Peruvian guide was an elderly mom, and she reminded me of my own mom. She was a very soft-spoken, kind, and patient person. I saw

the pure heart within her wanting to restore her own community closer to God. In general, witnessing showed me how we as second generation can bring hope to people and make a difference in people's life in a positive way." –Hiro Kamata



While waiting for guests to arrive, all of GPA met up and had a lunch at a nice restaurant. Peruvian food is filled with so many flavors and really tasty. You could even eat the rice by itself and be satisfied.



After finishing the meal, we decided to go visit the slums of Huaycan, high up in the mountains. Once we got there, the atmosphere totally changed and everyone became serious seeing all of the houses. The houses looked as if they could be blown away by the wind or broken by an earthquake. Reality became struck as we realized there was no water and electricity in the slums and how the living environment of the people were so poor. There was no vegetation growing outside and the people that were living in this upper region all looked dispirited and tired. People had to walk miles all the way down the mountain to get jugs of water and walk all the way back up since there was none up in the mountains. People had to literally work day by day just so that they could put food on the table. We realized how grateful we

should be for the things we have in our lives. Even though we wanted to go and walk around more, we had to go back to the church centers and prepare for the upcoming lecture.

