

FFWPU USA: Meet Dr. Achille Acolatse, New Southeast Regional Director

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Photos courtesy of Dr. Achille Acolatse

On a summer day in 1988, Achille Acolatse's life forever changed. Growing up in a Catholic household in Togo, Africa, he was unexpectedly introduced to the Unification movement by a neighborhood friend.

"At age 17, I met the church," recalls Achille. "My spiritual father is from Benin. We lived in the same neighborhood and played soccer together almost every day with our friends."

A studious young man, Achille dedicated his time to school, his love for soccer, and practicing his faith. His parents, a teacher and an accountant, emphasized the importance of their children being well-rounded and educated. "Education was top priority for my dad, and faith was a priority for my mom," says Achille. "I grew up going to church regularly as my mom was a very fervent Catholic. I was even part of the youth choir of my church." Achille's dad, for his part, felt, "if you do well in school, you can do whatever you want."

The Revelation

After some time away, Achille's soccer pal reappeared - now a member of the Unification movement. His friend's passion for this new religious teaching both intrigued and inspired Achille. "We were very close, and he invited me to come to the church center," remembers Achille. "The introduction to the Divine Principle made sense to me. At a workshop is when I made the determination to join; they said the messiah is here, and I believed that right away."

Achille eventually moved into the church center nearby, joining the local movement of some 20 to 30 members. His mother wasn't too pleased, but his father was curious. "My Father was taught the Divine Principle, and he had so many questions but really loved it," says Achille.

The Blessing

In 1992, Achille was among 30,000 participants who received the Marriage Blessing from True Parents on August 25 in Korea. A picture matching with Katsumi Arimatsu from Japan was a big leap of faith for Achille. "This was the first time I was leaving my country and the first time I was ever on a plane," recalls Achille. "I was very nervous. I flew to Korea without telling anyone, except my brother."

Katsumi, who grew up in an orphanage, had immense faith despite a very difficult childhood. She poured herself into fundraising and witnessing after meeting the church in her late teens. "I was excited to meet her," says Achille. "It was an amazing experience for me ... She told me she only had three people in her life: God, True Parents, and me."

Back home, Achille's parents were stunned. "My father was very welcoming, but my mother didn't believe it was real," says Achille, with a laugh. "But my wife was able to win her heart, and for some reason they really bonded. Even today, my wife's Facebook [profile] photo is of her and my mom."



The Mission

While Achille pursued his Master's Degree locally and did "home church," his wife was a missionary with Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) in Morocco. Eventually, in 1998, the couple charted a new course as they began their lives together in a foreign land, moving to the U.S. where Achille's older brother lived.

While working for True World Group, Achille, a self-professed intellectual, received his PhD in electrical engineering from the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT). He and his wife then moved to Washington, DC for its abundant government jobs. "I could work and also serve God and the church," says Dr. Achille.

And, that's been his mission ever since.

A family man with five kids, ages 15 to 24, Dr. Achille has selflessly served the DMV (DC-Maryland-Virginia) community for more than two decades. From soccer in the streets of his hometown 5,000 miles away, to working in various church roles including pastor, district pastor, and most recently, being [appointed](#) FFWPU USA Southeast regional director on Sept. 18, Dr. Achille says God has walked him through every step of the way.

"When I look back on my life, I really feel God planned everything for me," he says. "God would not ask me to do anything I can't do ... I'm so deeply grateful to Heavenly Parent, True Parents, and my wife. I've grown a lot in my heart, loving someone from a different nationality and being part of our international movement."

The Future

Dr. Achille says he is focused on creating a culture of love and forgiveness in his community, as well as an environment where people feel at home. "This is what True Parents want, being God's sons and daughters who love each other," he says.

"Everything that we do has to do with our heart and the mindset of how we do it," he says. "I love the term 'total salvation' because this is God's desire. My heart is invested in creating this kind of spirit in our region where we attend Heavenly Parent and True Parents."

Dr. Achille officially started his role as Southeast Regional Director on Oct. 1, succeeding beloved longtime leader Rev. Ernest Patton, who stepped down to focus on family. In a regional memo, Rev. Patton expressed his heartfelt gratitude to community members for their great investment over the years, and stated, "The Acolatse family offers the energetic, passionate leadership that will propel [the region] to a higher level."

Southeast

Mrs. Yong Concludes U.S. Tour in Nation's Capital



Photo courtesy of the Capital Family Church

From Sept. 16 to 20, Mrs. Yoshie Yong, the wife of Dr. Chung Sik Yong, Regional President, FFWPU North America, spent the final days of her [national tour](#) in Washington, DC. “[The community] had such a beautiful time together with her,” said Dr. Achille Acolatse, who was inaugurated as FFWPU USA Southeast regional director at Sunday Service during Mrs. Yong’s visit.

Mrs. Yong, who stayed at the Upshur House during her visit, met with numerous local young families at the Capital Family Church on Sept. 17. “She really poured her heart out on how to educate and raise up our younger generation,” said Dr. Acolatse during a Sept. 20 report to FFWPU USA leaders. “She really inspired our young families to unite and put into practice what she shared with us.”

Dr. Acolatse said Mrs. Yong’s sincere responses during a special Q&A session “moved everyone’s hearts.”

“At the end of the Q&A, everyone wanted to take a photo with Mrs. Yong,” he said. Dr. Acolatse’s personal takeaway from her talk was the emphasis that education is not just about our minds, but rather, “more than anything else, it’s the education of our hearts.”

Dr. Acolatse also mentioned that the Chinese character for

'education' combines the Chinese character for 'filial piety' and 'father.' "These are two key components of education," he said.

Mrs. Yong focused on educating parents about the matching and Marriage Blessing as well. The Yong couple matched several young Unificationists who received the Marriage Blessing earlier this year.



Local pastors and ministry leaders also met with Mrs. Yong to tour Washington, DC—including the National Mall—where she was joined by the Heavenly USA team.

"When Mrs. Yong enters a room, you feel the Holy Spirit, and it's incredible," said Dr. Acolatse. "Mrs. Yong touched our community in a really incredible way."

Mrs. Yong kicked off her U.S. tour at the beginning of September in New York City, as she offered guidance on public outreach and raising families of faith with Unificationist communities across the country.

You can view more photos from Randy Francis [here](#) of Mrs. Yong's final tour stop in Washington, DC.

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