

My Unificationist Memoirs - Chapter 10

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Sometime in late 1982 or early 1983, a changing of the Japanese guard occurred at the Asian Church on Judah Street. My older brother and mentor, Mr. Kobayashi went to work in the fish and restaurant business, while a younger brother freshly arrived from Japan, assumed the oversight role for our witnessing. A sense permeated our ranks at the time, that the newer leadership felt its mission was to correct the mistakes of the earlier Japanese missionaries and impart the true heavenly tradition to the American membership. I don't recall exactly, however, I cannot imagine those sentiments sat well with me.



In one of my very first meetings with Mr. Kobayashi's replacement, I was informed that the focus of my witnessing should be the Nisei and Sansei in Japan Town, Nihon Machi, in San Francisco. It became clear to me that what this meant in practical terms was that I should shift my focus away from the Vietnamese. As I have written earlier, I did not react well to this new direction, "I felt there was a racial disdain for the Vietnamese refugees I had come to serve and love - I had grown very close to them. The separation between Abel and myself led to other issues. At the time, it felt like it was another abandonment of an ally... It's more complex, I know. Now. Then, it was harder for me to see." The situation became so difficult between my central figure and myself, that my wife was asked to come out and reason with me. That did not go as expected. I felt that the ground was shifting beneath my feet. As I look back, I can understand the pressure the new Japanese leadership felt to quickly bring witnessing results. On the other hand, I could only see it as a betrayal of my heart for, and my commitments to, the Vietnamese refugees, my Home Church community. I have often reflected on this point since: the conflicting directions existing between the high pressure witnessing campaigns to find

prepared people and the very settled and long term efforts required for Home Church. I have no doubt that True Father wanted and needed both - and that a more experienced witnesser could achieve a balance. But, I had been knocked off balance, and my reaction to my central figure made any resolution difficult.

Early in 1984, Mama and Papa-san Choi took over the Judah Street Asian Church. I felt a profound sense of liberation. I again turned my focus to the Vietnamese community. Another opportunity opened up as well. I had always felt the need to return to school and complete my degree. I saw how the refugee community worked to achieve social standing and acceptance through higher education. For years, I had thought that my sacrificial life on MFT, through indemnity conditions, would create an opening with my parents and siblings. In reality, neither their views of me or the church had appreciably shifted. Despite all that I said and did, the Washington Post and New York Times shaped their perspectives on my life. To move them, I needed to move to another level.



With Mama and Papa-san's backing, I applied to school at UC Berkeley and was accepted. I completed a few requirements at San Francisco State University in the Fall of 1984 before transferring. Initially, I lived with Mike Cardone on Washington Street, but then got a room with Joachim Baum and Bruce Biddle on 6th and Judah, one block away from the center. I thrived as I studied. My physical health improved, I regained my intellectual curiosity, and I began to develop a more hopeful sense of the future. I chose History as my major, with a focus on China and Japan. Although my course work covered the entire history of both countries, my final semester focused on US relations with China, and my thesis explored "Images of the Chinese in American Military Literature." At the time, my research reflected my intention to follow in the footsteps of my family and to seek work in the national security arena.

The positive effect on my family was immediate. I had worked my way through school, achieved a straight "A" record, and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, the National Honor Society. No longer could they write off my religious convictions as

emotional or lacking in intellectual consideration. That shift did not bring them into agreement with those convictions but it did affect their attitude towards me.

Other changes occurred, however, which ultimately affected my Blessing. I believe Mr. Kamiyama felt this from his prayer. Sometime after he was released from Danbury, he sent Mr. Nakata to seek me out in San Francisco. Sitting together in the Judah Street Center, Mr. Nakata asked if I would like to join Taicho in New York. However, I had returned to school by then and I was quite happy to be working with our elder Korean members, who had worked with True Father from the early days of our movement. Although I felt a strong pull to rejoin him, I declined to accept Mr. Kamiyama's offer.

