

The Universal Peace Academy's United States Heritage Tour

Chung Ran Kim
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UPA students take a group photo at the finale of their closing ceremony

The Universal Peace Academy's (UPA) United States Heritage Tour culminated with a graduation ceremony for the 16 cadets on February 5, 2014 at the Learning Center on 43rd Street, NY. Along with testimonies and speeches, the participants viewed a slide presentation which highlighted their tour across the country from churches to national parks.



Rev. Rendel speaks to the graduates on the importance of freedom and responsibility.



UPA Cadets proudly attend their closing ceremony.

Leaders and members of the national church headquarters staff were there to participate in the graduation and offer congratulations. Ms. Chung Ran Kim, the wife of Dr. Dong Woo Kim, President of UPA, encouraged the cadets to “seek a deep understanding of True Mother’s words” and emphasized “the importance of education as a foundation for spreading Heavenly Parent’s heart.”



A UPA Cadet gives a testimony of her experience.



A UPA Cadet addresses the audience at the closing ceremony.

The cadets reminisced over sunset photos of a special visit to Twin Peaks, the first holy ground. Their time at Plymouth Rock reminded them of the sacrificial pioneer spirit, essential to the founding of America. Jana Lajdova, who shared her testimony during the graduation, remarked “We experienced so many things, met many members and felt a lot of love.”



The UPA closing ceremony begins with a prayer.



Dr. Richard Panzer gives the students a presentation on the establishment of the Unification Theological Seminary.

Their travels took them all over the United States, where they bonded with many of the local communities, from the movie theater church in Los Angeles, to the Korean Evangelical Association (KEA) drum team. The latter shared the spotlight with some of the cadets who joined in on a performance. The UPA also learned more about the United States and its important role in the world. Many were particularly impressed with the students from the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) and with the staff of the Blessed Family Ministry (BFM), who gave a presentation about what the USA does to support other English-speaking countries.



Dr. Richard Panzer welcomes UPA students at the start of their visit to Barrytown College.



UPA students learn about the development and progress of the University of Bridgeport.

Their experiences were as vast and as wide as the country itself; from the intimate and profound moments like seeing the demolished car from the fatal accident of True Father's second eldest son, Heung Jin Moon, to viewing the large halls of the United Nations, where they gained a more global perspective and deeper insight into what it means to be a global leader. Each moment was a lesson to grow, learn, and inherit the spirit and heart of the United States and American Unificationists.



UPA students stop to listen and take notes in front of the School of Education on their tour of the University of Bridgeport.



UPA students listen to Manuel Quesada's testimony of True Father's fishing methods.

As the cadets reflected on their time on the tour and the many things they had learned over the past 49 days, they were filled with gratitude, excitement and determination to inherit True Parents' love for America and her providential mission. In her testimony, Lajdova reflected on their visit to West Point, and the fact that True Mother's vision for UPA was to transform the program into an academy for peace instead of war. "A soldier has guns and bullets," she said, "but we have love and truth. West Point started with ten cadets and five faculty one hundred years ago, and we have more than that. We can be better if we exercise and inherit True Parents' tradition."