

“You Are My Sunshine” Spreading Inspiration 40 Years Later

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We recently observed the FFWPU’s 40th anniversary celebration commemorating the Yankee Stadium Rally. The 50,000 people who gathered at Yankee Stadium in New York 40 years ago had also rallied behind the slogan, “God Bless America.”

“Before you became a member of the FFWPU (Unification Church), what did Korea mean to you?” Mrs. Patsy Casino began to wipe away tears as soon as the question was asked. This African-American middle school teacher will be turning 63 this year. What could possibly be causing her to become so choked up with emotion? “When I was a child, my father fought in the Korean War. He was apart from his family for many years. I was one of seven children, and the only way we could hear news of our father was from the letters he wrote. I still have the dolls that my father sent me from Korea. It’s a boy and girl doll set, most likely a bride and groom. My family was in a very difficult situation. Patsy continued to reminisce about her father. “My father always said that racial discrimination should not exist. When I first met Rev. Sun Myung Moon, he said that all of humankind must live as one family, without Communism and racial division. I was very moved by that. My mother was Catholic, and although my father didn’t have a specific religion, he supported my activities. I was very relieved.”

The God Bless America Family Festival was held on June 5 (local time) on the lawn of the Belvedere estate in Tarrytown, New York. It was held by the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification with approximately 3,000 people in attendance. A video commemorating the June 1, 1976 event was repeatedly played on a large screen.

Why 50,000 People Gathered at Yankee Stadium 40 Years Ago

According to the video, it was nearly a miracle that the event was even held. A rain storm began without any warning. The set was destroyed by the wind, and there was chaos. But just then, someone in the audience began to sing “You Are My Sunshine,” and soon, the single voice became a large chorus. This famous country song from the 1930s went like this: “You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are gray. You’ll never know dear, how much I love you. Please don’t take my sunshine away.” Their earnestness must have been felt because the rain stopped and sunlight poured in, filling the entire stadium. Rev. Sun Myung Moon stood on stage and said, “In God’s eyes, there are no Blacks, Whites or Asians.” The audience cheered with thunderous applause.

Patsy Casino was a singer in the “Sun Burst” gospel group, which was formed in 1973. Her byline in the newspaper in 1976 read “Patsy Johnson (maiden name).” This group sang in hospitals, schools and senior centers as free benefit performances. Patsy Casino shared her experience with the 1976 rally on stage at the 2016 anniversary event. She also remembered singing “You Are My Sunshine.” “Brothers and sisters, I remember that day so vividly. I was 23 years old and I had just graduated college. I heard that the True Messiah was on the earth and I told my father that I had to go. True Father (Rev. Sun Myung Moon) had said that singing was important. He said that we need to first open people’s hearts with songs, and that one by one, everything that we do would change the future. I was deeply moved by this. We had uniforms and did a lot of different kinds of work, such as cleaning the streets of New York and putting up posters. When we sang at the Yankee Stadium Rally, the rain started pouring. But as soon as we sang ‘You Are My Sunshine,’ the rain stopped. Rev. Moon then said, ‘This is just a rehearsal for the next Washington Monument event.’ I was so shocked.”

On September 18, three months after the Yankee Stadium Rally, 300,000 people gathered at the Washington Monument in D.C. Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the One World Crusade garnered much attention from the public. Immediately following the Yankee Stadium Rally, Newsweek magazine had published a cover story on June 14 with a photo of Rev. Moon. However, the articles shared through different forms of media were not all positive. They referred to those following Rev. Moon as “moonies,” and suggested that they were kidnapped from their parents and brainwashed. “They spoke of brainwashing because in the middle of the hippie and free-sex culture, the people who came in contact with the Unification Church suddenly cut their hair and began wearing suits. They prepared for weeks for a single event. During this time, they lived at the New Yorker Hotel, which had just been purchased by the Unification Church (FFWPU). The media said that they were kidnapped and brainwashed, but their parents could have come to the hotel to visit their children at any time. Using expressions such as ‘kidnapping’ and ‘brainwashing’ when referring to adults is not appropriate,” explained Ki-Hoon Kim, FFWPU North American Continental Director. After graduating from college and arriving in America in 1976, Dr. Kim had also witnessed the rally 40 years ago.

The Union of the Only Begotten Son and Only Begotten Daughter: FFWPU’s Doctrine

If you compare FFWPU doctrine and events with that of other existing religions, you will find many similarities, but you will also find many differences. At the start of the event, the FFWPU members sang “How Great Thou Art,” a song from the Catholic Church, as well as “Country Roads,” which is known to us as a John Denver song. Their events include formalities that are independent of other religions, including their use of the word “Aju” in place of “Amen” and the unified call of “Eok Mansei” at the end of the program.

The highlight of this particular event was the keynote address by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon’s speech contained the core doctrine of the FFWPU. “If, when Jesus came as the only Begotten Son, he had met the only Begotten Daughter, then Jesus would have been able to realize the ideal of God. However, that did not happen.”

Because Jesus, the only Begotten Son, was unable to establish a family, “God’s dream” could not be realized and “God’s providence” was established through values of FFWPU, the union of the only Begotten Son and only Begotten Daughter. That is to say that all the world’s religions serve as methods to realize the same ideal of becoming one family as brothers and sisters, regardless of doctrinal differences. The explanation of America’s providential mission and role is also the same. Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon emphasized that among the 200 nations in the world, America stands as the Elder Son nation and should not abandon its role. America must not seek its own happiness or personal interests. FFWPU members explained that the “union of the only Begotten Son and only Begotten Daughter is a principle that has been emphasized since before Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s passing.” They added, “Before Rev. Moon passed, he said that we must take down the sign of the ‘Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity’ and replace it with ‘Family Federation for World Peace and Unification’ because the purpose of religion is not to exist for its own sake; it is to realize one family and a peaceful world.”

Whether it was a coincidence or not, a rainstorm began immediately right after Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon’s address. Those in attendance began singing “You Are My Sunshine,” but the rain continued. The afternoon program consisting of the Ilshim Purity Vow Ceremony, a Taekwondo demonstration and other events was cancelled. While an interview with Patsy Casino was being conducted in the office Rev. Moon used during his lifetime, the sun began to brilliantly shine through. In the future, will these believers look back on this day and interpret this as an act of providence?