

2015 GPA Commencement Ceremony

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June 20, 2015



Generation Peace Academy, the leadership training program for Unificationist-born youth, hosted its Commencement Ceremony last Saturday, June 20, at the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, New York. Sixty-one first-year graduates, 17 second-year graduates and seven third-year graduates concluded their GPA experience together in a simple yet moving ceremony.



The emcee for the ceremony, Naokimi Ushiroda, president of CARP-USA, welcomed the roughly 200 friends and family of GPA participants in the chapel of UTS at 9 a.m., following the procession of the 85 graduates. He outlined the purpose of the program, which is to help participants develop a relationship with God and True Parents, study and apply the Divine Principle, and experience a public lifestyle and leadership.

Susan Bouachri, director of human resources for the National Ministry Team, led the invocation, inviting our Heavenly Parent to celebrate, together with the participants and their loved ones, their accomplishments throughout their time with GPA. In his welcoming remarks, GPA Director Roland Platt talked about the unique culture that this group of graduates created on the program. He testified to their love for each other, their sincerity in seeking out God throughout the year, and their purity of heart. Next

came a video showing the year in review, created by GPA Media Director Stair. It was truly wonderful to see the year encapsulated through moving imagery and video.

GPA Media Director Stair put together a video encapsulating GPA 2015 through moving imagery and video.

Four graduates gave testimonies describing their defining moments while on GPA. Each outlined how they were able to create a stronger bond with God and True Parents through their GPA experiences. Those who gave the testimonies were: first-year graduate Erika G., third-year graduate Irvin G., second-year graduate Yoshika I., and third-year graduate Patrick S.. After the testimonies, the GPA choir performed a touching rendition of the Wiz Khalifa and Charlie Puth song “See You Again” that brought the graduates to tears as they sang together.

Dr. Michael Balcomb, president of FFWPU USA, greeted and congratulated the graduates and the audience, and introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Ki Hoon Kim.



Dr. Kim, the continental director of FFWPU North America and the representative of our True Parents, spoke of how the GPA experience truly transforms the young adults of our community, and how he can draw so many parallels of what they experienced on GPA with his own personal pioneering experience. Just as GPA participants find God and True Parents through the trials of fundraising, of rejections, and of frontline work, his pioneering experience also formed him as a man and pushed him to find God and True Parents. Because of that experience, he is the man he is today, and it has defined him and what he does. Dr. Kim even stated that because of their effort in developing that relationship with God and True Parents, and the sacrifices and investment they put into it, the GPA members have become mentors to him, as well as mentors and leaders of the American movement. It was a blessing to see how much Dr. Kim supports GPA and believes in it as a program.

Dr. Kim’s moving message set the way for the beginning of the commencement ceremony. Each graduate received their certificate to the applause of GPA graduates, friends, and family. After posing for a commemorative photo, they moved to what is lovingly known as the “hugging line,” in which all the GPA staff members line up to personally congratulate the graduates and give them hugs.

The commencement concluded with the Phillip Phillips song “Home,” which was led by the GPA choir but had everybody joining in. After the closing prayer by third-year graduate Megumi Homma, and three cheers of Eok Mansei led by third-year graduate M. Yu, everyone was invited outside to a family BBQ lunch to continue the celebration. Thus concluded another unique and fulfilling year on GPA.