

Naokimi Ushiroda: Lovin' Life's Leadership Program Celebrates Doubling of Enrollment

Ariana Moon and Yoshie Manaka
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Director of Education for Lovin' Life Ministries Heather Thalheimer said, "One of the most important qualities in a leader is to be a person of heart, a person of love."

Lovin' Life Ministries' (LLM) Leadership Program graduated its second summer class of 43 participants, more than double the number of last summer's, on Friday, August 17, 2012 at the Lovin' Life Learning Center in New York, NY. According to Leadership Program Director Naokimi Ushiroda, this summer's participants came from a total of 20 different states and 10 different countries and were of ages ranging between 17 and 39.

Emcee Teresa Ferrete, coordinator for the Leadership Program, warmly welcomed participants and their "practicum" hosts to the morning graduation ceremony, which took place in the chapel of the Learning Center 4W 43rd Street. After several musical numbers by members of the Leadership Program, many of whom had participated in the Music Practicum, Ushiroda offered opening remarks.



Graduate Iris Quesada said, "It was amazing to get to know each of you; it didn't matter whether we grew up within the Unificationist faith or not. We were all part of the Leadership Program, we all wanted to go back to our communities and become better people."

Three graduates – Iris Quesada from Gloucester, MA, Sheng Ping Chang from Taiwan, and Essie Lausberg from Australia – testified about their experience as participants for the Leadership Program.



Graduate Sheng Ping Chang said, "I think the Leadership Program is the most valuable program – and I really mean that! The program helped me with understanding different personalities."

"I had no idea how much joy I would get out of meeting all of these wonderful people," said Quesada,

who interned for the Public Affairs Practicum. “It was fantastic! It was amazing to get to know each of you; after a while, it didn’t matter whether we grew up within the Unificationist faith or not. We were all here, we were all part of the Leadership Program, we all wanted to go back to our communities and become better people. I would so recommend this program for anybody who wants to grow themselves, who wants to meet people from around the country and around the world.”

Chang, who interned for the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) Practicum said, “I think the Leadership Program is the MVP – most valuable program – and I really mean that! The program helped me a lot, even with meeting new people and understanding how to deal with relationships and different personalities. The thing that I learned the most was heart of gratitude.”



Emcee Teresa Ferrete, coordinator for the Leadership Program, warmly welcomed participants and their “practicum” hosts to the morning graduation ceremony.

“One thing that was really meaningful for me was Chairman Kook Jin Moon’s ‘Freedom Society’ speech. [His words] changed the direction of my life. Also, we had Jin Sung Park talk to us about heart of attendance, the kind of heart we should have towards True Children and True Family. And I learned a lot from CARP with Victoria and Wendy. It’s really inspiring to know that American CARP is changing the old concept of CARP. It’s not middle-aged missionaries sneaking around campus anymore. I really feel that CARP America is going to take care of our young Unificationists and help them feel supported.”

Lausberg, who interned for the Ministry Practicum, shared a tearful testimony that resonated with many in the audience.

“Lovin’ Life is amazing, and I can’t be grateful enough to True Family and everyone else for making it a reality that I could experience,” she said. “Since joining the Leadership Program, I have learned and grown so much. I have a legitimate family in all of you! I know you love me and respect me and value me as I love and respect and value all of you. I’ve become able to express myself more freely. I surprised myself with my own leadership abilities, like trying out public speaking.

“I think I’ve learned a lot about LLM itself, too. Its culture is really a culture of heart. That term is used a bit too freely, and I don’t think I ever really understood what it meant until I came here. I think it’s a culture of warmth and safety in which people can freely give and receive love. It’s a culture that values the heart and sincerity in everything, whether you are a first-generation- or second-generation Unificationist and other labels and technicalities, heart and sincerity is the thing that shines through. It’s a culture that allows people to connect to God’s heart through connecting to True Parents’ heart, True Family’s heart, and each other’s hearts.

“I’m so grateful to all of you here – the program organizers, practicum leaders, and most of all to Rev. In Jin Moon and her family – for creating the Leadership Program and making it what it is. I’m so grateful to all of you, my precious brothers and sisters, for helping me find myself.

Yoshitaka Shiotsu also offered the following brief remarks about his experience as a member of the Ballroom Practicum.

“Thanks to ballroom practicum, myself, and I know a lot of others, gained a lot of confidence and learned how to really express ourselves and communicate,” he said. “In ballroom dancing, you need to have a clear vision of what you want to do on the dance floor, and you have to be able to communicate that assertively and clearly. I really think this is all what Rev. In Jin Moon wanted for us and our Lovin’ Life culture. Ballroom is so integral to that. I want to thank Rev. In Jin Moon, Ariana Moon, Jin Sung Park, Eika Davis, Teresa Ferrete and Neal Ichinohe.”

In an entertaining portion of the graduation ceremony, various graduates displayed the skills they had acquired in their respective practicums; for example, the Ballroom Practicum showcased a dance medley, the Video Practicum played an original video, and the Administrative Practicum performed a subject-appropriate skit.

Before introducing Rev. Joshua Cotter, vice president of the Unification Church USA, as the keynote speaker of the graduation ceremony, Director of Education at LLM Heather Thalheimer offered the following remarks on the topic of true leadership:



Sungduk Morales and Nina Presley pull a fierce Tango step during the Ballroom Practicum's presentation.

“The most important thing about leadership is being someone who can really express heart. With True Father lying in a hospital, we are extending our love to True Parents. But why? Because they loved us first. Everyone in this room has a connection of heart to our True Parents because of Father and Mother’s love for us. So, one of the most important qualities in a leader is to be a person of heart, a person of love. You can have all the technical skills in the world, but if you don’t have love, it’s nothing.

“I hope you have tasted that culture of heart here at the Leadership Program and that you can take home with you, because that’s what distinguishes LLM from any other ministry or organization.”

Rev. Joshua Cotter then provided a tearful testimony about his conversion experience, and sang the song “Love Is Born Anew.” A ceremony during which each Leadership Program graduate received a certificate followed and the graduation officially concluded after a group photo.



Naokimi Ushiroda, director of the Leadership Program, said, "What would give True Parents the most hope is if we as individuals stand strong and share God's love, True Parents' love, and this culture that we're building here with our local communities."

Remarks from Naokimi Ushiroda

“We’re finally here on our graduation day. It’s been both a very long and very quick seven weeks. We have a very broad and diverse group, but by the end, I felt that we really came together like a family. I saw elders looking after youngers, people acknowledging that some of us are quirky and still loving each other despite that – I felt that the culture of Lovin’ Life was manifested throughout the program here.

“I know that everyone came here with different personal reasons, but the overall purpose [of this program] was to inherit something to bring back to your local communities. Even this graduation ceremony is designed so that every aspect of the program’s purpose can be shared – we have testimonies where we share about understanding the vision of LLM, we have practicum presentations, which will share how participants became proficient in an area of ministry, and we practice leadership skills we’ve learned throughout the program such as public speaking. This event was put together by the participants, so they’re in training even until the very end.

“One experience I had here was when I was walking through the halls during the very first week of the program. I walked into the Brown Room and I saw Jaga and a bunch of ministry-support staff talking intensely about what it means to believe in True Parents, what it means to have a life of faith, what natural

witnessing is, and then I walked and I took a peek into the Chapel and I saw the Ballroom Practicum practicing their waltz and dancing beautifully – well at that point it wasn't so beautiful yet – and I walked to the Blue Room and I noticed that Hyun was writing on the whiteboard and the Music Practicum members were taking notes and I realized that this is exactly what Rev. In Jin Moon envisioned for the purpose of this building – to have everyone pursuing their passions in these different areas of ministry and to be able to give back to their communities through their passions. I really felt, 'This is Lovin' Life.'



Graduate Phil Brown from the United Kingdom of the Video Practicum presented a video he had created together with Fukunaga Yoshida.

“One other thing I'd like to point out is that although I was asked to be the director, this program is really representing all of Headquarters. All the practicums are hosted by employees of Headquarters. The people who are actually running LLM are providing the internships for the participants here. We also asked Headquarters staff to give testimonies on Tuesday nights, and so the program itself is pretty much the best of what this ministry has to offer being invested into the participants. More than the practicum training however, it's the personal relationships we develop with Headquarters staff that's really awesome. That's what I felt when I worked at Headquarters – more than the administration or the accounting that I did, it was about getting a feel of the culture at Headquarters with all the individuals who work there. What is being provided here is something you really can't get anywhere else.

“Yesterday we were at Camp Sunrise for our one-day retreat. We had a gratitude ceremony, a chance for people to express their appreciation for each other. Tears were flowing everywhere. Being Japanese, I don't shed tears [laughter], but there are some exceptions and that ceremony was one of them. We will not forget each other. There will probably be more tears after this graduation. There is so much everyone went through together.

“We also heard about True Father's situation, and we openly invited people to do some condition to support the recovery of True Father. Every single Leadership Program participant decided voluntarily to do some condition – many of us here are doing a three-day fast starting today, some of us have opted to do a 1,200-bow condition – but I felt that as much as we are grateful for each other, the reason we're here is because of True Parents. They are the reason many of us even exist. It was kind of interesting that at the end of our seven-week program this situation arose, but we felt like we could conclude with this offering of sincerity and through these conditions end on a note of solidarity reminding us of our purpose. I also felt that, what would give True Parents the most hope is if we as individuals stand strong and share God's love, True Parents' love, and this culture that we're building here with our local communities - That would be the greatest encouragement to our True Parents and True Family.”



Vice President of the Unification Church USA Rev. Joshua Cotter offered a heartfelt testimony about his experience joining the Unification Church.

A Testimony about True Parents from Rev. Joshua Cotter

“True Father and True parents are on our minds, and thank you everyone. I spoke with Rev. In Jin Moon

a couple of times. She went directly to Korea on Tuesday, her birthday, to be by her parents' side, and she's been there ever since, 24 hours a day. I communicated with her that everything is good in America. The whole nation is in prayer, fasting and making strong conditions, especially our young people. She really wants to thank you from the bottom of her heart on behalf of the True Family and True Mother. It's a very special and important time.

“We're getting updates from Dr. Seuk that True Father's respiratory situation is better. So, all of our prayers and conditions are very important in the next forty days. Father is a fighter, Amen? My tears are not in any way due to True Father's current condition in the hospital, it's due to my love for him. I'm sure you feel the same.

“The first time I heard about our True Father's life was on a hillside in Northern California, a place called Booneville. We hiked up this hillside on a Friday night; it was the conclusion of a seven-day workshop. That particular evening in the fall of 1975, in early November, was beautiful. The sun was setting, and there was a kind of fine rain, washing over us. Noah Ross was our teacher at that time. We got to the top of the hill, and he just stood. Some of us sat on the ground, and while it was raining, he shared for about an hour about Father's life.



Members of the Music Practicum (from left to right) Aaron Jackson, Juno Musonda, Guinyu Ngoran, and Tobias Yasutake, provided entertainment.

“I had just recently connected very deeply to the life of Jesus. I was 22 years old, pretty clueless, and God and Jesus were so deeply taking my life and turning it around. When I heard the explanation of the Divine Principle and of Jesus' life the Sunday before, I was just in tears, much more than right now. Then when Noah Ross started talking about True Father, and God was sending this rain, immediately I was consumed with tears. It just verified in my own heart who Father was. I didn't need anyone to tell me. Just by hearing about his life, God verified in my own heart that this person is the Messiah, the Second Coming. And honestly, brothers and sisters, from that moment, my life has been transformed. I was able to offer my life to God.

“It's been 37 years now. But the immense blessing at this time in history, I never lose sight of it. I think that our True Parents are the most precious thing we have, amen? I feel that even if God says, ‘Okay, Father Moon, I think it's time for you to come home to the spirit world,’ I think Father would have the audacity to tell God, ‘You're wrong. You're wrong about this. I've got another 27 years on this earth, so don't even think about calling me home!’

“The last time Father was in the hospital, he was here in America in the spring time. And he was such a pain to all of his nurses and doctors! He didn't want people to make a fuss about him. He was gravely ill, but he continued his schedule and did Hoon Dok Hwe. People tried to keep him in bed but he would not listen. He doesn't care about his own physical body. Have you seen such a person in your life? No one has! And for the fact that we're alive when our True Parents are on the earth, living with their family, brothers and sisters, we have to constantly thank God.

“I'm sure Father is doing the same thing right now with True Family around him. He may be in a deep sleep, but as soon as he's able, the nurses will find him at three in the morning, walking around hallways. He's going to be up and around. If there's any kind of bathtub or pool in the hospital, Father will ask for fish to be put in there.

“I was in Korea a couple of months ago. They made a little pond right down the road from Cheong Pyeong. It's a little fish pond; I don't think it's even as big as this room. Father was sitting there fishing, and it was like he was at the Pacific Ocean. He has six fishing rods in the pond. Six! There are probably six fish in the entire pond! I couldn't believe it. I thought, ‘He's just totally serious, no matter what he's doing.’ The whole scene was so beautiful, so serene.

“I'm sure Father feels all of our prayers, and that the whole worldwide family focusing on him is exactly what he wouldn't want us to do. But thank God we're doing it.”

“Congratulations to all of you guys. You did a tremendous job. You are leaders, you are God’s true sons and daughters. You have tremendous, great futures ahead of you. We are just so grateful that you could share these seven weeks with us, because you changed all of us and have grown together, and each one of you is God’s champion. So never feel anything but that. God is with you, True Parents are totally with you, and True Family is with you. We’re with you here. I want to say how important it is for our staff here to stay in touch with you. Wherever you’re going back to this nation or that, it’s LLM’s responsibility, given to us by Rev. In Jin Moon, to be there for you, take care of you, and help this ministry grow where you are. It’s not because we want to selfishly spread this ministry; it’s because God is in this ministry. The world needs to have this blessing. Whatever is done and accomplished here is not for the sake of America, New York, or a handful of people. It is for the world.



After a certificate ceremony, the Leadership Program graduation officially concluded with a group photo.

“You are all incredibly important. I want to see how we support you from here on out, real support. Because the real work begins now. None of us wants to see you just go back alone. You go back with our full support and blessing. I’m really proud of all of our staff, and of course Rev. In Jin Moon, who made all of this possible. Let’s keep our True Parents in our prayers, and absolutely support and take them in our hearts as we go through this day. Congratulations!”