

Grads Urged to Reach for the Stars at Commencement Gala in New York

Celine I. Tardy
June 7, 2011



Young Bok Gomez, Natasha Honey, and Daniel Castillo performing the self-written song "Stubborn Love."

The star-power of the rising generation of Unificationists was evident to all at the Second Annual Commencement Gala held at the Manhattan Center on June 3, 2011. "The potential I see around me is phenomenal," commented Senior Pastor Rev. In Jin Moon on a night of celebration for graduates from around the country. The talent of many was showcased in song and dance and capped by an encouraging speech by their senior pastor. "The world is truly your oyster," Rev. Moon told each attendee.

"If there is a single most important thing that I would like to leave behind as a Senior Pastor of Lovin' Life Ministries, it is for our community to have incredible pride in who we are -- the kind of pride in oneself knowing that we belong to a community of God and every one of us was born with a potential and a life destiny to fulfill," said Rev. In Jin Moon in her congratulatory remarks.

The black tie gala opened with the performance of Sonic Cult, Lovin' Life Ministries' band, which initiated a crowd of graduates immediately to run to the dance floor to cheer for both the band's original compositions along with classic favorites such as, "Let's Dance!" During the banquet for 300 graduates, family members, and guests, graduates from around the country were shown on slides. Graduates honored included Rexton and Ariana Moon, son and daughter of Rev. In Jin Moon, who graduated this year from Harvard University.

All through dinner, graduates performed on the stage of the Grand Ballroom, including the highly anticipated performance of the song "Stubborn Love," composed and recorded by D-Cast (Daniel Castillo), Young Bok Gomez, and Natasha Honey, and an original "robot" pop-and-lock dance by Misha Greene. Attendees also enjoyed a brother-and-sister duo – Dawn and Glenn Haider – who performed their own song, "Grey," along with performances of singers and musicians from Special Task Force (STF), a Unificationist leadership training program, performing "Nothing Without You" and "Seasons of Love."



Rev. In Jin Moon giving congratulatory remarks to attending graduates.

Rev. In Jin Moon was introduced by Cynthia Jones, a graduate of STF, who shared her experiences during the one-year STF service program with appreciation to Rev. In Jin Moon for investing time to raise her and other young-adults and to give them the best opportunities possible. “It is because of In Jin Nim’s support and encouragement that the God-given abilities that we all have are being taken to the next level; she gives us a reason to strive for the best we can do because she always brings us back to God and True Parents,” Ms. Jones said.

In her congratulatory remarks, Rev. In Jin Moon focused on taking the letters “i” and “m” out of the word “impossible,” which many of us use to stop us in going forward in our dreams. “What I am trying to do, together with Lovin’ Life Ministries, is to take away the concept of impossibility. Nothing is impossible as long as we believe and as long as we are willing to put in the hard work.” Instead, she encouraged each person to see that anything one puts one’s heart and mind towards is possible. “Many times we are our worst enemies by saying to ourselves, „that is impossible.“ As long as you believe in God and the True Parents, and the divinity of yourself, there is no such thing as impossible,” Rev. In Jin Moon said.



Awardees with Rev. In Jin Moon at the Second Annual Commencement Gala.

Awards were given to high-school and college graduates for academic excellence, as well as to STF graduates for excellence during their year of service. Each award winner was invited on stage to receive his or her award from Rev. In Jin Moon, with a final photo taken with all of the graduates who attended that evening.

A night of dancing began with three ballroom-dance exhibitions performed by STF graduates in the waltz, the swing, and the *cha-cha*. Afterwards, everyone was invited on to the dance floor for dancing that continued till after midnight.