

UPF-USA's new chairman, Ricardo de Sena, visits Chicago

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True Parents always loved Chicago. Father would look out at Lake Michigan from his suite at the top of Hilton Hotel and think about fishing for Coho Salmon. Dr. Michael Jenkins and Bishop Ki Hoon Kim always hoped to take him fishing on this the second largest of America's great lakes. One day while we were in a motorcade taking True Mother to the airport, the motorcade suddenly turned around and we all headed to the lake. Standing on the shore and facing Chicago's beautiful skyline, True Mother simply wanted to pray for the city from the point that she had viewed from her hotel room. The next time that Father and Mother came to Chicago, Mother took Father and the members down to the same spot. Again we took a group photo, but I had a very challenging incident. The walk down to the shore is a quite steep and I just happened to be walking right next to Mother. My instinct was to offer her my hand for support, but I was not quite sure that this was proper. Years earlier while I was a young freshman at UTS I had waited with Dr Young Oon Kim at Father's House for Father's fishing boat to return and I was right on the shore reaching out my hand to help Father out of the boat (I don't think I washed my hand for the rest of the year). But this was True Mother. I was then suddenly rescued by the Messiah as Father reached out his hand and Mother grabbed it for support.

After working as the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Midwest Chairman with Rev Jim Gavin for the past 3 ½ years I witnessed the changing of the guard. This year, Rev Gavin "retired" and moved back to his hometown in Minnesota and Senor Ricardo de Sena was selected as the new National Chairman of UPF – USA. Senor de Sena came to Chicago to teach a Spanish Divine Principle Seminar and invited me to gather my best UPF Contacts and Ambassadors for Peace to meet him for dinner before he returned to New Jersey. He was inspired that last fall Chicago's new Illinois State UPF Director, Mr. John Prevost had organized an exciting American Leadership Conference Seminar in Chicago. Our keynote speaker was Reverend Clyde Brooks who had been Dr King's driver when he was here in the 1960's. Since that time Dr Brooks had become the CEO of the Illinois Commission on Diversity and Human Relations, a non-profit organization stressing equality and diversity. He has received many honors and is a dynamic speaker. He has also brought many groups to the Holy Land.

This conference was followed up in December when UPF joined with Chicago's True Family Values Conference to offer a two day American Leadership Conference in Chicago. Again, Mr John Prevost was an active organizer and along with Dr. Thomas Walsh, Mrs. Tomoko Duggan and Rev Tom Cutts. The conference brought seventy five leaders from as far away as Keneshaw Mountain, Georgia to suggest methods of how we can change the heart and spirit America in the second decade of the twenty first century..

Thus, this past Monday night (June 2nd) twenty four movers and shakers from Chicago gathered at the Woo Lae Oak Korean restaurant to meet the new leader of UPF, USA and to listen to Senor de Sena present his vision for America. These leaders included Dr. Brooks, Mr. Lee Walker, the founder of the New Coalition for Religious and Social Change; Professor Olfat El Mallakh, an Egyptian Coptic Professor of World Religion and Arabic Languages who has addressed our International Leadership Seminar in Korea and spoken in front of the tomb where Jesus was buried in Israel; Mrs. Mary Swopes, whose Mahogany Black Heritage Foundation raises funds through her educational programs and fashion shows to send inner-city students to college; and Mr. Robert Renteria a Chicago Latino Civic Leader renowned for his work with anti-violence education and youth initiatives as well as the best selling author of "From the Barrio to the Boardroom."

After a "breaking the ice exercise" where each guest read one reason why "men are never depressed" we all enjoyed a classic Korean dinner cooked right on our tables. Then Senor de Sena presented Rev. Moon's vision for UPF to the assembled guests. The essence of his talk, presented to a group of men and women who are making a difference in America through their own outstanding projects, was that each of us must be encouraged to follow our passion in life. The most incredible people in the history of the world have always been those who, regardless of whatever the world might say, faithfully followed their passions. Senor de Sena's presentation was stimulating and exciting and after a final group photo, many of the guests continued talking well into the night.

Since the conclusion of the program, we have received emails from several of the guests thanking us for a wonderful program and expressing their commitment to working together to straighten out the scoliosis in America.

Senor de Sena is committed to visiting the UPF regions all across America and in Chicago we are looking forward toward his rapid return.