

What Generation Peace Activists Are Thankful For at Thanksgiving

Ariana Moon
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The Generation Peace Academy (GPA) students currently enrolled in the Leadership Initiative module take the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday as an opportunity to express their gratitude for their community and loved ones. The following are testimonies from 32 young men and women who have spent several weeks at the Lovin' Life Learning Center in New York City, where they are serving the local community and interning at Unification Church Headquarters USA.



Eika Davis

Eika Davis: When I sit down and compare myself to the pilgrim families that celebrated their first Thanksgiving many years ago, I see one deep similarity: Hope. I give thanks because I have been enabled to believe in the future; the same hope and belief found in the hearts of the pilgrims when they gave up their lives to create a land they wanted for God resonates within me.

I have hope because I am a *part* of a new generation of young people here in America, *part* of a brilliant vision, and a small *part* of a family that has liberated God's Heart. It is the family through which our beloved True Parents and their children have brought the vision of a Love greater than that which we have ever had. I will celebrate this Thanksgiving, thanks to God, True Parents, and the True Children, with the heart that the future is no longer something simply hoped or wished for, but one we can live in the present. Thank You.



Kyoko Biddle

Kyoko Biddle: I've honestly never felt more love or more at home than when I am with my brothers and sister on GPA. Every day I am surrounded by this huge beautiful family. This is Cheon Il Guk. I am so grateful for my family and everything they've done for me and given to me. I'm grateful for all the people God has put in my life because each of them has taught me something. I'm grateful for this life I've been given because I know God put me here for a reason. I'm LOVIN' LIFE!



Erika Hiromitsu

Erika Hiromitsu: My appreciation and respect for the first-generation has grown so much since I've come to GPA. I never realized how crazy, passionate and full of conviction they were (and are) for giving countless years on the frontline. I am so grateful for all they have done for us to be where we are today.



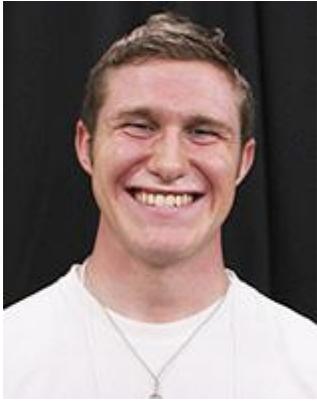
Michael Love

Michael Love: The thing I've come to be most grateful for in the Unification Church community is the family love. It's one of the few places where there is no fear of judgment. You can be who you are and try things you never dreamed of doing, because even if you fail, the love will still be there. I've found myself accomplishing things I never thought possible, and it's all because In Jin Nim has helped us substantiate Cheon Il Guk culture in our own hearts. Thank You God, True Parents, and In Jin Nim for bestowing this culture of love upon us.



Kyra Moyer

Kyra Moyer: I am grateful that God hasn't given up on humanity, that He still makes the sun rise each morning with the hope of a better day. I'm grateful that when I need to escape the craziness of life, I always have my family waiting to embrace me with loving arms. I'm grateful that I have the confidence to walk into the woods or an open field and feel at peace, feel one with the beauty and innocence of nature.



Matthew Rogers

Matthew Rogers: I'm grateful for having a huge family that extends all over the world. I know this family as the Unification community.

Steve Winter: I'm grateful to be staying at the Lovin' Life Learning Center where I'm around the older, famous and respected members of the church, from whom I can learn a lot. I'm grateful to be around members of the True Family like In Jin Nim and her family, who are very caring and nurturing while providing me with a chance to be empowered to make a difference in our world. I'm grateful to live among talented and kindhearted men and women who inspire me to be great. I'm grateful for my family and friends for always supporting me and loving me no matter what I do. I'm grateful for GPA and how it's helped me spiritually and also the friends I've made. I'm grateful for God and True Parents and all they have done for me, my family and my ancestors.



Emma Tecun

Emma Tecun: The community of people around which I have grown up and from which I learn everyday is unlike any you meet anywhere. More than anything, I am grateful for the respect and morals of my Unification Church community, which motivate us to live for the sake of others. Nowhere else have I found a place that cares for me, supports me, accepts me the way I am, and pushes me to become a better individual.



Anthony Hagen

Anthony Hagen: I'm grateful for the elder second-generation who have valiantly persevered through all the hardships that come with the passing of a religious tradition from one generation to another, therefore paving the way for all those to come, such as myself. To see them still following the principle while so many have left is truly inspiring.



Gloria Morales

Gloria Morales: I am grateful for the investment True Family, In Jin Nim, and Lovin' Life have put into the Unification Church community and the world at large. I come from a really protective family, and I wasn't able to build good relationships with other people until I came to New York City and attended Open Mic, Ballroom, and Junction. I have the opportunity to share with a lot of brothers and sisters. I am also grateful for their investment, because every week in the Leadership Initiative Ariana comes to teach us ballroom. Rexton shares with us SAT knowledge, and on Sunday In Jin Nim empowers us to strive for our dream goal, and be internally and externally excellent. I have learned so much from them that I have no words to express how grateful I am.



August Lindsay

August Lindsay: I am grateful for tomorrow. No matter how many times I trip and fall in a day, I always have the opportunity to change and become better. As long as I know that I am heading towards God, I will not stop. Life isn't about perfection, it is about perseverance!



Rebecca Nishida

Rebecca Nishida: I am grateful for In Jin Nim and her family. I know most people don't have the opportunity to spend time with them. I am so lucky that I have. I'm grateful for In Jin Nim's love and care for us Blessed Children and for reaching out to our families through Lovin' Life. I also appreciate her exhilarating taste in music.



Victor Muleki

Victor Muleki: I'm immensely grateful for In Jin Nim and the impact she has on the youth all over the nation. I'm grateful for her inspirational sermons, encouraging us to push forth for our goals and aspirations, focusing on both internal and external excellence. I'm grateful that I have a national pastor that I can relate to on such a big scale. I'm grateful that In Jin Nim has opened my eyes and shown me how to live like a true child of God.



Joanna Clive

Joanna Clive: It can be the littlest things, or the biggest, but whenever I can be grateful, I feel love, and I feel God. I realized recently that my happiest moments are when music is made with others, especially people I love a lot. I'm ridiculously grateful for our movement, because I would never be this blessed with this life without True Parents and In Jin Nim. A year and a half ago, I wouldn't have been able to say that with this much heart. I am grateful that second-generation are crazy and amazing. All those lines about Blessed Children's being strong and having so much unity is true – if we invest in it.



Yeimi Harford

Yeimi Harford: I am grateful to have friends who see the real value in me and a community that I know loves me. I love Indiana <3. I am grateful for the sacrifices and hard work of the first-generation who have laid down the foundation for the second-generation. Without the first-generation we would not be able to be Lovin' Life! THANK YOU!



Gracie Becker

Gracie Becker: I'm grateful for any challenges that God gives to me, because I know it will make me stronger. With these challenges I can be a better person for my future husband, my community, and the world. Most of all, I can return joy to God in my own way by showing Him that throughout all His challenges, I can stand strong.



Jin Ae Sakai

Jin Ae Sakai: As a member of the Unification Church, I am so grateful for the love and acceptance I feel through my brothers and sisters. No matter where I go in the country, God's love is always present through the people there, because we are all striving for the same goal and destination. I am so grateful for the support and guidance by the first-generation and my fellow second-generation.



Sungkwang Jones

Sungkwang Jones: I'm grateful that we have a National Pastor who supports us and even encourages us to do great things, from becoming a phenomenal musician, or being the most graceful dancer, to being the scientist that finds the cure for cancer. Rev. in Jin Moon not only wants us to be amazing spiritually but physically too.



Hana Mansur

Hana Mansur: As a young member of the unification Church, I am grateful for the role models that have guided me all my life. True Parents and True Children have given me tools I need to live a happy and healthy lifestyle. My parents, who have strong lives of faith, have raised me to be a loving, giving person. I am grateful there are people in my life who have made the way easier for me. Because of them, I can make something special out of my life.



Kuni Ohama

Kuni Ohama: I am grateful for my family's unconditional love, for the people always believing in me and never giving up on me, for friends that always are there to lift me up when I'm feeling down.



Michelle Han

Michelle Han: I'm grateful for the unconditional love given to me by the people in my life, regardless of how long they have known me.



Kahael Lange

Kahael Lange: I'm grateful for the foundation laid for us BCs by our parents, True Parents, and True

Family. I'm grateful for my older sister for being able to understand my humor when my mom doesn't get my jokes, and my dad shakes his head at me J. I'm grateful for my friends for supporting me and helping me to overcome my struggles, however petty or serious they are.



Altus Szawlowski

Altus Szawlowski: I'm grateful for the opportunity to live in a Democratic country, and for being able to walk to a corner store and buy anything imaginable.



Younghi Townsend

Younghi Townsend: I am grateful for being born and living in this time and place. God put me here for a specific reason and searching for that is the journey and adventure of my life. Thank you God, I appreciate this.



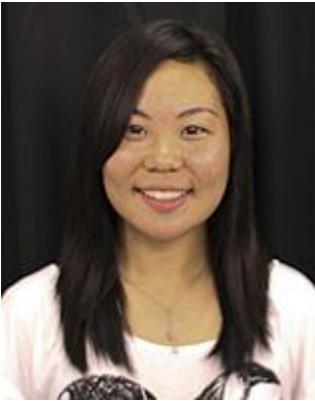
Katherine Williams

Katherine Williams: I am really grateful for my family. Their love and understanding has made me the person I am today. I don't know what I have done to deserve such an awesome family.



Kuni Nishimura

Kuni Nishimura: If we can find something we are extremely grateful for, we can be victorious over any situation. For me, that something that I am extremely grateful for is the relationships I have in my life now. I've had rough relationships in the past and to have relationships that I can truly experience God's love through is truly a blessing for which I am eternally grateful.



Harumi Miyakawa

Harumi Miyakawa: I'm grateful that I have a family back home who is giving, forgiving and supportive. I'm grateful for True Parents, True Children and In Jin Nim for giving me a wonderful opportunity to grow my spiritual life. I'm sincerely grateful to God for giving me challenges in order for me to inherit God's heart. I'm grateful that God loves me unconditionally and never gives up on me.



Youngbok Gomez

Youngbok Gomez: I'm grateful for every person that has loved me enough to push me to become a better person, the people who love me enough to affirm me when I'm doing well, and comfort me when I'm down. I'm grateful for all the opportunities to grow into a tree from a seed, from someone that follows to someone who leads. I'm grateful for our Heavenly Parent who has never ceased to do these things for me, and True Parents for the eyes to see that in every day of my life.



Mi Sook Mendonca

Mi Sook Mendonca: Being a part of Generation Peace Academy and away from my family has truly helped me appreciate all that my family has sacrificed for and unconditionally invested in me. Now, the simplest things – like hearing someone play “River Flows in You” on the piano – remind me of hearing my sister practice that song repeatedly while my parents were cooking dinner. It’s funny, because I used to get annoyed sometimes, but now every time I hear it I miss my family! I’m really grateful that they’re coming here to the Lovin’ Life Learning Center for Thanksgiving! It’s something so simple, but I’m glad we’ll be keeping tradition and spending this holiday together even though I’m not “home” anymore, because I know many people here wish they could do the same.



Eiko Sullivan

Eiko Sullivan: I’m grateful for making the decision of coming to GPA. Because of GPA and In Jin Nim’s love, I found a home where God can dwell. Without it, I wouldn’t be the person I am now.



Trevor Davies

Trevor Davies and Eiko Sullivan: We are grateful for Rev. Krishnek for being a really good example of a leader, a husband and a father to our community. His unconditional love for both young and old Unificationists will always bring us love and understanding of God and True Parents. Thank You Rev. and Mrs. Krishnek and the Seattle Church Community. We miss you all!



Christopher Hall

Christopher Hall: I'm grateful for the sense of family we have. We can trust our brothers and sisters. We also have our own festive energy.



James Galvan

James Galvan: I'm grateful for this world, for my friends, for my parents, for True Parents, and most of all God.