

Growing Up Western in an Oriental Movement

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Many years ago, when I was in seminary at UTS, I gave a sermon entitled, “Growing Up Jewish in the Unification Church.” Today, as I think about my family, I would like to update that title to, “Growing Up Western in an Oriental Movement.” My Austrian wife and I have raised “5 western children.” What I mean here is that both my wife and I have very western values (not Korean or Japanese) and we raised our children in the only manner we knew how. Our 5 children and Michael & Reiko Jenkins 5 children grew up like one family. Rev Jenkins and I worked on AFC, ACLC and our business (SunCorp) together from 1984-2001 when he left Chicago to assume the presidency of our church. Following his and Mrs. Jenkins’ front line leadership, we attended every providential event together—Summer Camps, DP seminars, Sunday service, church visitation, national events and blessings (RFK/MSG/MLK). Our children also spent their 8th grade school years in Korea in the GOP program and attended Chung Pyung as well.

However, from the time our children reached high school they began to care about ‘wordly’ things. They got jobs—not in church businesses but at such places as Dairy Queen and Starbucks, they joined sports, such as football, basketball, baseball and cross country running. Although they were given Korean middle names, their first names, Averill, Joshua, Solomon, Hana and Isabella reflect more on our own family’s and Jewish traditions than many of the Oriental names in our church.

Finally, and most indicatively, I will tell you one story. One night the daughter of dear friends, a Japanese-American couple, shared her testimony. She said that she decided that she did not want to participate in the social side of high school. She did not want to be influenced by the fallen western values of America. So she went through high school, became the school valedictorian (she is currently studying on a full United Nations scholarship at Sun Moon University in Korea, after her time on STF) but did not have any friends or participate in any after school activities. Through this experience she testified that she began to understand the painful suffering heart of God. While I listened, tears began to roll down my cheeks as I could feel the suffering of my little niece. But my daughters (her best friends) had a very different reaction. They said, ‘daddy, we don’t want to do that, we want to run track, have “outside” friends, go to Halloween parties and experience high school.

My children attended Father and Mother on many occasions. I remember in fact, my 10 year old daughter crying in pain and suffering while getting up at 3:30 am in order to attend Father’s Hoon Dok Hae at 5 am during his 50 city tour (which I thought might be her last opportunity to ever be with Father). Our children were raised to always get up at 3:30 am to attend God’s Day in below zero temperatures every year. While attending GOP in Korea, my children had incredible experiences with Father, Mother and Hyung Jin Nim — which they will never forget (and no amount of money could ever buy for them). To this day my 6’3” 235 lb. football player son walks around the house singing Holy Songs.

However, although I served as an advisor to STF and ran the summer Service for Peace Projects in Chicago, my children did not join STF or GPA (although my youngest had an awesome experience with the Next Gen Academy, including going Sky Diving last summer). Instead, they chose to go directly to college, where the 3 boys each won academic scholarships, played college football and won national championships at their respective schools. The eldest finished his Ph.D. and is currently a physical

therapist; the second is well on his way to earning his first million leading a sports athletics training company and the youngest at 23 is the top performer at his local bank branch.

My two daughters seemed to have turned out fairly good as well. The elder (22) is a national champion cross country performer and is receiving annual scholarships from her university. She will graduate with a degree in Kinesiology and is currently a finalist with Teach America for 2013-2014 academic year after she graduates in May.

My youngest, although not the best runner, was the captain of her high school cross country team. When given the opportunity to graduate early, she turned it down, because she felt a loyalty to the girls on her team (maturity?). She won a full state scholarship to college and then decided after her 5th semester to take a year off. She then went to live with her Austrian grandfather for 3 months and concluded by going sky diving with the NGA summer "outward bound program." She is planning on doing her student teaching in England on her way to becoming an elementary school teacher.

While my wife would scold me for bragging, and my mother would accuse me for living vicariously through my children, I give all credit to God and True Parents. I would not have my beautiful Austrian concert pianist wife (the best mother in the world to her children) if not for my True Parents. But this 29 year old Jewish graduate student would never have joined a church. He joined the Creative Community Project on Christmas Eve in 1976. He felt comfortable because the lecturer was a Jewish professor and many of the key leaders were Midwesterners, like Sheri Rueter and Noah Ross and were Jewish as well. At that time he had no idea that he had joined an Oriental church. By the time he found out it didn't matter, because he had accepted the Divine Principle, was studying the "new" testament and had figured out that Jesus was Jewish and that Rev Sun Myung Moon was the Messiah.

In conclusion, to say that my wife and I have raised five "western" children is an important statement. A few years ago I was speaking with one of the leading western couples in our movement. I really thought that their family must have it together. But they responded by saying, "don't you understand—our children are western children in an oriental church. Therefore they are on the outskirts of everything." I was really shocked to hear this—not what I expected from two of the western leaders whom I most admired. Like their children, my children have suffered in many ways throughout their lives. They grew up in a church which had little use for their input. By the time Lovin' Life was instituted and so much focus was finally directed at the second generation, my children were already in college.

Likewise, whenever Father called a matching, I would receive numerous phone calls wondering whether my children were going to attend. But I never felt like they were ready. They are still not blessed (nor married) but I am grateful that they have escaped the horrendous fate of so many second generation whose blessings were broken — often before they even began their family life. The only good I can say for my children was that very few of these tragedies happened in Chicago.

I read Father's questions and answers where He says that blessing your children is the most important mission of your lives. I believe this and my wife and I pray in this direction every day of our lives.

I had the blessing to be with True Parents one last time at the ten day OSDP workshop in July, 2012. Father spoke to us the first morning for 9 or 10 hours. He was different. I felt that he just wanted to give us everything that he possibly could in the little time still allotted to him.

Previously, Father had said that we must go beyond any borders in our lives. That there is no longer any American, European, Jewish, Catholic, Russian, South American or even Korean. As I grew up in a world filled only with White Jews and Catholics, I am so grateful that my children's best friends have included African-Americans, Vietnamese, Koreans, Indians, Christians and even the family of one Lutherans pastor (although I must admit that while they were growing up they were more impressed with their 36 cats than their theology).