

Blessed Teens Academy Takes Hak Ja Han Moon's Message to Heart

Michael Hentrich and Jeri Tamayo - Edited by Ariana Moon
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All of the staff and students of BTA attended Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's Hook Dok Hae session the following Sunday morning at her Las Vegas residence.

News that Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon would deliver the keynote address at the 20th Anniversary National Assembly of WFWP on October 27, 2012 drew not only distinguished women leaders but also thousands of Unificationists, including the 35 staff and students of the Blessed Teens Academy (BTA), an educational program for teenage Unification youth currently located in Blanco Texas. The following is a report by Rev. Michael Hentrich and Jeri Tamayo, BTA Administrator and Director, respectively, about the event.

We decided to go to Las Vegas because of the importance for second-generation Unificationists to attend our True Parents at this time. This would be the first time our True Mother spoke publicly after the 40-day condition following True Father's *Seonghwa*. The decision to travel to Las Vegas was difficult to make, because we did not have the financial means to do so. In order for us to make the trip, we fundraised along the way, selling *The World's Finest Chocolate*, which is a well-known fundraiser candy used by many schools in the United States.

The drive from Texas to Las Vegas was more than 20 hours. We left in the late evening on Wednesday Oct. 24, 2012 and arrived in Las Vegas, Nevada around midnight on Thursday. We took a good rest and continued to fundraise Friday afternoon in order to support the rest of the trip. A few of our students, along with Marianne Rischl, director's assistant of BTA, were able to prepare a table at the WFWP conference to witness about our program and to fundraise there. We chose to give 50 percent of our profit to WFWP as a donation for their work.



Kohki Nakahira, Steve and Jeri Tamayo, Michael Hentrich, Rev. Mark Hernandez and his wife and other church members take a group photo after Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's speech in the Milan Ballroom.

Attending the national assembly was a good opportunity for our students to share about their experiences at BTA with interested attendees. Many people were inspired by our students and wanted to know more about our program. During the WFWP program on Saturday, 10 of us were able to offer our time as ushers for the event. We were all able to attend True Mother's speech that morning.

“The event showed Mother’s strength, and it was inspiring seeing the first generation’s dedication to attend True Parents as they crowded around as close as they could to see her,” said BTA sophomore Soonmmi Whedby, 16.

BTA sophomore Eika Nishimura, 15, said, “I felt [during the event] a strong feeling of the Holy Spirit,

like a mother's love.”

A 50-minute video tribute followed, allowing us to watch and reflect on the victorious lives of our True Parents. According to BTA sophomore Morgan Gaines, 16, the video allowed her “to see True Father and True Mother in an up close way,” and to feel “heartistically connected to them.”

True Mother then spoke to us strongly about repentance and re-dedicating ourselves to God and True Parents. The students were moved by her heart to continue moving forward, and we left feeling re-inspired to contribute to our movement.

BTA graduate and current staff Kohki Nakahira, 19, said, “I especially appreciated Mother's guidance on learning and teaching the Divine Principle and to ‘catch fire’ again in our church. Her words allowed me to reflect on my own efforts or lack thereof and made me want to do more and make that extra effort.”

The next morning, we woke up at 3:30 a.m. to attend Mother's *Hoon Dok Hae* at her residence in Las Vegas, at the Cheon Hwa Gung together with other Unificationists and members of the True Family. Luckily, we arrived early enough to find seats right in the middle of the room where Mother could see us.

“My experience of seeing True Mother and True Children and the people around them was inspiring,” said BTA Senior Sarah Rischl, 16. “Mother's speech and *Hoon Dok Hae* and her seriousness in her education to us members inspired me to set a higher goal for myself in what it means to ‘attend.’”

The *Hook Dok Hae* was brief, and during it Mother shared with us her intention to drive through the United States to visit the holy ground sites that she and Father had blessed years ago. After *Hoon Dok Hae*, we and other attendees there saw Mother and several members of the True Family off on their trip. Despite our long journey ahead, we left Las Vegas feeling loved and empowered by our True Mother.