

Philip Brown and Fukunaga Yoshida's Film: Unificationists Working Side-by-Side

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Phil Brown and Fukunaga Yoshida, equipped with gear for their practicum, get serious about a photoshoot.

This past summer's Leadership Program, which concluded on August 17, 2012, was hailed as a success not only because the enrollment had more than doubled since last summer, but also because it welcomed seven first-generation Unificationists ranging from the ages of 19 to 28. As each of the 43 participants of the program joined "practicums," or internships at Unification Church USA Headquarters, two Unificationist-born youth from the Video Practicum, Philip Brown and Fukunaga Yoshida, decided to create a short documentary that focused on the dynamic between first- and second-generation Unificationists of the same age.

The documentary features a conversation between Brown and fellow Leadership Program participant Noah Trimble, 21, an Ohio-resident unlike most Unificationists his age in that he joined the church four years ago. The stimulus for the video was an opportunity granted by Video Practicum host Toshi Tagawa for Brown and Yoshida to work on a project in which they were given creative freedom.

"I had first met Noah in the brother's dorm and we'd struck up a conversation," said Brown. "We talked about our respective communities, our faith, how we felt about the program, etc. It was only towards the end of our chat that I found out he'd been a member for just a few years."

Out of an original plan to document Trimble's experience on the Leadership Program as a first-generation Unificationist, the impromptu dialogue between Brown and Trimble featured in the documentary, which addresses the topic of crossing paths as first- and second-generation Unificationists, ensued.

"When Phil asked me if he could interview me for a video project I wasn't sure what it was going to be about," said Trimble. "The first thing he said was that he just wanted it to be like a chat between two friends. This was easy because the two of us had bonded deeply since the fourth of July.

"We thought it was important to show people that the two of us came from very different births, backgrounds and histories to end up in the same place. Phil was born into the movement, I found it, and now we are right next to one another looking to do the same thing: deepen a relationship with True Parents and grow towards the vision of True Family. There is no difference between him and me; we are both just blessed children of God on the same path. 'first-gen' and 'second-gen' are just quiet words in

comparison to the things we can do together as young, inspired Unificationists.”

In harmony with Trimble’s sentiments, Brown said, “Naturally our two journeys in finding faith have been different as for everyone and I wanted to use the contrast to show a collective ‘oneness’ as opposed to a robotic ‘sameness’ in our experience of True Parents.”



Phil Brown could often be found singing and writing songs in the hall of the Learning Center with Leadership Program participant Aaron Jackson.

“What My Parents Must Have Been Like”

For Brown, a resident of Newcastle upon Tyne in England, the past was a “constant motif” during his time on the Leadership Program in the United States. The tone for his American experience was set by the 30th Anniversary celebration for Unificationists who in 1982 had gathered in Madison Square Garden to participate in Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s mass wedding – a wedding Brown’s parents had attended.

“I made a short stop at Madison Square Garden to take a photograph of my Mum and Dad’s wedding venue,” Brown said. “The United States is an important place in my family’s history as much of my parents’ mission experience was in the States. Coming here was a chance to go back to the roots of where my parents’ faith blossomed and spending my time with the first-generation Unificationists offered a greater insight into not just the place and context of my parents’ faith-finding, but also an insight into who they were, how they acted and how they felt at having discovered a new truth.

“Prior to my visit to the States, the word ‘first-gen’ might as well have meant ‘members over 40’ or ‘members from Eastern Europe.’ It was people like Noah, Caleb and the others on the program who re-defined what first-generation members are to me. I realized how first-gen in my mind were part of a self-made categorization, almost like a class system, but through my seven weeks on the program I came to see beyond that. It’s where we’re headed, not where we’ve come from, and I began to value every member of the program equally based on their aspiration and desire to understand the vision of Lovin’ Life and bring it back to their communities. I’m so grateful for the experience here and so grateful that I didn’t just have a summer holiday in America.”

Yoshida, who worked together with Brown to create the documentary, shared a similarly changed attitude. “Getting to interact with first-generation members my age really opened my eyes to what my parents must have been like when they joined and therefore, helped me break barriers with and concepts of my parents,” he said. “‘First-generation,’ ‘second-generation,’ ‘Blessed child,’ ‘Jacob’s child’ – all those became just words. In the end, what matters is one’s heart towards God and True Parents.

“A lot of us born into the church have this concept that we’re better than new members our age, that we

have some sort of status they don't, and because of that, a lot of tension can arise at times. On the Leadership Program, I learned to break these concepts, which had simply become bad habits over time. I gained the drive to strive for something greater than myself and developed a close circle of friends, as well as a more grounded sense of identity."



Noah Trimble and Caleb Boucher, both of whom are young first-generation Unificationists, participated in spiritual conditions to support Rev. Moon's recovery.

A Testimony by Noah Trimble

Trimble's experience with Unificationists who had been born and raised in the church was "mixed" upon his arrival at the Learning Center at 4 West 43rd Street in that most of those with whom he interacted with didn't realize he had only been a member for four years.

"As always, it is incredibly inspiring to be around young second-gen," he said. "They are all beautiful people with incredible talents, but you wouldn't know it, because no one ever boasts about themselves. Everyone is naturally humble. It's also nice how we can connect on a deep level and build strong friendships because we are all new brothers and sisters. Investing honestly and sincerely into relationships opens up all kinds of avenues for God to love you through.



Noah Trimble engages an audience, including Teresa Ferrete (right), during a presentation that was part of the Leadership Program's syllabus.

"The Leadership Program was intense. Long, information-packed days about so many different things – it's crazy! I learned so much from different people about *Heart of Attendance*, Ballroom Ministry, Lovin' Life, and so many other topics. I was in the Ministry/Guest Care Practicum, hosted by Jaga Gavin,

Andrew Love, Ester Allen, Kone and Olga Majitova. They gave us a very clear definition of where Rev. In Jin Moon sees Lovin' Life going and showed us how Lovin' Life in New York is actively pursuing that. It strengthens my life of faith to know that the problems in our ministry are being addressed and changed.

“When I heard about True Father’s health, I did a three-day fast and prayer condition. I’d fasted before but this fast was unique. I didn’t complain one time during it. That had been my goal. I haven’t yet had the blessing to see True Father personally or directly give him anything out of gratitude, and I felt that this was a chance for me to love True Parents actively while they are still here with us on Earth. They have sacrificed so much and it is Father’s unrelenting drive to do so that put him in the situation he is in. That being the case, I did not want to complain because this was a great opportunity, not an obligation. The three days were difficult, but in the end it was really nice to offer it up. Every day I’d pray and drink water, pray and drink water, and pray and drink water. All the people who were fasting at 43rd street came together just after midnight to share in a ‘break-fast’ breakfast. It was awesome to drink something other than water! We ate together and laughed. It was nice to see everyone fill up with energy after their first few bites.

“I know that there are people who may have been completely turned off by the church four years ago who would love it now. Whenever I get down about flaws in how the church operates, it’s easy to remember how much Rev. In Jin Moon has changed it in under four years’ time. This moves my critical heart to a grateful, optimistic one. I believe that we can make communities that people will love to be in and want to come to with the tools being given to us at the Lovin’ Life Leadership Program.”