

West Point Cadet Christal Theriot Upholds Unificationist Values at Military Academy

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November 11, 2011



Petite, soft-spoken and poised, young Unificationist Christal Theriot, 18, seems at first glance like any other timid college freshman. But many know that beneath her delicate exterior lies an unparalleled combination of determination, willpower and faith. Theriot is a first-year cadet of West Point, the world's premier leader-development institution, where students undergo not only rigorous academic training but also physical, spiritual, ethical, social, and military education.

Unlike many female students her age, Theriot had harbored a desire to attend a military academy for many years. "In high school, I just knew I wanted to go to a military academy," said Theriot. "I joined the Civil Air Patrol program, which is kind of like a junior ROTC program for high-school students, and it focused a lot on instilling a military lifestyle into me. During this program I developed much stronger bonds with cadets than I did with non-cadets because of all the struggles we went through, and that experience convinced me that I wanted to continue to study at a military academy.

"I was very open about being a Unificationist during my high-school years. I talked about living for the sake of others, and I soon realized this value was reflected in military academies through the term 'selfless service.' You know you're giving your life to the army, and you have to be open about it. You know that your life is for America and the service you're going to give is representing America wherever you go. So in my junior year, I applied to West point, knowing that I wanted to serve our country and that I could become a courageous and strong leader through the training offered there."

Theriot tallied up an impressive 81 hours worth of college credit at San Jacinto College South during her high-school years. "When San Jacinto found out I got accepted into West Point, they were very proud I was their student and connected me to the press," said Theriot, somewhat shyly. "I was the only one in my area who had been accepted into a military academy, and I was a girl, which is even rarer. So, through the college, I was interviewed live for Channel 9 news on ABC."

Theriot started her journey at West Point on June 27, 2011, with Cadet Basic Training, also known as "Beast." "It's a six-week program that transitions you from being a civilian to a soldier," said Theriot. "I was initially freaking out. That first week was pretty bad for all of us new cadets, because we didn't know

where we were, and people were shouting at us the whole time. We were just going place to place, not given much time to let anything sink in. We would be told, “Drop and do push-ups!” and we would have to.

“You realize you’re not friends with your higher-ups. You are a subordinate. Beast is harsh, but teaches you humility. West Point collects superstars from high-school, but you learn that you’re not that superstar anymore – you’re at the bottom of the food chain. You have to learn how to be a follower and put aside your ego to work together with your squad or complete the task at hand. During the training, we also have no contact from the outside world. It was different not being allowed to contact people. They gave us two phone calls during Beast and that was like the best day of my life, talking on the phone for 10 minutes.”

According to Theriot, about 50 people dropped out of her class of 1,200 during Beast. At the end of six weeks, each student who was able to complete the program receives a grade, the average of which is a “C.”

“I received an A,” said Theriot. “I got really motivated and I realized it’s better to have a good attitude, to give everything you have in the moment so you can get the most out of the training that you’re receiving. I knew that God has a plan for everyone. If you put all your effort into what you’re doing, into the environment He’s placed you in, then you’ll get the most out of whatever you’re doing.”



God and True Parents are more relevant in my life now than before. Even though you’re always in a high-intensity environment at West Point, you notice that whenever you don’t think of God and True Parents, whenever you’re not proactive about keeping them in your life, your spirit feels emptier. I know I’m still growing, and that I have a long way to go.

I’m very grateful that my parents taught me the values I have now, like living for the sake of others, which is what I apply in my life right now. I didn’t want them to worry about me – they worry more about me than I do about anything at West Point. I’m getting through, and I know that the hardships are what make me stronger.

Right now there are eight Blessed Children [second-generation Unificationists] at West Point, including me. We try to talk to each other as much as we can during our busy schedules. We have *Divine Principle* study together, and I talk to my friends about the church. The percentage of girls there is like 17 percent, and I feel that a lot of girls at West Point try to blend into the male atmosphere and forget they are ladies. Some have foul mouths. We ladies should know that we’re strong women, and we should be proud to be women of West Point.

Especially for female Blessed Children out there – be proud of the strengths that we all have and the talents that God has given us. I’m proud to be a Unificationist and to be a Blessed Child at West Point, and I think all the Blessed Children should be proud of who they are, wherever they are. I wouldn’t have the moral strength that I have now without the direction of True Parents. I can never forget them.

I would definitely bring my friends to Lovin’ Life.

To provide readers a better idea of life as a West Point cadet, Theriot listed her activities for a typical day. “You wake up at 5 a.m. to get ready for 5:30 a.m. physical training, which is about 45 minutes long. Then you have to get dressed and shower before 6:30 formation, which means cleaning up your room for morning inspection. Your bed has to be perfect, your clothes hung in the right order, your buttons buttoned, the brass on your uniform shined. And then you have classes from 7:30 a.m. to around 3 p.m., with lunch at 12 noon. After classes you have MacArthur time, during which you practice a sport if you’re in a club. I’m in club fencing, so I do that. If you’re not in a club sport, you do intramural sports, because the academy wants every cadet to be an athlete. Every cadet needs to be well-rounded and is trained in the three pillars of academics, physical, and military training. You get a grade for each of these pillars, which are combined to be your final GPA. After that, you have dinner formation. Formation is where you line up in your squads and platoons. After that, we have club time. I joined the Salsa team, which at West Point is great, because they focus on making salsa classy. And then, football games are every other weekend. They’re so intense! They make sure that all the cadets come, and all the plebs, or first-year cadets, have to do push-ups whenever we get a touchdown.

“Every day can feel like the same, but we West Point students are very dedicated to serving. We all came to the academy to serve our country. We’re so motivated and patriotic, and I admire all the cadets there. We’re prepared to give our lives in service to all the citizens and to protect the values of freedom.”