

## Unificationist Hanayo Ito Reports Sex Harassment and Abuse in Japan

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August 3, 2012



*Unificationist Hanayo Ito, a 24-year-old college student visiting the United States from Japan, tearfully told her story of persecution on her college campus to participants of the Lovin' Life Leadership Program at the Lovin' Life Learning Center in Manhattan on July 31, 2012. The following is Ito's testimony about the persecution she received at the hands of faculty and fellow students in Japan as a Unification Church member.*

“They say we are mind-controlling people. We are not. They say we are being mind controlled, that our absolute obedience is in line with slavery. When Rev. Sun Myung Moon says ‘jump,’ we jump, no questions asked. We do not. They do not see our freedom, our freedom to choose how to worship God, how to live and how to love. Just because you are born into a church doesn't mean it belongs to you. You have to take ownership of who you are. In high school, before going to college and working with the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), I learned to love the Unification Church. I seriously studied the Divine Principle and the Bible to understand what the truth is. Intellectually, I realized there is no other truth. Everything just made sense to me.



In high school, after I told people about my faith, I lost my friends. My teacher spoke about the Unification Church in class, calling it a ‘cult.’ I felt sorry for them, and I did not want to become like them, so, out of a desire to share about how great is the Unification Church, I decided to go to Chiba University, because I had heard it was a university that was tolerant. I had heard it was a very peaceful

and beautiful school with many foreign students, so I thought it would probably have a more worldly view on things. In reality, Chiba University is not tolerant: it is one of the universities that opposes our church most strongly. There are signs around campus to warn people about our church and its affiliated groups. CARP is not allowed. Anything organized that has to do with CARP is forbidden. It is an actual rule. If you try, you can be punished by the school.



### **CARP Battles Against Faith Breakers**

Ten years ago, CARP at Chiba was dissolved because of faith breakers. Then, Unificationists brought CARP back seven years ago. When I enrolled at Chiba, there were only five Unificationists. Due to faith breaking and persecution, we lost friends. I couldn't believe it when I lost all my friends after they discovered my beliefs. It hurts to know that people are so shallow and are not willing to stand by me. I do have some friends left, but they do not understand my pain and do not support me. Only one friend does, but not publicly. But I understand. I do not want them to have any trouble.

I won't use names, but I will describe in detail some of what happened to us. People would make background checks to find out who the Unificationists at school were. Then, they would try to force faith breakers onto you and try to get you to leave the university. My best friend, a second-generation Unificationist, was asked to go home in her junior year. Because her friends found out she was an Unificationist, the office found out. They called her into the office to ask about the Blessing of marriage. She felt they were impersonal and rude, but answered their biased and harsh questions. She lost her trust in her friends and felt afraid to go back to school. I lost many friends like this. They even called her aunt; they told her that her niece was hanging out with a group of suspicious people. They told my friend that if she was in CARP, she could not graduate and become a teacher. She refused to leave CARP and was therefore forced to leave the school.

My father is a businessman, and my mother is a nurse. They were participants in the 6,000-couple Marriage-Blessing ceremony in Korea in 1982. They just celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. Are we so different that we cannot celebrate what we have accomplished publicly? Let's get our human rights back. Don't give up your dreams because of other people. Unificationist parents don't want their children to be hurt so they tell them to stay quiet. [Fact is] if you speak out, it is like you are fighting your whole country. You have to be willing to give up your aspirations and dreams, which is why so few people are willing to stand up. I understand how they feel, which is why I have to fight.



### **Families Standing Up to Demand Respect**

There is a small group of three families who stand together on this. They got together and wrote to the university: “We are doing the right thing. You are the ones who are dangerous and causing problems.” For two years I was representing CARP on this matter, and I approached my professor on this problem. He never replied to me. Then the university started causing us more problems. They started giving lectures about why CARP is bad and how to avoid it. Many students attended that lecture. The university would bring specialists, professors or authors who wrote books against the Unification Church. As a result of the climate of hatred, my car was broken into and vandalized. This situation has been going on for a very long time at Chiba University, and the university refuses to do anything about it.

Unificationists also have been persecuted at Song Adon University. Again, I will not say names. One student there was discovered to be a Unificationist and was called into the office, where she was verbally degraded. Administrators said the Blessing was like a marriage between a dog and a cat. Incredibly, her professor called her into his office and molested her. She is in the process of suing him. There is no result yet, but in Japan, cases like these aren't normally won because Japanese authorities have been trying to get rid of the Unification Church. Japanese police are taught that cults are bad. At the university we try to spread the truth, but it is hard, because there is nowhere for us to go [to report abuse]. In CARP, there is a representative in almost every university throughout Japan, and we have created a network of friendship and communication.

I'm studying modern art in college. One day, I began to pray in the CARP office at school. I prayed because I felt very sad for humankind and what we are doing to each other out of fear and hatred and misunderstanding. When I finished, I looked up and saw an apple that was on the offering table and suddenly began to hear God's voice. God asked me, “Isn't this apple great?” I did not understand at first, but then I realized something. Although people are sad in this world and this wounds God, I know God is also happy. Yes, human history has been filled with much sadness but it is important to see through that. There is also much beauty and happiness in this world. God's motivation is to be happy through love. God made the apple so people can enjoy it and be happy. Therefore, I can now bear any persecution, because I see God's heart. There are negative things happening to me, but I know God has a purpose for it and for me.

I hope to one day be a professor at a university in Japan in order to be an agent of God. In Japan, Unification Church members will be able to speak freely and proudly about who they are without the fear of persecution, pain and fear of being shunned by friends, coworkers, or peers. I want people in Japan and around the world to know about our struggles and that we are willing to fight for our freedom and live our lives for God.”