

Japan's Love for Africa

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Edmund Charley, from Sierra Leone, and Mercy Quaye, from Ghana, smile on their wedding day in Seoul, Korea in 1992.

At fifteen, my bride, Mercy Quaye, was brought to the United States by a Ghanaian couple to look after their children. She stayed with the couple for seven years. When the children got bigger, the couple did not need her anymore. She was praying about what to do while attending a Presbyterian Church where she met Glenn Strait. She heard the Principle and joined the Unification Church about six years ago. Most of her time before the blessing was spent as a center member in Washington, D.C.

In 1989, she was supposed to go to the matching in Korea, but while she was fundraising her bag was stolen with her green card in it. She tried to get a copy so she could go to Korea, but the lady at immigration said, "You are too young to get married. You should not go." Mercy thought that maybe the lady was telling her the truth, in any case, she did not have her green card, so she had to wait until this blessing.

I was witnessed to by Mr. Nagatomo, the missionary to Sierra Leone, Africa. I joined in 1982. I have been waiting for the blessing for ten years. In Africa, during the early days of the church it was very hard to get news quickly and also to raise the money to go to the blessing. I was fortunate that in 1987 At Mr. Nagatomo's urging, I came to the United States to study economics. After graduation Mr. Nagatomo requested th.t I stay and fundraise, directly hear Father speak, and become familiar with the church organization. I also added some computer science to my education.

When he told me to prepare for the blessing financially, I did. In 1989, I applied for a church worker's visa and my case was pending. When the blessing came up it was not possible to go without jeopardizing the visa and the communication connection through me between Sierra Leone and the World Mission Department International Headquarters.

At the time, the West African Region was divided between English-speaking and French-speaking nations. Sierra Leone was part of the English-speaking group, consisting of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Gambia, with Nigeria as the headquarters. A regional director rarely can visit. I was able to channel news directly to Sierra Leone.

However, as time progressed my desire to return to Sierra Leone became stronger, but my central figure encouraged me to stay in the United States until I received the blessing as it would be so difficult to get out of Sierra Leone once I returned. I thought the 1989 blessing was going to be in New York, but then it was changed to Korea. I realized then how difficult it was to get the blessing.

I prayed tearfully for three days and on the fourth day had a dream in which Father was matching Africans to Africans. As he went down the line and came to me he said, "It's time for lunch we will have

lunch and then start again." I felt happy as I felt it meant that I would be the first for the matching next time. When I woke up, I felt it was Heavenly Father comforting me.

My prayers for the blessing changed after that. Rather than pray for this or that quality in my spouse I just repented for not being worthy of receiving the blessing. I gave all my intensity to this prayer because I realized it is really difficult to be blessed by the Messiah.

Dreams fulfilled

On July 15, 1992, Kathy Coman from the World Mission Department called me very early and said, "You are matched to Mercy Quaye from Ghana, twenty-eight years old, and somewhere in the United States." I only knew one sister from Africa working here and she wasn't named Mercy. Later Kathy gave me Mercy's phone number and address. While I dialed the number someone said, "You have to go through a central figure." "I know, but this is a match made in heaven!" I replied.

She was fundraising so I left my number and the message that I was her new fiancé. She did not call back, so I called again and connected. I told her I had heard that we were matched, but she had not heard anything. She said,

"Do you believe in Heavenly Father and True Parents' choice?" I wanted to joke, but I knew I had better not; so, I just said, "Yes." Her voice comforted me, and I knew that she was the person I had prayed for. Then I didn't want to know so much about how she looked, her voice comforted me so much- I was very grateful to Heavenly Father and True Parents.

I began doing three bows to them each day in gratitude because I did not know how else to express my gratitude. Before, I had prayed for someone who is faithful-no matter what she would not betray God and True Parents. I believe this kind of person will never break the blessing. I hoped for someone I could share with and who could become the spiritual mother of a country. For our future in Sierra Leone and the success of the mission there, I felt someone respectful, loving, and caring was needed. Just by hearing Mercy's voice, I had a strong feeling that God gave me the person I had hoped for. I never had that feeling before and the experience was great.

In my country when a marriage is arranged we check the health of the other family, so I asked about her physical strength and family background. She was fine but she did not like so many questions. When I found out she was a full-time center member I was completely satisfied. Center life is very spiritually nourishing. She asked me for my picture and, when it came, asked her central figure if I could visit.

I arrived Saturday evening at Upshur House while Mercy was fundraising. Paul Herman, the center leader, and his wife and son David welcomed me and shared the history of that historic place. The older blessed members were keeping a prayer vigil for the newly matched members and Paul and his wife were on a fasting condition for the same purpose. I felt grateful Mercy was in such a caring environment.

After dinner, the members returning to the center testified to Mercy's greatness, and when the phone rang I knew it was for me. Mercy encouraged me to go to bed and she would see me the next day.

Kevin McCarthy led the pledge and then spoke on prayer life. I was introduced to the brothers and sisters and finally, the moment was here. Mercy came over from the fundraising center, and Clyde West called me saying, "Mercy's here." I thought, "Is it real that Father looked at my picture for a few seconds and picked someone for me?" Indeed, it was real, she was real. When we saw each other we both laughed and at that moment felt like we had known each other for twenty years. We had no barriers. Our traditional cultural background is almost the same. We understood each other better each time we spoke, and she felt comfortable with me.

After Sunday service and breakfast, we went to a workshop for the blessing. Everybody said we looked alike. I met many members she works with and lives with. I realized she was just the perfect match for me.

Thanks to Japan

On August 5 I left for Japan where my spiritual parent had invited me to attend a meeting of the W24 Club as a representative of Sierra Leone. These are not our family members. "They are individuals who have their own businesses and have positions in society. All of them are in their forties and just graduated from the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Usually, they hold their meetings on the twenty-fourth of each month, but they moved it up so that I could be there.

I arrived in Tokyo and stayed there for two days. My spiritual parent explained how they came into contact with the W24 Club. Because Mrs. Nagatomo had fought and overcome cancer in her womb and gave birth to twin daughters (Karen and Suiren), Mr. and Mrs. Nagatomo became famous not only in our

family but throughout the entire nation of Japan as well.

For two days I was with their physical parents in Miyazaki and then on the eleventh attended the W24 Club, where the president, Mr. Kosaka, presented me with a monetary gift on behalf of the club which I received on behalf of the Sierra Leone church. They also promised to help the Sierra Leone church in the near future. The rest of the time was spent in Tokyo thanking groups and individuals for their tremendous help in financing Sierra Leone members' trips to Korea for the blessing. Eight members were blessed this time; the first blessing in the seventeen years since the church has been in Sierra Leone.

In Korea on August 21, I met Mercy. We were admired by many other couples, especially the ones from Africa because we are an African couple but have had the opportunity to live and be trained in America while True Parents are here.

End of evil and sonship

The holy wine ceremony was the most important part of our life, and we talked deeply into the night about what it meant. It is the time all evil history of our ancestry must stop, i.e., her evil history and my evil history as well. However, she was confident; she trusted God and True Parents absolutely. We went through the holy wine ceremony and the blessing. Her new position right now is that of being a mother and having a son.^[1] I am now praying for an understanding of exactly what that means. Sometimes it's tough.

The more I pray the more I realize how difficult it is to be a son to someone who you know is your wife and someone younger than you. It is quite an experience, and that is what I am praying about now, not just externally but deeply, seeking its purpose. I feel that it is very important for us. So far she has been nice, and she has an amazing sense of humor but I realize that she is very serious about God, True Parents, and our future.

Overall, we are both happy and grateful to Heavenly Father and our True Parents for allowing us to become part of their lineage. We are looking forward to overcoming the many challenges that lie ahead and to fulfill the responsibility given to us as a blessed couple.

^[1] In the first stage after the blessing (for the first generation) a bride is like a "true mother" and the groom is like her "true son."

Edmund Charley is one of eight members from Sierra Leone blessed in Seoul - one of the first blessing participants from Sierra Leone since the church was established there seventeen years ago. Though back in Japan, Mr. Nagatomo, the spiritual parent and original missionary to Sierra Leone, did not forget his younger brothers and sisters and appealed to clubs and businesspeople for donations to make their blessing trips possible.