

UPA spent January visiting historical places in True Parents' work in the USA

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UPA spent the last two weeks on the West Coast visiting Holy Grounds and practicing outreach.

The Universal Peace Academy (UPA) spent the month of January visiting historical places in the legacy of True Parents' work in the United States. Earlier this month, they visited the East Coast including the New Yorker Hotel and Manhattan Center in New York, the Washington Times in the nation's capital, the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut, the Unification Theological Seminary, East Garden and Belvedere. Then, the group of cadets made their way to the West Coast where they visited Las Vegas and embarked on a Holy Ground pilgrimage before they split into two teams, some staying in Las Vegas and others heading up to Los Angeles for a week of outreach activities.

The following are the cadets' personal reflections along each stop of the way during the West Coast portion of their trip:

Las Vegas Family Church & CARP



UPA meeting with the leader CARP Las Vegas, Akira Watanabe

On January 11, 2016, UPA traveled from New Jersey to Las Vegas. There, they met Mr. Akira Watanabe and other members of the local chapter of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP Las Vegas). Unificationists from the Las Vegas Family Church also came out to greet them. The cadets took this chance to share and reflect on their travels so far.

“Visiting the Holy Grounds in eastern America was such a great experience for me. Throughout this pilgrimage, I have felt True Parents' love for America and the world. I look forward to seeing the Holy

Grounds in western America, which are more concentrated in one area.”

-Kashin Kim

“Today we traveled from New Jersey to Las Vegas. Through my travels so far I came to know that how dedicated True Father was and how much he loved America. I really missed him. Las Vegas is a place where True Parents truly invested themselves, and I am so glad to be here.”

-Tomomi Fukuda



UPA's arrival to the Las Vegas airport

“It was amazing to have visited so many places where True Parents have dedicated their time, such as Belvedere, East Garden, the Washington Times, and the New Yorker Hotel, and truly feel their love. If the schedule in the East Coast was to experience the True Parents' achievements, the West Coast is about experiencing the creativity of our Heavenly Parent through visits to natural wonders such as the Grand Canyon and Zion National Park. Although we arrived late, we were greeted warmly by Mr. Akira and CARP members. It was nice to have met the people who we will be witnessing with and we look forward to our time in the West Coast.”

-Soo Ho Kim

Hoover Dam, Sedona and the Grand Canyon



UPA explored canyons and caverns on their tour around the Las Vegas area

On January 12, the group made their way to Hoover Dam. They also visited Sedona where they climbed Bell Rock and stopped by the Chapel of the Holy Cross. Then on the 13th, UPA visited the much-anticipated Grand Canyon, as well as Antelope Canyon and Horseshow Bend. On January 14, they visited Zion Canyon where they sang together and offered a prayer and determination to True Parents.

“Today, I visited the Hoover Dam and Sedona for the first time in my life. At the dam, I was able to see and feel the grand man-made creature. True Father would visit here often, and I started to think about what True Father’s thoughts might have been on his visits.”

–Gook Hyung Lim

“Being in places so huge and vast, I realized that the problems I’ve been worrying about are a really small compared to God’s love. God created a mountain from dust; it’s an incredible miracle.”

–Kenta Gishi



UPA cadets hiking in Sedona

“The nature God created is so amazing. I came to understand that there is another existence with even higher value than nature: humankind. Unfortunately, right now those taking ownership of nature might not have the best intentions. I want to help bring everything back to God as quickly as possible.”

–Yoshika Sakamaki

“Looking around the Grand Canyon, Antelope Canyon and Horseshoe Bend, I saw the greatness of God’s creation. As a son of God, who inherited God’s creation, I found that I have the responsibility of protecting it. This is the blessing God gave us.”

–Suyoung Cho



Cadets at the Grand Canyon

“It was truly beautiful and huge and I can’t describe it in words. I wanted to internalize this kind of atmosphere in my mind, a strong and deep peace.”

-Yoshihide Nakagawa

“Seeing the Grand Canyon made me feel I should be really thankful to have been born in this world. I’ll never forget this place.”

-Keiko Shimoda

“Visiting Zion National Park was one of the most emotional days for me on this pilgrimage. Especially when we climbed up the mountain, we each shouted our determination and love toward Heavenly Parent and True Parents and sang the song ‘Mission’ together. Through this, we came to know how each of us thinks and feels. We shouted different words, but it all resonated as one, and it made me think we are all connected through our Heavenly Parent. I am really proud and thankful to be among the UPA cadets.”

-Kashin Kim

“Today was special because we hiked to a place overlooking the canyon and there, each one of the cadets shouted their determination and heart for True Parents. While it was a small thing to do, I really hoped that our heart resounded in True Parents’ heart as our voiced echoed in the canyon. As our Holy Ground Pilgrimage comes to an end and we begin to prepare for the witnessing program, I sincerely wished that I could bring real results in witnessing to be able to offer comfort to True Mother.”

-Soo Ho Kim

Outreach



A group of cadets planning their week of outreach

On January 15, the group met with UPA youth envoys who had lived and worked in outreach in Las Vegas for one year. The group also went to the Las Vegas strip, and met with Mr. Watanabe for a briefing of their activities in Las Vegas. From January 16-25, a group of the UPA cadets made their way to Los Angeles to participate in outreach activities, while the rest stayed in Las Vegas to do the same. The following testimonies come from both teams.

“Today we met UPA special youth envoys. They told us their experience about witnessing for one year in Las Vegas. I was impressed by them. Moreover, I was really thankful to God for their brilliant leadership.”

-Yoshika Sakamaki

“Today we met UPA special envoys and Mr. Akira to prepare for witnessing in Las Vegas. It’s not easy work so I have to be ready, internally and externally, to do outreach. Unlike Eastern people, Western

people are more open at religious conversation. Therefore I felt that I have to study Divine Principle more deeply so that those I meet can embrace it.”

–Kenta Gishi



Two UPA cadets witnessing to a college student

“My biggest takeaway for today was that in outreach, making a system is important, but ultimately it is the Divine Principle to which people are drawn.”

–Yoshihide Nakagawa

“After visiting the International Peace Education Center in the morning, we took a five hour road trip to Los Angeles, where we met Pastor George Kazakos and Rev. Yang. I was really thankful for their warm welcome. I have a firm determination that we all are going to fulfill our goal here.”

–Keiko Shimoda, Jan. 16



UPA cadets and Pastor George Kazakos (center)

“I determined to become a leader who can embrace America through witnessing.”

–Su Young Cho, Jan. 16

“Can you imagine having a Sunday service in an IMAX theater? That’s where the Los Angeles Family Church holds their services, and today I will experience this special service. As a Korean it was quite shock but on the other hand, I came to think about what making a service means. What kind of service am I going to make when I am sent to the field? It was a great time to think outside the box.”

–Kashin Kim, Jan. 17

“The atmosphere and energy at the Los Angeles Family Church service was very lively and we were welcomed by the family members. Afterward, we visited the Holy Ground at Griffith Park. Pastor George told us the story of True Father’s visit to LA and how he had traveled across California to create the first four Holy Grounds of the US. Thinking about the heart and determination that True Father had for the US, I prayed and pledged to invest everything for the witnessing program here and bring victory for Heavenly Parent and True Parents.”

–Soo Ho Kim, Jan. 17

“Today we heard Mrs. Eu’s testimony. We also had a dinner with CARP and GPA members. It was a precious time to be together.”

–Kenta Gishi, Jan. 17



UPA heard Mrs. Gil Ja Sa Eu’s testimony

“Today we had a workshop with Mrs. Naoko Hiraki about how to witness in Los Angeles. I was very impressed and moved by her testimony and explanation about her experience. Mrs. Naoko’s speech moved me to tears. I swear that I will do my best like she did, and I really appreciate her for coming to talk to our team today.”

–Keiko Shimoda, Jan. 18



Mrs. Naoko (center) supported the cadets in their outreach work

“To prepare witnessing in Las Vegas our team went to UNLV (University Nevada Las Vegas) today. Now everything is ready and the only thing left to do is to go witnessing.”

– *Su Young Cho, Jan. 18*

“Today I witnessed at Pasadena City College for the first time. I learned many things during a full day of outreach with local Japanese Unificationists. Through working with them, I learned a lesson that in witnessing the most important thing is not thinking. It’s listening honestly with all my heart.”

–*Yoshihide, Jan. 19*



UPA cadets witnessing on campus

“Today was the first day of witnessing. I was very nervous and worried, but I was grateful for the witnessing team. I found that the college is a place prepared by heaven, and I would like to inform a lot of people about True Parents. Tomorrow, I will work harder.”

–*So Hoon, Jan. 19*

“We started witnessing with the Generation Peace Academy (GPA) , CARP and local missionaries at the university today. When we went to approach students their reaction was positive. It was an amazing experience to me and I also thought that in the future I need to have my own motivation to continue to do outreach.”

–*Kazumi, Jan. 19*

“Today I did witnessing in Las Vegas. At first, I was so nervous because my witnessing experience is little. Before starting I prayed that I want to love the people I am going to meet. Today was rainy but I don’t give up and keep on witnessing. Finally, I could meet a person who was prepared. We talked a lot and also went to the CARP center.”

–*Tomomi, Jan. 19*

“We did witnessing at UNLV today. Usually, most of the students are so kind even though my English is not good; they all listen.”

–*Su Young Cho, Jan. 20*

“In the morning, I met with someone I had witnessed to earlier. His name is David. He was a little bit late, so I had thought that he might have not showed up. However, he finally came to the cafeteria, and we read the Divine Principle together with Mrs. Naoko. She really guided David well, so finally David decided to attend the next reading. From the experience, I came to know that the most important thing about witnessing is dedication for others.”

–*Gookhyeong Lim, Jan. 21*



Mrs. Naoko (left) supporting UPA cadets in teaching the Divine Principle on campus

“Today, we joined the Shine City Project in Las Vegas. CARP and many other people participated in this project. After gathering, we all went to volunteer together. I felt hope through their work to make Las Vegas a better place.”

-Kazumi, Jan. 22

“Today we held a workshop. Before the workshop we did witnessing, and I met a person who really wants to learn Divine Principle. Finally after the workshop, he said that he was so glad to learn Divine Principle and his smile was so bright. I felt God is working with us.”

-Yosika, Jan. 23

“Today we had a team meeting and discussed a lot about our witnessing. There were many ideas how we should do better, but the conclusion was that it starts in our mind. At first, we talked about the external conditions such as speaking English fluently and the strategy of approach but that was not the answer. It is important, but more than anything it’s the unity with Heavenly Parent and True Parents.”

-Kashin Kim, Jan. 23



Cadets sing with Los Angeles Unificationists

“Today was Sunday, so we visited Los Angeles Korean church for Sunday service. This church had a good atmosphere and we ate delicious dinner. Mrs. Eu came and gave us the sermon. She told us her memories with True Father and what kind of attitude we need in the present day.”

-Keiko, Jan. 24

“Today, I went to join the Sunday service in Las Vegas. Dr. Ki Hoon Kim came and gave us the sermon.

After that, I went to Las Vegas strip to feel and understand the American culture. We looked around the shining buildings, hotels and casinos. I came to think deeply about how to change Las Vegas to a better place.”

-Tomomi, Jan. 24



UPA explores the Las Vegas strip

“Today, I was scheduled to meet David, whom Mrs. Naoko and I had met last week. However, he didn’t show up. I was a little bit sad, not because he didn’t keep his commitment, but because I was not able to teach him everything I wanted to about the Divine Principle. This taught me a lot about the reality of outreach and made me reflect on what I could have done to better support David.”

-Gookhyeong Lim, Jan. 25

“Today was a tough day for me. I could feel the painful heart of God and I also shed a lot of tears throughout the day. This experience made me closer to God so I am so thankful about this. Tomorrow I hope to feel God’s happy heart.”

-So Hoon, Jan. 25



Two UPA cadets approach a college student inviting him to learn the Divine Principle