

## Unificationists and Friends Challenge Faith Breaking in Japan at Pace University - Victoria Roomet

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Two young Unificationists attending Pace University in Pleasantville, NY, worked in tangent with the other campus organizations to organize an event titled “Religious Freedom Now” on March 20, 2012. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness about faith breaking of Unification Church members in Japan.



*Unificationists, Pace University affiliates and friends gathered to raise awareness about faith breaking of Unificationist Church members in Japan.*

Hatsue Masuyama (21), a third-year Education major and a second-generation Unificationist, is the Secretary of the Residence Hall Association at Pace. She attended a religious freedom event at the New Jersey Institute of Technology in November and felt inspired to hold a similar event at her own school. She and fellow Unificationist Kimisei Miyake (21), a first-year student and Vice President of the Freshman Honors Society, worked together with the Residence Hall Association, as well as the Future Educators Association to put on the event

“Hatsue and I did numerous things to publicize the event,” said Miyake. “She networked with organizations and we also printed out flyers for the event. We posted a flyer on the door of every dorm room on campus, and we printed an announcement on *Flush Flash*, a paper that gets posted in bathroom stalls that lists all the upcoming events.”

Their efforts to publicize paid off. About 50 people attended the event, including more than 25 students.



*Efforts into networking, handing out flyers and posting announcements around the university resulted in a crowd of about 50 people at the event.*

### Remarks from Victoria Roomet

At the event, Victoria Roomet, president of Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), introduced the issue of faith breaking in Japan and its significance in the United States. She said the following:

“CARP is the collegiate wing of the Unification Church. Like a lot of new religions and religious minorities, we Unificationists tend to face some level of religious discrimination, just because we are not understood. While I was on campus as a college student, I faced a degree of discrimination when I was getting my CARP chapter established as a club at Brandeis University. I was really surprised by this, because I thought most people didn’t know what the Unification Church was. Apparently some people did, and had read some negative things online, which they just threw at me. It turned into a pretty big

production. Typically, getting a club approved would take ten minutes, but my meeting took two hours because these people just kept saying negative things about us.

“But the good thing about the conclusion of this meeting was that the Student Union saw that people were being overly discriminatory and during the meeting, and they passed us notes saying, ‘This is religious intolerance, this is unacceptable, you should sue these guys for the things they’re saying!’ So the club was recognized and everything was fine.

“Because we have a just system in American universities, if the club hadn’t been recognized, it would have been really easy for me to walk over to the administrator’s office and say, ‘Hey! Some religious intolerance just took place. We need to do something about it,’ and it would have been addressed. That’s what is expected here in American society these days, which is awesome. We have freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Let’s hear it for that! America!



*From left to right: Harrison C. Davies, President of Residence Hall Association and Unificationist Pace students Hatsue Masuyama and Kimisei Miyake.*

### **Religious Intolerance in Japanese Universities**

“Unfortunately, there are other countries in the world where this does not exist, even though they claim to practice the same principles as America. For example, Japan is a modern-day democracy, and they pretend to uphold religious freedom. However, they are very intolerant of religious minorities, particularly towards the Unification Church.

“So put yourself in these Japanese college students’ shoes. This is what Unificationist students face every day. One thing Japanese universities are doing is putting out cautions issued by professors during enrollment, orientations, anti-cult seminars and regular classes. Even in classes, professors are openly bashing these organizations.

“There are also various forms of academic harassment and intimidations towards CARP members, including constant surveillance, interrogation, coercion to leave the church or speak against it and even rejection of grad-school exams. Many of these students are denied entrance into grad schools or classes because the professors find out that they are a part of the Unification Church.

“Worst of all is the encouragement of coordination between the students’ parents and ‘rescuer’ ministers who kidnap students and subject them to forced confinement with the purpose of de-conversion. Since 2006, there have been about 40 confirmed cases on college campuses of college students being kidnapped and then forced to revoke their faith.

“At least in America, if somebody was trying to kidnap me on campus, I’d be able to turn to the administration. They’re my friends, they’re looking out for me. It’s their job to support me as a student. But in Japan, the administrators are working together with the deprogrammers to kidnap students. It’s a very backwards system that they have on campus. And nobody is doing anything about it; the issue is pushed aside every time because it is considered a ‘family matter.’ It’s legal in their eyes.

“I was recently able to travel to Korea for work, and I met with several students who are facing this kind of discrimination on campus. They were incredible people. But it was so heartbreaking for me because of the way they were looking at me. Their faces were telling me, ‘you’re my only hope.’ I mean, if I had that kind of situation in America, I could vocalize it, and people would listen to me. But in Japan, they have no voice. Nobody is listening to them.

“So, I kind of feel a sense of responsibility. Because we’re so lucky to be living in this democracy where these rights are upheld, we almost have an obligation to help those who don’t have a voice.”

## **Testimonies from Survivors of Faith Breaking**

Luke Higuchi, President of Survivors against Forced Exit, offered a testimony about his own kidnapping experience and showed a short documentary entitled “Japan’s Hidden Shame.” The film featured personal testimonies from victims of faith breakers and offered facts about the discrimination of Japanese Unificationists.

Gail Veith, a survivor of faith breaking in the United States, also gave a testimony about her traumatic experience at the hands of ‘deprogrammers’ and how her relationship with her father was destroyed through that experience.

“The strongest force in the universe is the parent-child relationship,” she said. “If a parent believes that their child is being misled and abused, they will do anything they can and spend any money to save that child. But faith breakers take advantage of that.

“My dad took me to a mental hospital, and ironically, that was my saving grace. They interviewed me in one room and my dad in another room, and then they brought us together and told my father, ‘Mr. Greenwich, your daughter is perfectly normal. She’s over eighteen, and in America, we have religious freedom. She can choose any faith she wants.’ I always loved America, I’m very patriotic, but at that moment, I thought, ‘thank God for America!’

“It’s hard to describe in words how I felt. But imagine if your dad took you and sold you into slavery. Imagine how that would feel. Your own father took you and delivered you into the arms of the enemy, how would you feel? We’re still trying to mend the scars, even today.

“I have a very happy family, a wonderful husband and four children, but I cannot deny the fact that families in Japan cannot enjoy the same luxury we have here in America. We have to really think about them, and how we can help them.”

Dan Fefferman, President of International Coalition of Religious Freedom, then gave a presentation entitled, “Forced Conversion in Japan: a Hidden Human Rights Crime” in which he offered more detailed facts and figures about the mistreatment of Unificationists in Japan.

Matsuyama ended the program with a presentation on how attendees can immediately make a difference, by signing a petition online at [religiousfreedom.com/index.php?option=com\\_mad4joomla&jid=3&Itemid=490](http://religiousfreedom.com/index.php?option=com_mad4joomla&jid=3&Itemid=490), and in response to a question about Unificationists and international marriages, introduced the Unification tradition of the Marriage Blessing Ceremony.