

## Changing Hell into Heaven: A Testimony of the Leda Project

Minoru Nakata  
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Mr. Minoru Nakata, director of the Leda Project, visited Los Angeles and San Francisco on October 26 and 27, where he gave his testimony entitled “The Leda Project: Changing Hell into Heaven.”

“I really didn’t want to go to South America, especially not to the Pantanal,” he recounted to the audience of his very first visit there. He spoke of the unbearable heat, the treacherous terrain, and sharing the land with all kinds of snakes, mosquitoes and poisonous insects. It was an immense task. As he described, “We went to the Pantanal with shovels and carts. There was nothing there—no drinking water, no electricity, no buildings. There was one communication tower, which stopped working after one month. Therefore we were totally isolated without any communication system. We did not know what was going on in the world. I could not communicate with my wife, who did not know where I was.”

The harsh conditions were not just physical, however. Some of the most difficult parts, he said, were dealing with relationships. It was easy to become short-tempered or to have a negative attitude in the midst of so much suffering and hard work. This, said Mr. Nakata, was the greatness of True Father. “I really thought about True Father’s greatness in this environment,” he said. “In North Korea great tribulation was awaiting him. He knew he might die in North Korea. He went to Hungnam prison, but he always lived for the sake of others. Do you think ordinary people could survive in this kind of situation? If you could do this, it would be the ultimate practice of the Divine Principle.”

Despite the seeming impossibility of the task, the ultimate mission of the Leda Project was to turn the barren land into a usable space. Though the place is still remote, it now plays an important role in the region’s environmental and sustainable future. “Everything is connected to humankind,” said Mr. Nakata, “including solving the food shortage problem and protecting the environment.” He recounted how several NGOs and Christian organizations once came to the Pantanal with hope but all left defeated. “Our greatest achievement was that we developed agriculture on the barren land. This has had a huge impact, and people are quite impressed. Leda had been completely forgotten by the people and the government, but Rev. Moon was able to revive this forgotten region!”

The Leda Project became the first civilian group to succeed in hatching fish eggs. Through much trial and error, and a deep faith in God, the group successfully raised and hatched the eggs. This was a big deal for the country and garnered national attention. The group held a Releasing Ceremony to release the juvenile fish into the river as a way to help the local people. The president of Paraguay, the minister of the environment and the minister of agriculture all attended and thanked the group. On the importance of taking care of the environment, and persevering through struggle, he noted, “If we love all things of creation, they will return beauty to us. Love is the key. We can sometimes fool people, but we cannot deceive the creation.”

In closing, Mr. Nakata spoke of the importance of the United States as a central nation in the world, and the unique relationship of North and South America. He encouraged his American audience, “Let us awaken and become active again, maybe even more active than before. I am going to do my very best based on all my past experiences. Let us begin anew and let us work hard together to lay the cornerstone of the substantial Kingdom of God on earth.”