

Reclaiming the Word “Unity”
A Manifesto for the Lost Generation

Yoshie Manaka

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Abstract

The word “unity” is a loaded term for those of us who were raised by followers of Reverend Sun Myung Moon. To the very first generation that were born into this new movement, the word has been repeated so many times that it has lost its meaning. When we hear it uttered, we don’t hear the word itself, or the definition. Instead, we are confronted with a lifetime of love and disappointment and pain and neglect. “Don’t ask questions,” the word seems to say. “Deny your individuality.” “Sacrifice your happiness for the greater good.” The room gets smaller, darker. “Live for the sake of others,” rings in our ears. “Unite with your central figure,” echoes around us. “Pray about it.”

This document hopes to speak for, and to, a generation of Unificationists: the lost generation, who has been raised, loved, and hurt during the chaos that is a natural, excruciating process of birthing a new religious tradition. It hopes to narrate our collective experience; to remind us of the good, while still acknowledging the bad and ugly. It draws power and inspiration from pamphlets of the past that were written in a passionate frenzy and passed in secret, from person to person, in cafes and on the street, until their pages were battered and torn. Those pages lit a fire in the minds of disillusioned youth, and changed the course of history. “Working men of all countries, unite!”¹--but what is the unifier for a generation that recoils at the word “unity?”

¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Gutenberg, January 25, 2005, <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/61/pg61-images.html>

Who We Are

We are 24 years old and older, and we call ourselves the 2nd generation, or blessed children, which is probably a signifier assigned to us by our parents. We call ourselves bc's for short. This is a natural abbreviation for children who were raised on acronyms: the first iteration of our organization was Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity. This is a mouthful of a name, so we use the acronym HSA-UWC, colloquially only using the first three letters. In America, we took on the name Unification Church, which we shortened to the UC. Later, we became the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU). Our mothers were involved in Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP); our fathers in ACLC (American Clergy Leadership Conference), or maybe UPF (Universal Peace Federation). We, the younger generation, learned to have a sense of humor about acronyms and a detachment to names, because you never know when those might change. We have words and jargon that define our lives that mean nothing to anyone else.

And we have to admit--this was an awesome community to grow up in. We had the best childhood friends in the world. We were imbibed with a sense of *specialness* that we wore like an amulet. When we were with our church community, we felt innately safe. We were in the company of good people.

Through this tight-knit and worldwide community, we have traveled around the world. We have "family" everywhere: everyone is called "aunt" and "uncle," even if we've never met before. We have experienced the phenomenon of meeting total strangers from remote countries, and immediately feeling like we are the best of friends because of our shared context. And we

know, without a doubt or a second thought, that this stranger is a good person, with good morals, who wants to make a positive impact on the world.

And yet---we have been buffeted on the waves. We are hurting. Across the world, bc's 24 and older are waffling. We are experiencing a crisis of identity. When we think of the Unification Church, something rises in our chests: anger, pain, love. Good memories, painful memories, problematic memories.

So we have extricated ourselves. Some of us leave in a much more vocal and angry way, some of us stick around for the community but leave behind the teachings and the practices and the holy days. We are not at church.

The Problem(s)

It started the moment we were born, really. There has been a dissonance that we have experienced every day of our lives, an inconsistency between what we are taught within our community and what we are taught outside of our community. There has been a struggle between “truth” and reality; what we are taught compared to what we see around us. Not to mention, the undeniable fact that we fit into all the definitions of “cult” and “high pressure religious organizations,” and that our parents even warned us not to talk about church to our school friends.

We were raised in hiding. We only felt we could truly be ourselves with other bc's, those who *got it*. Our parents fought communism tooth and nail, and won--but they were attacked for it. And they were wrung out and left to dry, and part of us feels like they have nothing left to give. They are so afraid of being hurt again, that they have retreated into themselves, and into the church as an extension of themselves. They don't venture outside anymore. The community that

raised us and nurtured us has grown stagnant, not willing to acknowledge the outside world.

There are no windows open in this house. We feel suffocated by it, and we're starting to notice a stench.

We can admit that the teachings make sense, but the standard is impossible, and as in any closed community, the gossip is robust. The ideal is beautiful, but we have fallen short over and over again. The ideal is too hard. I saw the standard but not the love. I wasn't loved.

And above all: hypocrisy. Lack of integrity. In the family, in the church leadership, in the organization itself, even in myself. The standard is unreasonable. Who can you expect to live up to the standard of perfection?

Within our lifetime, our founder-spiritual-teacher-prophet lived and died. We mourned, or at least we saw our parents mourn, and then we watched the resulting power struggle, as believers strained to move forward and make decisions based on his teachings, for the first time, without his direct intervention.

Repeat a word too many times and it loses its meaning. If you stare at something for too long, it begins to distort. What of his teachings are actually true, and what are the ramblings of a charismatic leader? Why the hell did my parents sacrifice their lives--and *my life too*? For this "truth"?

And Yet...

If you believe in this kind of thing, the answer is that it comes down to the Blessing, and changing one's lineage from Satan's to God. If you believe in this kind of thing, our generation is not only the 2nd generation of a new religious movement, but also the very first generation to be

born into God's lineage. If you believe in this kind of thing, future generations born into this movement will be different, and we're a little different, too.

I don't know if you believe in this kind of thing. It may not be appropriate to say that your DNA is different from the other good people in the world.

If you don't believe in this kind of thing, one thing is still for certain. Intentions matter, and our parents were intentional when they were making us. They were doing it for world peace and unification, baby. Multicultural families were their deliberate effort to save the world. We were absolutely not made for ourselves, and our parents pretty much didn't let us forget it. At no point in our lives were we ever told that "your life is for you." No matter how hard we try to pull away, or leave this part of us behind a veil--we can't sever this connection to the Unification Church, and it's because of this: We were given a mission and a purpose at the moment of our birth, or at the moment of our eight-day ceremony when we were literally given to God. Our purpose of existence is to heal the world and the suffering heart of God.

There's an entire chapter dedicated to purpose in that book that was shoved down our throats, and it boils down to this: True happiness only comes by fulfilling one's purpose of creation. And yes--be fruitful, multiply, have dominion.² But I argue that the purpose of creation for our generation of bc's includes world peace and unification. If we are dissatisfied, it's a direct correlation to that.

Whether we like it or not, it's written into our DNA. And to be honest, the purpose of bringing love and healing to the world is a very noble thing to have written in our DNA. But it also means that we feel things differently than the people around us. We were raised to think

² Sun Myung. Moon, *Exposition of the Divine Principle* (The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1996), 15-51.

about the greater good first, we were raised to think about the pain in God's heart. And so we can't easily wear blinders to the suffering in the world.

You know what else we were taught about? Unity. Unity, unity, unity. Mind-Body unity. Unity of husband and wife. Unity of subject and object, creates energy, is the building block of the universe.³ "Our cherished hopes are for unity. Even our dreams are for unity. We live our lives for unity. Come along, unity. Unity saving the people. Unity saving all nations."

So, from the moment we were born, there has been this repetition of one word over and over. Maybe instead of the normal heartbeat sound, our hearts beat "*Tong-il. Tong-il.*" Unity was the most precious hope placed upon us at the moment of creation. Our baseline is unity. Which--to be honest, if we think about the makeup of the universe, is also God's baseline. Disunity doesn't work. Disunity isn't natural. Disunity is jarring, painful even, to God.

No matter which road you took to get to the conclusion (belief or non-belief), this is the conclusion: **we feel things differently than other people.** And because of who we are and why we are made, we actually feel a visceral pain when there is disunity. We, the first generation to be born into God's lineage, have tapped into the pain God feels when there is disunity. We truly go a little haywire. "This is not the way things are supposed to be!" we say in our heads. "The energy is off. Someone feels unhappy in this room, and I won't feel comfortable until everyone loves everyone else in this room."

Boil everything down, and we are left with this: we feel physical pain when there is disunity. It is both our strength and our weakness. *And it is the reason why we leave.* Because it

³ Ibid., 15-51.

is our baseline, but it's hard work, and we didn't see it. We didn't see it in our families, or our churches, or even in ourselves.

Reclaiming the Word

Unity is the only state of being where we feel comfortable, and yet the word makes us squirm. But what does unity even mean?

The first truly painful act of disunity at the time of the fall⁴ was the separation of Adam and Eve from God. It was a disunity between parent and child, human and God. But unity is only one word that gets to the same outcome. There are other words that have been circulating for that parent-child relationship: Filial piety. Attendance. Hyojeong. It's all the same thing, and they all mean unity. Unity means relationship. It means a mutual love and trust and the sincere desire to honor where you come from. To raise them up like they raised you.

For too long, "unity" has been a catch-all term, used as a lazy excuse by imperfect people to make you shut up, stop asking questions, and obey. They were wrong.

I say to you, it is time to reclaim the word "unity." It is time to shake off the connotations and memories that have collected around that word, and re-assign meaning to it--the kind of meaning that beats in our hearts and gives us purpose. Relationship. Love. Let's wear the word like a badge, rather than shying away from unity.

It's also time to stop apologizing for your parents; to stop apologizing for the upbringing you had, and the moral standards that you were raised with. As the ones who are born out of the faith of our parents, let us learn from the children of Noah:

⁴Ibid., 52-78.

“And Ham...Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father’s nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, ‘Cursed be Canaan; lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers.’⁵”

This is a cautionary tale for our generation. It is a natural tendency of young people to dismiss the ways and thoughts of their elders. But we play a vitally important role here. We are the only thing that can truly change the way the world sees our parents. Our attitude to the sacrifices and the choices that they made have a direct impact on the way the current public sees the Unification Church, and the way history will remember them.

Do you value your life? Do you think your parents did a good thing, to dedicate their life to healing the heart of God, marry a stranger, and have YOU for the sake of saving the world?

Even if you can’t understand it, can you honor it? Can you thank them for it? Can you thank them for your life? And DO SOMETHING that changes the minds of the people you work with? The people who know you, and like you, because you are a hardworking, loving, balanced, well-spoken, mixed-race, peace-loving human being (because even if you have left, you can’t change these most basic parts of yourself)?

Truths We Hold to Be Self-Evident ⁶

1. My parents meant well.
2. Unificationist belief is unique because it teaches that God is directly my parent, and everything that Sun Myung Moon, Hak Ja Han Moon, and my parents have done--all the

⁵ Genesis 9:22-29

⁶ Thomas Jefferson et al., “Declaration of Independence: A Transcription.” National Archives and Records Administration, accessed February 29, 2020, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

crazy, stupid things they have done, even at the expense of their family and my wellbeing--was to wake the world up to this fact. I get that.

3. This has affected my life. And largely, in a good way.
4. I am literally alive because of it.
5. I have a family that I love because of it, and the best friends in the world.
6. I have a very strong conscience, regard for humanity, and innate feeling of responsibility to the world because of it.
7. And I am grateful for the experience. If I close my eyes and think about the breadth of experience that my life has, I am grateful for the experience.
8. Breathe out the pain and betrayal, acknowledging that that exists in equal measure to the love that I have experienced. Breathe in, love and gratitude. Breathe out.
9. I am willing to admit that there is a possibility that God feels the same love, gratitude, pain and betrayal.
10. I don't know if I can forgive it, but I can understand why my parents chose this path to comfort God.

The Covenant of the Lost Generation

1. **I WILL BREAK THE CYCLE OF HISTORY.** Instead of apologizing for my parents, I promise to cheer them on. I lift up their life as something hard and good. I may not understand them, but I love them. If I hear someone speak ill of them, I will defend them. **THEY WERE NOT SHEEP.** They were warriors.
2. **Ye shall know them by their fruits..and we are good fruits.** The world is watching me. Jesus told his disciples to "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's

clothing.⁷” You shall know them by their fruits, he said. I am the (sometimes unwilling) fruit of my parent’s labor. It is up to me to decide how history speaks of my parents, and the Unification Church.

3. **I promise to be an ambassador for the community that made me.** I promise not to be ashamed or hide this basic part of my identity. If someone asks, I will answer, and I will not be apologetic. I will also be truthful--I will not sweep any part of my history under a rug and pretend it doesn’t exist. But I will refrain from using hurtful language and descriptors that contribute to the negative public discourse about this community.
4. **I am AWAKENED to the birthright bestowed upon me by my parents,** to respond to God’s greatest hope of living in UNITY with humankind. I am a capable, skilled, contributing member of society, and I am moved to use the skills that I have gained! No longer will I suppress, avoid, disengage! I was hurt because I have cared, and I continue to care! Fully embracing my scars, I will once again stand and jump in, and contribute--to my community, and to God’s dream!

⁷ Matthew 7:15-20

Literature Review

In an effort to understand the breadth of manifestos in history, and with the knowledge that my intended audience might not respond to an academic paper, I wanted to explore many different types of manifestos that forced people to pay attention, respond, and thus shift the culture. In addition to the *Manifesto of the Communist People*, the three *Humanist Manifestos*, the *Christian Manifesto*, and *Gay Liberation Front* manifestos that we looked at in class, I also examined *95 Theses* by Martin Luther, which gave birth to the Reformation, as well as *Common Sense*, a manifesto that convinced the American public of the need for revolution, and the *Declaration of Independence*, the introduction of which I memorized in elementary school, and can still recite from memory.

I was especially drawn to two art manifestos: *BLAST!* By Wyndham Lewis, which spearheaded the Vorticist effort to start an artistic revolution in England, and *The Dada Manifesto* (1918) by Tristan Tzara, a second manifesto for the DADA movement. I enjoyed their irreverent tone and creative use of language, and found that we share a similar demographic. Lewis' manifesto was an English manifesto for the artists of England, to shock them and wake them up. At once "blasting" and "blessing" England's soggy culture, and the people in it--somehow managing to be critical of England while remaining patriotic. I felt that I could inherit the creativity, language, and the self-awareness of duality that I saw in Lewis' manifesto. Curious to know the impact of BLAST on English culture, I found Paige Reynolds' "*Chaos invading Concept*": *Blast as a native theory of promotional culture*, which argued that not only did the content that "blasted and blessed" companies in order to convey their idea of proper and improper promotional culture, but even the disruptive design had a lasting impact on advertising

as we know it today. Tzara's manifesto was also very self-aware. Tzara says that he is against the writing of manifestos in his own manifesto, describing the process of writing one as putting on a show, "to sign, shout, swear, to organize prose into a form of absolute and irrefutable evidence, to prove your non plus ultra and maintain that novelty resembles life just as the latest-appearance of some whore proves the essence of God. His existence was previously proved by the accordion, the landscape, the wheedling word." These sentences spoke to me, because my paper attempts to speak to many levels of belief and non-belief. These two manifestos, *BLAST!* and the *Dada Manifesto*, both seemed to speak to a similarly disillusioned generation as the one I am addressing: Tzara even said that Dada was born out of a "need for independence, of a distrust toward unity," which mirrors the attitude of the lost generation completely. Rather than lean into unity, the vorticist movement and especially the Dada movement charged forward into chaos, reveling in the disunity. I wanted to inherit their language and humor but lead the reader to a different conclusion.

"How Luther Went Viral: Social media in the 16th century," in a December 2011 issue of *The Economist* compares the word-of-mouth and distribution of pamphlets in the 1500's to the blog posts and discussion threads of today (this may now be a bit dated). Whereas today we track popularity by likes, shares, comments, and retweets, the indicator then was number of "reprints." An important element of the manifesto that I hoped to capture was the "viral" effect: these manifestos that I looked at were revelatory in their own ways, and touched on some universal truth that struck at the hearts of people and filled them with a fury that led to social movements, both good and bad.

Now having some familiarity with many variations of manifestos, I began an exploration into the hearts of my peers, and God's heart for them. Again, my intended audience might not react well to a scripture-heavy work, but is most likely educated in the teachings of the *Divine Principle*. I therefore revisited the Introduction, and Chapters 1 and 2, which explains the necessity for a new truth that reconciles science and religion, reveals the repeating patterns of dual characteristics in unity as the building block of the world, assigns purpose to the creation of humanity, and tells the story of mankind's fall into Satan's dominion.

My paper is also supplemented by some scripture from the *Bible*, specifically Genesis 9:22-29, where Noah gets drunk, falls asleep, and his sons are ashamed of his nakedness; and Matthew 7:15-20, where Jesus speaks about false prophets.

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