

The Women's Corner
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In the spirit of promoting harmony and unity within the women's division I am delighted to introduce, beginning with this issue of the *World Tribune* and continuing on a quarterly basis, a column specifically devoted to the 1997 women's action-based theme, Actively Closing the Gap. I couldn't think of a better time than now — the conclusion of the eighth annual commemorative women's nationwide gatherings.

On behalf of all the women, I'd like to express sincere appreciation to the children, men and women who supported us with your time and talent. Your behind-the-scenes involvement was vital to our success.

Many women throughout the country told me of the impact their home visits to promote the gatherings had in strengthening personal relationships. The result: More than 21,000 women and their guests gathered at more than 750 locations throughout the United States. Each get-together was unique and creative. Participants were deeply moved by the dramatic, courageous stories shared by women who had experienced the joy of victory after closing the various gaps in their lives.

President and Mrs. Ikeda were most pleased to hear how dynamic and well attended these meetings were. Congratulations, everyone!

As you know, the purpose of these commemorative meetings was to celebrate the first annual women's division meeting in 1990 at which time President Ikeda gave us the "clear mirror" guidance. In it he stated: "What is the purpose of life? It is happiness."

As practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, we know that happiness cannot be given to us. It will not magically appear in our lives. It is not something to wait for. Happiness is the result of an inner transformation, something we must actively challenge ourselves to create. To achieve happiness, we must confront and overcome our negative life tendencies resulting from attitudes or actions generated from our lower ego. Often such tendencies result in gaps or as a sense of incompleteness appearing in our lives. Fear often rushes in to fill this empty space and at other times we languish with an absence of feeling.

The great news is that once we overcome this sense of incompleteness, like a domino effect those in our immediate environment feel it. Even others down the line whom we don't know can be influenced positively.

Of course we'll always have challenges and struggles that appear as gaps — they're a necessary and natural element of growth. But without worrying, let's chant to the Gohonzon and take positive action; that way, time and again we will certainly see these gaps close.

Instead of focusing on what's not there — the empty spaces, the distance, the differences — we can focus on creating a fulfilled, supreme state of life based on a correct practice for ourselves and others. Simply put, we manifest this "only by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 5). Then, just as promised by the Daishonin, winter will always turn into spring.

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