

**SIGN POSTS: Here and Now**  
**By SHIN YATOMI**  
**SGI-USA Youth Division Study Committee**

**If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 172)**

Our past does not exist in a history book. Nor does our future exist in a crystal ball. Citing the *Shinjikan* Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin here explains that our lives at this moment embody eternity — our lives exist nowhere but here and at no other time but now.

Oblivious to this, however, we often fancy ourselves living in the past or future. Some people are preoccupied with how their lives might have been different: “If I hadn’t dropped out of high school, I wouldn’t be living from paycheck to paycheck.” Others only wish for something far-off: “I could make it big in Hollywood someday.”

Living here and now does not mean to deny our past or give up our dreams, nor does it mean to fall into hedonism. It means to understand that the effects of our past and causes for our future exist in the present, to thus recognize the power of our present action to change our past and shape our future.

Shaping our future by changing our present is easily understandable, but how about changing our past? Of course, we cannot alter past events. But we can change their meaning. No matter what kind of mistakes we may have made, or sufferings or hardships we may have experienced, when we accept our past courageously and use it as a springboard for growth and happiness, we are changing the past. The past experiences that weighed us down become something different — experiences that drive us forward. The death of a loved one, for example, could fortify our resolve to live more meaningfully not only for our sake but for the sake of the deceased.

This Goshō passage tells us of the preciousness of the present moment and our ability to influence our past and future in the here and now.

**WT**