

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

We Cannot Be Indifferent

A few weeks ago a heinous crime was committed in Jasper, Texas. In this small, southeast Texas town with a population of just under 7,000, three men stand accused of chaining another human being by his ankles to the back of their truck. His remains were found scattered along a three-mile stretch of dirt road.

What I cannot stop thinking about is the terror that this man must have felt during the ordeal of being chained to the back of that truck. How, as the truck began to move, he must have clinged to hope that it would stop. The pain that he must have gone through as the dirt and gravel cut into his skin, as his body began to bounce off the surface of the road.

I am compelled to ask myself: What cause did this man make to be chained to the back of a truck and dragged down a dirt road? What cause did those three men make to drag a man down a dirt road? What cause did the community of Jasper make to be the stage for such a crime?

But the most important question is: What happens next?

I have chosen to see these four men as functions to awaken the people. To awaken me. I believe that to meet the cruelty of this crime with our indifference only perpetuates the crime.

Crimes similar to this happen all too often. The targets are African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, gays and lesbians — anyone who is perceived as different. And most of us do nothing, say nothing. Or if we do say something, it is along the lines of “They [the victims] must have provoked it.” But most of us just turn away, shut our eyes. It’s not our problem.

My sincerest prayer regarding all of this is that what happened in Jasper will be a turning point for all humankind, and that somehow we will all learn to be more accepting of our differences. That we can enhance people’s sense of humanity before they become victims, before they chain someone to the back of their truck. That’s why I practice. That’s why I tell others about Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

As George Bernard Shaw writes, “The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: That’s the essence of inhumanity.”

— PRESTON RICHARDS, Dallas

A Father’s Letter

This is for Michael Lisagor (“Perspectives,” June 26): I didn’t have a father who chanted, nor one who was concerned with me except as a mirror to himself. I also had a mother who was immature and enraged and not nurturing. I have suffered throughout my lifetime trying to overcome feelings of great despair. Chanting helps. But the feelings are deep, the karma is deep. The fight goes on. I say this because I had a very difficult night and morning and then read your letter. This letter helped me because it is the words and feelings of a wise and caring father. It is fatherly in a way I have not experienced. It made me cry. I’m sure I will read it and reread it.

You covered a lot of bases, and it shows your own emotional growth.

Thanks for the gift.

— BARBARA BOTTNER, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

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Touching Experience

Thank you [Doris McCloskey] for the wonderful experience (July 3 *World Tribune*).

I am 33 yrs old and have been practicing 10 years. I just went through a similar experience, losing my mother to cancer three months ago. I think I may still be going through a “fear of no faith,” as I have lost my momentum for my practice.

All I can say is what you’ve experienced is where I hope to be someday. It seems that I am stuck because I did not get the result that I wanted. It’s hard to contemplate so many people losing such an important person — I feel all seven children lost their best friend, let alone watching my father contend for himself at the age of 75. It’s painful.

I found your experience very inspiring and hope I can rejuvenate my faith soon.

Thank you!

— SHARON DODDS, Minneapolis, Minn.

I was really moved to tears by Doris McCloskey’s experience about the death of her mother. It was so beautiful and filled with the shining light of Buddhist practice, and I could relate to it 100 percent. Two-and-a-half years ago my mother passed away after a three-year battle with lung cancer. My experience during that time, after 20 years of practice, was very similar to Doris’, and when my mother did slip away, she was on no medication and in no pain! The night she died we happened to have planned a discussion meeting at my apartment, which we indeed did have. Part of the meeting was a memorial for my mother, with everyone chanting for her and offering incense. I was able to give my experience in faith regarding my mother’s illness and eventual death. I know it was so encouraging to the members, and it *really* was to me. Thank you, Doris, for sharing your experience.

— PAT WINTER,
New York

Propagation and the Newspaper

Because of my circumstances, I have only seen my oldest sister, Joanne, five times in the last 32 years. I write to her regularly and all of her responses have been upbeat, so I had no reason for concern.

On her 60th birthday, I called her and we had a long talk. It became evident to me that she has been suffering for many years and is now at a low point in her life. I asked if she remembered that I am a Buddhist, and if it would be OK for me to respond to her evident anguish. I was very surprised by the response I got.

“Do I know that you are a Buddhist?” she said. “Of course I do! Don’t you remember that you sent me that newspaper for years? Didn’t I ever tell you that, when I was struggling, your newspaper seemed to be the only hope in my life?”

I told her that, although I had sent her the *World Tribune* for five or six years, and had referred to Buddhism in our correspondence, she never once said that she enjoyed it or gained encouragement from it.

She said I had never asked that question.

Dumb me! I had stopped sending her the *World Tribune* more than 10 years ago, because I guessed that she wasn’t reading it.

I could kick myself in the head right now. This printed word that I take for granted had been missed by someone very important in my life. With my birthday card to my sister, I enclosed an article from the *World Tribune* in which SGI President Ikeda discusses the third stage of life. In that dialogue, he talks about a woman who did not join the Soka Gakkai until she was 63 years old. She retired from designing at age 98 and is now 103.

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Her life seemed to start anew at age 63.

I hope the article helps my sister, but more important, I am determined to send her the *World Tribune*, not take the *World Tribune* for granted, and recommit myself to propagating this Buddhism.

In the July 3 issue, President Ikeda discusses the power of the printed word. How right he is. My sister told me so.

I'm glad I called Joanne. She reawakened in me how important the *World Tribune* is, and also that as a member of the SGI-USA, propagation is at the essence of my practice.

As a 30-plus-year member, you would think that I would have this inbedded not only in my brain, but also my heart. It took a non-member — my sister — to make me realize how important the *World Tribune*, *Living Buddhism* and propagation really are.

I'll send Joanne the *World Tribune* because it gives her hope. I will chant for my sister, because deep in her heart she wants me or someone to lead her to the Gohonzon.

You never know when something important is about to happen. I called to wish Joanne “happy birthday,” and hung up learning much more.

— DENNIS RISSLAND, Victorville, Calif.

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