

PERSPECTIVE: We Can Still Change the World

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When I was a teenager, I was sure that my parents, my friends' parents, and just about anyone else older than 20 had lost touch with the "true reality" of life. I was fired up. I was ready to change the world. I had all the answers.

Then I left home. Phrases like *electric bill*, *phone bill* and *auto insurance* took on new meanings. Laundry no longer magically appeared done on my bed, and I seemed always to be hungry. I didn't sleep enough and made many bad choices, which only served to further enhance this new learning curve.

Then, I got married. Then, I had kids of my own. *Holy cow* doesn't cover it.

Now I realize that I have become much like all those people I thought were so wrong, so out of it and so full of mistaken views. I appreciate them now. I long for them now. Man, I was dumb!

After 15 years or so of hard-core reality checks, I wonder, can I regain some of those "I'll change the world" feelings and ideas I used to have? Could I use them to motivate me to do things a little bit better for my kids and the world we live in today? At least if I try, I might repay some of what I owe all those people who took care of me while I returned very little other than complaints, criticisms and protests.

I feel this same way when I think about the SGI-USA (formerly NSA).

To me, NSA and all of our leaders back in the '70s and '80s were like parents and, well, I for one was certainly the teenager. I feel that when SGI President Ikeda came in 1990, we all kind of "left home," so to speak. Boy, were we happy to leave! Yeah, we knew everything. Yeah, "they" (our older pioneer leaders) didn't understand us — they didn't understand the American way! We knew all the faults and problems our "parents" had and *every little tiny thing* they did wrong in "raising us." Yeah, they didn't know how to handle anything right. Yeah, we could do better.

Now I find myself longing for them. Longing for the attention I used to receive that brought my Buddhist practice where it is today. Longing for all of what the SGI-USA used to be.

Sure, there were problems. Yes, there are things we can do better. But what about all the good things we had? NSA was so alive. The activities were so compelling. The youth division was so vibrant. The women's division was so supportive and seemed so tightly woven together, like a large blanket that would wrap you up when you came back from activities.

Yeah, remember that? *Came back from activities*. We used to go out and make something happen at meetings.

Much like my real parents, I now understand a lot more about why certain things were done, and I see the value it created for me personally. I am benefiting today from the experience I received from them. No matter what else I can say about it, *that* is the final reality. I believe this is because my "parents" had the determination to make NSA and me personally grow, develop, flourish and stand up.

I feel it is time to repay those "parents." We must "make happen" what we all spoke of in the early days: a better organization, a more democratic structure, a more "culturally American" based SGI-USA. We must also take what was good, infuse what was enriching and stand up with at least half the courage that our "parents" had by teaching our juniors. It's time to take this organization over from the core outward and repay President Ikeda and all of our pioneer "parents" by creating a vibrant, progressive, democratic and growing

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SGI-USA for kosen-rufu.

We have to fight for the proper foundation in this country so that more of our people can have the Gohonzon and manifest benefit like we do. We have to fight, sometimes our own selves, to teach others how to use this practice to overcome their problems. You know the drill. We all know the drill, but it's only a drill if we make it one. If instead we put our hearts and "American" minds to work, we can make the SGI-USA happen...for us individually, for our prospective communities and for the world that will follow America in the future.

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