

## **Protest Rally Helps People Reawaken a Mission for Peace**

**By ROBIN MEADER, Bureau Chief**

**Mount Rainier, Md., July 11**

To protest the destruction of the Grand Main Temple by High Priest Nikken and to reawaken the desire to accomplish world peace as SGI members, 700 Washingtonians, Marylanders, and Virginians gathered today for a family rally with the theme “Construct Peace.”

Penny Parker, Washington, D.C. Region young women’s leader and co-chair of the rally steering committee, talked of both Buddhist protest and celebration, citing second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s response to the mistreatment and death in prison of his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, during World War II: Enraged by this injustice, Toda resolved to build an SGI organization of 750,000 happy members. With the family rally, SGI members of Washington, D.C. Region confirmed their determination that nothing and no one can deter their advance toward world peace.

The simultaneous protest and celebration was evident at the community center, with food, entertainment, displays, a petition-signing table and discussion groups. The heart of the rally included three speakers, one of them Mary Morris, who was instrumental in bringing about the petition and ultimately the rally.

Ms. Morris described her transformation from one who avoided conflict and didn’t care about the SGI’s excommunication to one who passionately advocates protest. “Let history show that in our time,” she said, “millions of bodhisattvas stood up to Nikken in protest and compelled him to step down — the only honorable course of action left to him now.”

Tami Frazier, a third-generation SGI member who has never visited the Grand Main Temple, explained her awakening to a sense of mission in realizing that the battle for world peace is not only for herself but for her ancestors and especially those to come in the future.

Vice General Director Bill Aiken noted that the true sanctuary of the SGI is not on some map but in our support of one another’s Buddhist practice. He resolved to strengthen the forces of the Buddha by introducing one person this year to Buddhism within the SGI.

A recent article about the Grand Main Temple’s planned demolition, published in the *Washington Post*, shocked some former SGI members into action. Mary Dusing recalled: “When I saw that article, I knew that I had to take a stand. The destruction of the temple is an affront to the sincerity and faith of the members — not only of SGI members but of temple members and even of the priests who supported the construction.”

The words of physician Alwin Harding seemed to speak for everyone attending today’s rally: “This activity gives me great hope for the future of the SGI, especially because of the tremendous participation of the youth. Whatever is going on, we will win, we will overcome, and we will accomplish our mission.”

*With reporting by Emily Carnes, Rob Hendry, Alicia Hetzner, Annie McDonell and Gloria Starks.*

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