

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

We Hold the Key

I'd like to respond to Terry Mitchell's "Perspective" from June 19. She was commenting on interfaith activities toward world peace. While I agree we should respect all people for the Buddha nature within, and that sincere, righteous people exist within all faiths, world peace will only be achieved in a world where people are changing karma and bringing out that very Buddha nature through practice to the Gohonzon. Hence, the Buddhist's mission to establish kosen-rufu is not an idealistic dream but a responsibility to humankind.

When dealing with specific issues, meetings and actions of people of goodwill can be very productive. However, participating in prayer and meditation sessions, in my opinion, is flying right off the map of how our humanistic movement should proceed.

Additionally, the article's conclusions with regard to SGI President Ikeda's talk of holistic humanism seem too general to me. His speeches and lectures have varieties of meaning depending on the listener, and to a Gakkai member they're instructive in perhaps deeper ways.... This "human wholeness" he speaks of, I feel, is totally about improving individual character and dialogue between conflicting groups through tapping into our Buddha nature with OUR Buddhist practice and then sharing it with others in every field of endeavor in which we're involved. Depending on the situation, we either instruct others in true Buddhism directly, share the teachings in appropriate ways or affect our environment based on our high life-condition.

My point is that [Nichiren Daishonin's] Buddhism is the KEY to a real world peace.... We know that only a fundamental change at the core of our lives and the spreading of the Law that can achieve this change in all people will protect us from our reactions to the manipulative power of the lower worlds....

And which organization in the world knows and promotes bringing out the Buddha nature? It is the SGI, and I don't think we're arrogant to be proud as long as we don't distance ourselves from the non-Buddhist world and continue to be an active part of society. Certainly, our methods will be in accord with the time and country in which we live, but while others are waiting for Jesus to return or the Messiah to make his or her appearance, the SGI will be realizing its ongoing mission to enable people from every walk of life to start to change themselves and the world now in our lifetime.

— MICHAEL RUDNICK, Bedminster, N.J.

Organizational Reform

In response to Karen Roach's "Mailbox" entry (July 10), I'd like to respectfully disagree. It's certainly true that we need to continue our ongoing process to develop and reform the SGI-USA from within. The life of any religion, in fact, depends upon it. This is a natural process that will continue for the 10,000 and more years of the Latter Day of the Law. It entails the serious efforts of self-reflection and self-reform we as Buddhists undergo on a daily basis. Such struggle must never become mere lip service.

But, in my opinion, to confuse this ongoing organizational development with the battle to defeat the third most powerful enemy in Buddhism only weakens our organization. Such a position, instead, finds an abode in the devil of mercy, by capitalizing on a shallow and distorted comparison, thereby missing the essential point....

As Nichiren Daishonin states: "When truth and error stand shoulder to shoulder, and when Mahayana and Hinayana dispute which is superior. At such a time, one must set aside all other affairs and devote one's attention to rebuking slander of the Law. This is the practice of *shakubuku*" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 103).

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And as SGI President Ikeda has pointed out, “Unless we can clearly distinguish between allies and adversaries we will be unable to win in the struggle for kosen-rufu.” In that case, there would no longer exist a real organization to reform.

— MARK KORAL, Los Angeles

Karen Roach speaks out (July 10 “Mailbox”) about a very important point — the state of leadership at all levels of the SGI-USA.

Nikken’s behavior, deplorable as it is, does not change the fact that members have left our organization to get away from “leaders” who act without compassion and without a spirit of equality. Eight years after SGI President Ikeda’s 17-day guidance trip to the United States, I feel authoritarian practices still exist in our organization. This is an unacceptable state of affairs; it is not enough that we have “made some progress.”

On a certain level, it simply does not matter that we (the SGI) are correct about the true heritage of the Law as long as we continue, as individuals and as an organization, to tolerate even the slightest bit of authoritarian behavior from ourselves. Do we truly want all SGI members back from the Nikken sect? If so, we must attract them back. To do so, I believe, we must first completely defeat the devilish nature of authority within ourselves and within our organization. As the man said: “First you must crush the hard shell of the lesser self. That you must absolutely do.”

Please keep fighting, Karen Roach!

— JOE KOSTECKE, San Diego

I have been reading *World Tribune* since I came to the United States. I always enjoy reading every article and really appreciate the staff’s and editor’s tireless effort for kosen-rufu in the battle of speech. I have some words to say for Karen Roach’s letter posted in the July 10 issue.

Ms. Roach mistakenly remarked that the results of some defecting membership in the SGI-USA in the past lie in the misguided leadership. Because I came to the United States in 1995 from Japan, I have no idea what the organization was like in pre-1990 era, although some members I know here in New York City occasionally mentioned here and there that there was certainly aggressive kosen-rufu movement in the every aspect of Buddhist activities. I am sure there are many cases and reasons of the unfortunate decrease in membership around that time.

But most of the cases why they left our organization was their poor understanding of this Buddhism....

I also understand Ms. Roach’s feeling that we sometimes want to blame on leaders whatever the problems we might have. Of course, if there are obvious wrongful misconduct and failure found on the leadership, we have to strongly accuse them.

As far as the priesthood issue goes, however, there will be absolutely no excuse to hesitate to speak up against evil.... We have to keep reminding ourselves that should we never stop talking about the priesthood issue and that we need a clear understanding not only of the priesthood issue but also of all activities and practices of this Buddhism.

Do you remember when President Toda got out of prison and what he did to rebuild the defunct organization? He started by lecturing on the Lotus Sutra to a few members! You know why? Because there was a lack of understanding of the Daishonin’s Buddhism among the membership who left the organization during harsh times. It doesn’t matter at all how many years we have been practicing. What matters most is whether we are practicing correctly or not.

— KAZUMASA ISHII, New York

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