

IN MY LIFE: Real Debt
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As for my parents in this lifetime..., they not only gave me birth, but made me a believer in the Lotus Sutra as well. Thus I owe my present father and mother a debt far greater than I would had I been born into the family of Bonten, Taishaku, one of the Four Heavenly Kings or a wheel-turning king... (“The Four Debts of Gratitude,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 8)

I have enjoyed the tremendous fortune of being born an SGI member, but even as I type these words I realize that I have no idea how important this fact is in my life.

It impacts absolutely everything I have been and will become, though as the rebellious young man that I am I have often rejected the notion.

My ability to grow in life with the Mystic Law at my immediate disposal has been at once empowering and inebriating. I have felt, at times, “drunk” with my own ability to be rescued by my fortune — fortune I essentially inherited from Mom and Dad.

Recently, I have been struggling to repay an actual debt to my parents. You know, the money kind. For much of this almost inexplicably difficult struggle, I have been unable to ascertain what the heart of the issue was, why I couldn’t “get over the hump.” Why was it so hard for me to just do this?

In studying this letter, I have begun to see the depth of my real debt to them. And perhaps I have been unable to perceive the true value of my life as a Bodhisattva of the Earth. If I truly felt that I could attain the highest level of life available to a living being, how could I possibly be anything but ecstatic about doing everything I could to repay them, financially, cosmically or otherwise?

One great thing about Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is that all I have to do to repay my karmic debt to Mom and Dad is become a great person with lots of fortune. Cool. I was planning on doing that anyway.

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