

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Enabling Interaction

I congratulate you on the great improvements I've seen in the *World Tribune* in the last few years. Before the improvements, I usually read it to find out what I needed to know as a leader rather than for pure enjoyment. Thus, although as a leader I recognized its importance, it was difficult to feel excited about it. But now I read it before going to my other mail, and I'm beginning to mail various articles to encourage members. Ted Morino's article on cemeteries and Richard Yoshimachi's article on the prayer beads were especially interesting and had that down-to-earth, useful quality about them.

The article in the Sept. 11 issue about Bethany Wild finding her birth mother was tremendously uplifting and very well done. Several members who read the article felt the same way. Thank you, Bethany and your mother, for sharing such a tremendous treasure of the heart with us.

The "Fine Print" section is also a nice addition. I read about members whom I haven't heard about in years and like the comfortable feeling when members are interacting on "lighter" subjects close to their lives.

One of the things that's interesting to me, especially in the "Mailbox," is looking at where the members are writing from. I'm sort of a geography nut and am always impressed by the fact that members live in many small towns that I've never heard of. The SGI movement in its early years was generally viewed as an urban phenomenon, even in the United States, and the number of members now writing in from small communities is a testament to the Gohonzon's wide penetration into the lives of ordinary people. The "Mailbox" does a great service by enabling interaction that draws us closer together from such diverse and far-flung communities.

Keep up the good work !

— KEN TAKEMOTO, Kaneohe, Hawaii

A Rejuvenation for All

Thank you, Iain Coggins and Corrine Meadows for your truly uplifting experiences on the profound death of your wife and friend, Kathy Coggins. On Sept. 6, a fellow member of ours, Hu Sun Kennedy, passed away in a tragic and sudden death. It has been a tremendous loss for many of us, as she had touched our lives, as Kathy did yours, in so many ways.

I always thought how bright and joyful Hu Sun looked every time I saw her. We exchanged few words, since she spoke mostly Korean and very little English, but you could see the enthusiasm she had for SGI activities. She and her sister, Kye, were almost inseparable, and the last time many of us saw her was at our monthly world peace meeting.

I had just returned home from our community center, where we chanted for Hu Sun, and I picked up this particular issue of the *World Tribune* (Aug. 21). I was hoping to find some encouraging words, when I spotted the headline "Rejuvenation." In the article, the description of Kathy's conviction and courage at the time of her death was truly inspiring, as well as the rejuvenation it brought to both your lives. After reading the guidance you quoted from SGI President Ikeda — "An early death enables a believer to lessen his karmic retribution" — the immense darkness I felt earlier towards Hu Sun's death was suddenly lifted and was replaced with hope and understanding.

We will miss these two special women, but in their deaths they have indeed provided a rejuvenation in all our lives. Thank you again for sharing your experiences.

— HELENE ANDERON, Dededo, Guam

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Propagation by the Culturally Aware

I would like to respond to the letter “Not About Pride” by Thea Matthews (“Mailbox,” Sept. 11), which questions the propagation of the SGI at a gay rights parade.

First, I would like to say that Thea is correct that we should closely and critically question how and where we propagate the SGI and Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. It is not something to take lightly.

Second, her letter made me realize that we do not exactly know the motivation or purpose of why SGI members marched in the parade. We did not take part in their meetings and cannot fully discern their reasons.

However, I would like to remind Thea and the readers that the world is made up of many cultures and sub-cultures. Because of my life and its experiences, I (as do we all) belong to so many cultures and sub-cultures that it is hard to name them all. I am a member of many groups: white, male, thirty something, married, heterosexual, SGI, Minnesota native, teacher in the ESL field, and of a group that has lived in other countries.

As Buddhism permeates every pore of my body, I cannot help but express my beliefs. Either indirectly with my point of view or directly by introducing people to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, I express my Buddhahood, and I will end up propagating Buddhism to all the cultures and sub-cultures that I belong to....

I cannot tell members of one culture how they are to propagate Buddhism, if I am not a member of that culture. Thus the SGI members who marched in the gay parade may be of a particular culture (West Coast, San Francisco, homosexual or ?), and they are trying to bring peace and happiness to the people of that culture....

— CHRIS CONLEY, Seattle

I agreed with Thea Matthew’s letter. I staunchly support the separation of church and state. However, I also support fellow SGI members’ personal political, social or environmental pursuits. Our people need to be “out there” as individuals — individuals who have a mystic connection showing proof of this Buddhism.

I don’t think that the SGI should be “out there” lobbying for XYZ causes. It goes without saying, though, that should there be an issue of such magnitude (such as the Jewish Holocaust), then we should take a stand as an organization.

— KIM SOUTHWORTH, Oregon City, Ore.

No More Nikkens

I find that I must respond to the editorial “Directly Facing the Problem” by Dave McNeill (Sept. 11). I understand the point Mr. McNeill makes about members’ possible confusion in the personification of Nikken as a representation of all forms of negativity. However, I do not believe that is what is occurring among the members. Instead, by the principle of the oneness of life and its environment, I strongly believe that any new recognition by members of the ability to stand up against injustice or to reexamine their own authoritarian behaviors and attitudes and change them lessens Nikken’s power in the world and increases the joy and strength of the SGI.

I write as one who has spoken out against Nikken, signed petitions, carefully explained the details of his abuses of power to members and non-members and who has met with temple members for the purpose of demonstrating the true spirit of the Daishonin’s teachings. I also write as one who has personally rejoiced when members who formerly could not see their own connection to the Nikken issue made that connection, in whatever way they made it.

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In fact, those who make the connection through identifying the same tendencies of Nikken or confronting their own passivity to the abuses of power within their own lives and environments, and then pray and take action against these are particularly encouraging to me. Further, I suggest that without these grassroots efforts on the part of the members, a person like Nikken will appear again — and again try to distort the teachings of the Daishonin. I think that the history of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood supports this prediction completely. The upshot is, unless we can fundamentally change the human tendency to control others or be controlled by them in all of human society, we invite the emergence of such a person....

— MARGE ALLEN, Albuquerque, N.M.

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