

World Tribune

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THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

MAY 9, 1997

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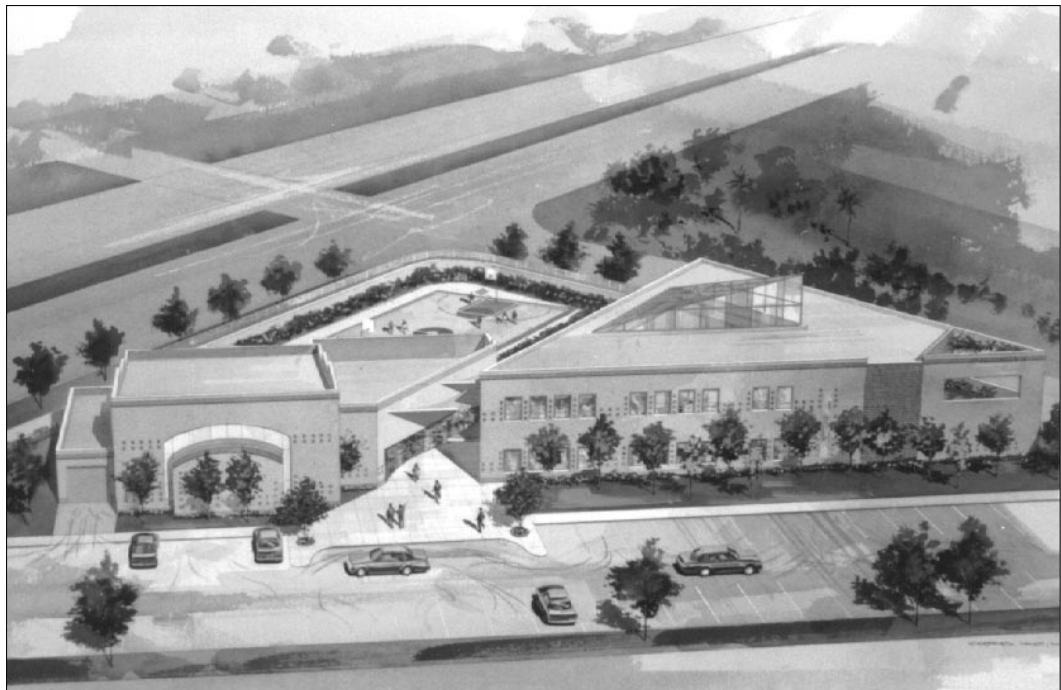
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The new Los Angeles Friendship Center, scheduled to open in fall 1998, is a gift from the SGI in Japan. It is the first SGI-USA center to be built in the city of Los Angeles.

L.A. Friendship Center To Open

By DAVE McNEILL

MANAGING EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., April 27

Los Angeles members will soon have a home of their own. For nearly 30 years, the headquarters for Los Angeles-area members has also been SGI-USA's national headquarters. Now, thanks to a gift from the SGI in Japan, a new Los Angeles Friendship Center will open in the fall of 1998, serving as the center of activities for the five Los Angeles joint territories.

"This new building will help give Los Angeles an enhanced sense of identity and unity," General Director Zaitso said. "It

will become a base station for the area's growth into the 21st century."

This is also the first culture center to be built in the city of Los Angeles. Since 1968, the organization's national headquarters has been located in Santa Monica, Calif., on the Pacific Coast. Most of the community centers established in Southern California have been outside of the city proper. But the new Los Angeles Friendship Center is centrally located at the northeast corner of Fairfax Avenue and Venice Boulevard with easy freeway access.

A committee of some 30 peo-

ple helped design the new facility, which will be built from the ground up after the earthquake-damaged building now on the property has been demolished. Demolition is expected to begin in June and construction in September. Representatives from the various joint territories as well as from such divisional groups as the Gajokai, Byakuren, and various music groups met for nearly four months to come up with the plan.

"We wanted to build the kind of center that really reflected the members needs," Vice General Director Greg Martin said. "The process was very exciting and

led to a unique design."

Two adjoining buildings will be built on the two-acre property. A large triangular building will house multi-purpose meeting rooms, administrative offices and a Gohonzon-room suitable for wedding ceremonies. A dramatic two-story atrium highlights the design.

The second building will house a 350-seat Gohonzon room that will be convertible to a rehearsal site for the various performing groups. Plans also include a gallery space for exhibitions.

PLEASE SEE NEW CENTER, 4



Mel Gibson as Sir William Wallace in the movie 'Braveheart.'

Historian Discusses the Real 'Braveheart'

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER

Tokyo, April 4

The life of Scottish national hero Sir William Wallace, portrayed in last year's Academy Award-winning movie *Braveheart*, was the subject of a discussion between SGI President Ikeda and a University of Glasgow professor today.

Wallace (c. 1272-1305) rebelled against the arrogant at- tempt of King Edward I of Eng-

land to impose direct rule over Scotland. Wallace, a champion of independence, rallied the common people to fight the oppressors. Under his leadership, they at one point completely routed Edward's well-equipped army. The English eventually returned to Scotland. And Wallace continued to resist them. But in the end he was betrayed by a friend and cruelly executed, his severed head and limbs placed on public display.

Dr. J. Forbes Munro, an economic historian at Glasgow University, said that the English wanted to make a public example of Wallace in order to snuff out any further ambitions the Scots might have had of defying England.

Rather than cowering the Scots, this barbarous act caused outrage and galvanized them to action. The flame of resistance

PLEASE SEE WALLACE, 4

VOICES

What book has profoundly impacted you and why?

Members from Seattle Joint Territory respond:



Long Walk to Freedom [the autobiography of Nelson Mandela] was a truly inspiring account of a remarkable man. Nelson Mandela is an absolute lion! His spirit to face severe racism and brutal treatment with profound courage has helped me to strengthen my resolve to face injustice in whatever way I can.

— ART HOOVER, Olympia, Wash.



Centennial by James Michener. I read this book when I was 16 and it left a big impression on me. The story chronicles the lives of people in Colorado over hundreds of years and shows how good and bad causes affect generations of people. I realized then that my actions not only affect me but also others. Now, as an elementary school teacher, I know that a young person I influence could become president of the United States or could go in the opposite direction.

— AARON FRANKLIN, Everett, Wash.



Nuclear Madness: What Can I Do? by Dr. Helen Caldicott. This 20-year-old book brought to light that I knew next to nothing about nuclear proliferation. It has a map in it that gives details of where nuclear arms are stored, where nuclear plants have been built, etc. I was stunned that all but two states had several symbols in them. And my home state of New Mexico had started it all. As I chanted for a goal for kosen-rufu, it came to me that I needed to contact Dr. Caldicott and find out exactly what I can do to help her cause, to stop the nuclear madness. If I can, in this lifetime, make a major impact on stopping nuclear development, I will feel I have done my job for kosen-rufu.

— GLENNA VINCENT, Bellingham, Wash.



I read *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway awhile ago. Hemingway is an exquisite writer and sections of his prose moved me to tears. I was also moved by the courage and nobility of the characters. I am convinced that people seek good and value and that war must never be tolerated.

— WARREN EDMONDSON, Seattle



In his book *Beyond Discipline*, Alfie Kohn gives some substantial arguments why many of the disciplinary programs currently used in schools are failing our children. He shows how we can move from control and compliance to a community environment where children are respected and valued. His visionary thinking inspired me to challenge my issues of control both at school and in my daily life. I was touched by the underlying Buddhist or humanist philosophy in his practical approach to the journey of self-discipline.

— KATHLEEN TRACY, Kent, Wash.

You Can Give a Good Lecture

Heard any good Goshho lectures lately? Given any good ones?

EDITORIAL

listeners and have a pure-hearted spirit to help them understand, we can touch their hearts.

For our movement to progress in the United States, and for Buddhism to take root in people's lives, study must become a regular and meaningful part of our activities. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, understood this point perhaps better than anyone.

When government authorities persecuted the Soka Gakkai in Japan during World War II, many of the organization's top leaders quit. Josei Toda, then general director, concluded that it was a lack of study that allowed those leaders to act cowardly in the face of government authority. They could not see the profound religious significance in the persecution that befell the Soka Gakkai.

After the war, Toda set out to rectify the situation by giving lecture after lecture on the Lotus Sutra and the Goshho. As depicted in *The Human Revolution*, Toda's profound understanding, clear logic, humor and deep understanding of human nature made his lectures the foundation of the Soka Gakkai's growth. The conviction in faith he passed on to his listeners remains a model for us today.

Recently, in line with his challenge that study be taken more seriously this year, General Director Zaitsu urged joint territory leaders to take the lead in giving refreshing and inspirational lectures. Actually, this spirit to challenge giving quality lectures is something every person can benefit from, whether we've been practicing one year or 40. In the process we study harder than we usually do and pray more deeply that somehow what we say can reach even one person.

What's the key to a quality lecture? SGI President Ikeda often says that in public speaking, sincerity is everything. When we truly care about our

Study Department chief, has shared several practical pointers. When it comes to Goshho lectures, he says the speaker should make sure to understand the literal meaning of each line, the principle explained and the intent contained there. He also emphasizes the speaker's life-condition and the use of humor, real-life experiences and clear logic.

Bookstores, too, contain many public speaking aids. Books like *Speaking With Confidence*, *I Can See You Naked, ASAP: The Fastest Way to Make a Memorable Speech* and *The Toastmasters International Guide to Successful Speaking* all contain valuable tips that can be applied to our study movement.

Anyone can learn to be a powerful speaker. "The ability to get your message across clearly, confidently and persuasively is a skill which anyone can learn, practice and perfect," writes David Lewis in *Get Your Message Across*. And Terrence McCann, executive director of Toastmasters International, writes: "I honestly believe that every person who truly wants to become a confident and eloquent speaker can. Success or failure in this area depends solely on attitude."

Our movement cries out for people who can speak passionately about our profound movement. As President Ikeda has said: "We must speak out and say what needs to be said. Let's boldly proclaim the greatness of Buddhism and the righteousness of the SGI. That courage will slay the negative tendencies in our lives, as well as those in the lives of those with whom we speak."

With prayer and preparation, the next great lecture you attend could be the one you give. **W**

NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

'How has studying the priesthood issue helped you deepen your understanding of and faith in Buddhism?'

Please be specific and limit your responses to 75 words or less. All responses are subject to editing. Please send your responses and a face photo of yourself to: "Question of the Month," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, Calif., 90401. Fax: 310-260-8910. Or e-mail us at: SokaNews@aol.com.

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

'Boldly Entrusting' — The Challenge Continues

I agree with Dixon Hamby (April 11 "Mailbox") in what he said at the end about the "great asset we have in those pioneers...." However, I do have experiences that run counter to what he stated at the beginning of his comment. And please, I'm not saying that he is wrong. All I want is for him to hear me, so he can understand our plight as young people.

First of all, I understand that we are told not to look down on the younger generation, but there are certain "base instincts" that in most cases make communication between generations almost impossible. The funny part is that in most cases the older person is simply trying to stop the younger one from committing the same mistakes he or she committed while young.

And there, in my opinion, lies the wisdom of "boldly entrusting."

We all tend to shut-out our elders. It is also a built-in function, a manifestation of a deeper thing, that we all try to say, "So, if it happened to you, it won't happen to me...." And the cycle never ends.

I feel that all of these valuable people can feel safer about these "bold steps" if they, instead of trying to transfer their experiences to those who just won't listen, sit down in front of the Gohonzon and pray for the success of whatever activity these young people are tackling:

This is more of a behind-the-scenes attitude;

This is more compassionate;

And this is more effective, if what concerns you is the value created through the activity, rather than the outcome of it.

— FRANCISCO PALACIO, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Understanding Other Religions

The *World Tribune* continues to convey, with great verve, the greatness of the SGI's philosophy and movement. I point out here a lapse of judgment in the April 11 "Editorial" in the hope that editorial content can be made even better.

The point being made was that religious teachings should not be the property of an elite, but should be available to all. This is well and good for the SGI, but other religions may not feel the same way about their teachings, for cultural or traditional reasons.

You sharply criticize the Hindu religion's priests, the Brahmins, for their traditional role as the exclusive possessors and interpreters of Brahma, the sacred Hindu teachings. Hindus are proud of their Brahmins. There are 500 million practicing Hindus in India alone. In my city there is quite a large Hindu population. You may think that no one will take offense if you refer to events that occurred thousands of years ago, but in religious matters it is precisely those ancient happenings that people are sensitive about.

In the same issue of the *World Tribune*, SGI President Ikeda, in one of his speeches, refers to "the renewed appreciation of India's cultural heritage" and to "the country's spiritual revitalization." India's cultural heritage derives, to a great extent, from Hinduism. And the Brahmins have been centrally important to it. On the one hand, I know that our SGI comrades in India and elsewhere are contributing wonderfully to a new "spiritual revitalization" of their countries. On the other hand, the SGI is making efforts to understand other religions in order to hold meaningful dialogues and to take cooperative, constructive actions with them. I hope that the *World Tribune* will assist in this endeavor.

— NICHOLAS BERGMAN, New York

Letters printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA or the World Tribune.

A Letter to Tiger

PERSPECTIVES

By FLETCHER DALTON
BOSTON

Hey, Tiger! Thank you for Augusta. This letter may seem a little late, but I imagine you've been pretty busy reading the mail coming in from around the world.

Your victory recalls to me some characteristics of champions. One is that they never seem surprised at their victories. Of course, why should they be, since inevitably they've done their homework? Preparation is the name of the game. Years and years on the courts, on the track, in the lab, in the gym, doing re-

search, whatever, brings confidence and power in the crucial moment and allows the victor to win the prize. Arthur Ashe didn't seem surprised when he held the victory cup overhead at Wimbledon almost a generation ago, Tiger. Gratified, happy, yes — but not surprised.

I'm not just referring to confidence in sports stars, however. Once I complimented a celebrated American singer on performances of a difficult role at the famed Salzburg Music Festival. Although the event was a "first," and as significant to her career as Augusta to yours, there was no coyness, no fake humility in her response: "I hope you heard the six high C's I hit in the last act!" She proudly proclaimed: "I gave

the audience everything I had. Every bit of my study, practice and planning was aimed at this day and others to come."

Another characteristic of champions that I admire, Tiger, is their seemingly inherent immunity to obstacles. A successful lawyer once told me, "When they throw an obstacle my way, I catch it, chew it up, get the nourishment from it, spit it out and keep on truckin'!" I think that no true champion has ever been deterred by barriers of race, class or disability.

And no true champion has ever waited for the "right time" to accomplish his or her mission. For the champion, Tiger, the right time is always now. One world conquered — many worlds to come. **W**

Tiger Thoughts

By MICHAEL LISAGOR
VIENNA, VA.

A few weeks ago, more than 20 million Americans and I watched a young man named Tiger Woods win the Masters. I was glued to the TV set on the last day of the tournament as he finished what was arguably one of the most tremendous rounds of golf ever. I was much more aware of the significance of his age, 21, than his race, Asian American, African-American and Native American. For many people, especially minorities, his victory was more far-reaching...similar to Jackie Robinson becoming the first black to play professional baseball. It was especially significant since golf has officially and then unofficially continued to shun minorities.

What amazed me the most about Tiger was that any human being could hit that little white ball more than 1,000 feet down a narrow pathway so consistently without hurting someone. Having just started the sport myself a few months ago, I know firsthand how difficult it is to hit that tiny ball with a club. Actually, in golf circles, this is called addressing the ball. This is how Tiger Woods addresses the ball: "Ah, very nicely done." This is how I address the ball: "Stupid ball. Why won't you go straight?"

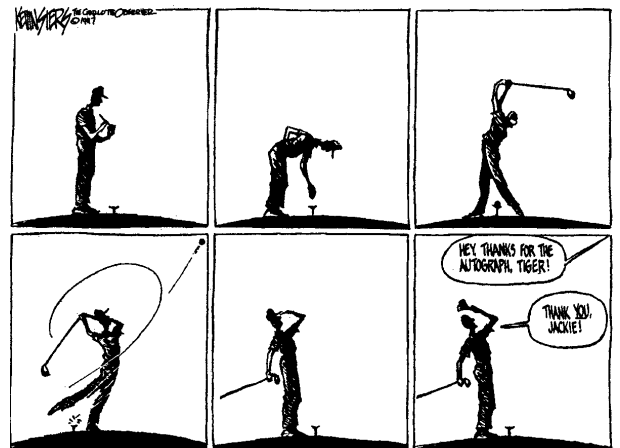
My game is much more suspenseful than Tiger's, from a spectator point of view. I've introduced the element of surprise:

You never quite know where I'm going to hit the ball next. I played my first nine holes about a month ago and drove one ball over a 50-foot-high netting on the right side of the fairway...bouncing across a street...and, I fear, through a window onto someone's plate of apple pie. This must be why the professionals call it a slice (ba da bum!). But, as usual, I digress.

It is rather ironic that the same society that rewards a great golfer

ninth grade English teacher (1964). She was another real superstar. I guess it's all about values and dreams.

SGI President Ikeda has said: "You should not be pulled down or defeated by your worries in life; otherwise, you are only heading toward unhappiness. First, to overcome your worries, you must win over yourself." Golf requires deep concentration. You could really see Tiger struggling to keep a high



with more than \$60 million in earnings and endorsements pays outstanding teachers only about \$30,000 a year. Not that I have a problem with Tiger making all that money. His years of dedication and strict training have resulted in a successful career — more power to him.

Millions of young people will now dream of becoming the next Tiger Woods, just like millions of young people dream of being Michael Jordan or Cal Ripken. But it would be refreshing if millions of young people dreamed of being the next Mrs. McCord, my

life-condition, especially the few times he hit a ball poorly.

Tiger's success will hopefully encourage many of our youth to overcome their disadvantages and achieve something of value in this lifetime. His sincere behavior, the mature way he deals with interviewers, and the foundation he has already established to help inner-city youth are encouraging signs that he will be as successful off the golf course as he already is on it.

That, in this time of self-indulgent, instant millionaires, is no small feat. **W**

NEW CENTER, FROM PAGE 1

An outdoor basketball court is just one feature included with young people in mind. "The committee wanted to create a facility that was children-friendly, somewhere they would want to come," Mr. Martin said. There will also be a library and study area so children who have to do homework will have a place to go while their parents are in meetings. There are also plenty of sitting areas and open space designed to make people of all ages feel welcome.

"I hope the youth can take advantage of this new building and come to discuss various issues and study about faith," Mr. Zaitso said.

Although the purchase of the property and the construction costs are a gift from the SGI, the acquisition of this property fits in well with the new formula for community center allocation, according to Mr. Martin.

Before the announcement of this new facility, the Los Angeles membership, which constitutes about 20 percent of the nationwide organization, would have been due a new community center in 1998, the year this new building is scheduled to open, he said.

To create good relations with our neighbors in the area, SGI-USA representatives have begun meeting with neighborhood associations and elected government officials. WTT



Sir William Wallace, played by Mel Gibson in the movie 'Braveheart,' is knighted by Scottish nobles.

The 1st Annual 'World Tribune' Essay Contest

THEME: *Human Diversity*

CATEGORIES: *Elementary School;
Junior High;
High School;
College/University;
Open (All Ages)*

The World Tribune invites all members to share their thoughts on one of the most important subjects of our day: human diversity. There are so many different kinds of people in our country. Whether we differ in our race, our gender, our size, our background or our sexual orientation, we all share one thing: We are all human. What joys have you experienced in celebrating this diversity? What have you learned about yourself when you've met someone different from you? What prejudices have you faced? What needs to change in ourselves and in our country so we can rise above prejudice and discrimination?

We are looking for short, personal essays no more than 750 words long addressing these questions and any other ideas you have on human diversity. A special committee will judge the essays on the quality of writing as well as on clarity and originality. The top three finishers in each category will have their essays published in the World Tribune. Plaques and other non-cash prizes will be awarded to the top three finishers.

To Enter: *Send your essay (double-spaced, typed) to "Essay Contest," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA, 90401. Indicate which category you are entering. Only one entry per person. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope. All essays become the property of the World Tribune. Any essays not double-spaced and typed or exceeding 750 words will not be considered.*

DEADLINE: JUNE 30, 1997

Historian Discusses the Real 'Braveheart'

WALLACE, FROM PAGE 1

continued to burn so brightly that by the beginning of the 14th century — a little more than two decades after Wallace's death — Scotland secured recognition as a separate kingdom from England. Later, in 1707, England and Scotland, together with Wales, joined in a union, the Kingdom of Great Britain.

Reflecting on Wallace's courageous life, Mr. Ikeda observed that in both life and death this heroic patriot changed the course of history. He then shared a Robert Burns poem with Dr. Munro, an admirer of Scotland's national poet, that celebrates that famous resistance movement. It is titled "Scots Wha Hae," and the last stanza reads:

*We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!
Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow! —
Let us do, or die!*

Professor Munro also mentioned that a document Wallace and other resistance leaders sent to the Pope still exists. Apparently, it was used as a reference by the drafters of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. Praising Scotland's remarkable history, President Ikeda said that a brilliant spirit will transcend both time and national boundaries and will forever shine in the annals of history.

Glasgow University, where Dr. Munro teaches, is one of the oldest educational institutions in the world. Founded in 1451, the

university is famed for establishing the world's very first faculty of engineering. In the 19th century, its scientists and economists played an active role as progenitors of the Industrial Revolution, which so dramatically transformed the world. It counts among its alumni such illustrious names as: Adam Smith, the celebrated economist; James Watt, the developer of the steam engine; and Lord Kelvin, who formulated the absolute scale of temperature that bears his name.

When President Ikeda received an honorary doctorate from the University of Glasgow in June 1994, Dr. Munro delivered the address citing the reasons for the conferral. An exchange program has been in effect between Soka University and the University of Glasgow since 1987. So far, 150 Soka University and Soka Women's College students have studied under the program.

During the discussion, the professor expressed his absolute delight at seeing so many Soka University students active throughout the world. Even though they are still young, he said, they have incorporated the philosophy of value-creation in their lives as they boldly make their way through the world.

Querying his guest on a host of topics, the SGI leader wanted

to know how the city of Glasgow became the driving force of the Industrial Revolution. Professor Munro gave three succinct reasons: education, a geographic location advantageous to trade and rich deposits of iron and coal. The people of Scotland, he said, who at the time were relatively poor compared to those in other parts of Great Britain and Europe,

A brilliant spirit will transcend time and national boundaries and will forever shine in the annals of history.

used these three assets to their advantage with the diligence and earnestness for which they are known, successfully gaining a competitive edge over other regions.

The two went on to discuss Oxford and Cambridge universities and their long tradition of producing great leaders. Then turning to British prime ministers who he thought had brought great reformation to society, Dr. Munro cited Sir Robert Peel, who took office in 1834, and David Lloyd George, who headed the ruling Liberal Party during World War I. Saying that both men were innovators, Dr. Munro went on to observe that great leaders understand the times they live in, what changes are needed and how to bring them about.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. Munro presented Mr. Ikeda a poem by the English poet A.E. Housman (1859-1936) titled "The Cherry Tree," a gift from his wife. WTT

ANNE MARIE OFFER, NEW YORK

'Offering' Something of Value

When I began practicing, I was resistant to almost all aspects of the SGI organization. You might say I was a "tough nut to crack." However, last Sept. 11, I celebrated 14 years of practice. I am now taking responsibility as a chapter chief in Manhattan. I will be forever grateful to my sponsor, who saw the deep suffering in my life and gave me a way to overcome it and become happy.

I began practicing back in the days when folks spoke of Big Actual Proof —

confidence, a sense of self-worth and belief in the greatness of my life. Because I have developed myself through my Buddhist practice, I have found myself on an exciting and unexpected path.

I'm an actor. That's why I moved to New York. I have had wonderful experiences in this field. However, as a child, I always fantasized that when I was famous I would be interviewed on a talk show. On a college theater tour, we would do mock talk shows in the hotel rooms and I would host. Several years

wanted to do the same thing. I wanted a show that would encourage and challenge viewers never to give up on their dreams.

From my determination and lots of prayer sprang *Something To Offer* (a wordplay on my last name), based on the theme that we all have something special and unique to offer the world by pursuing our dreams and goals. *Something To Offer* is a half-hour TV show that I thought I would do once. Six-and-a-half years later, I have hosted and produced more than 130 episodes and interviewed more than 400 individuals. What's amazing, too, is the outpouring of support I've received from family, friends, SGI members and even strangers, who have contributed their time, talent, equipment and even wardrobe — it's just been amazing.

Last year I was advised to focus on inviting more high profile guests to attract needed financial backing. After chanting for the courage to make this happen, I secured an interview with Geraldine Ferraro, the first woman to be a vice presidential candidate.

That success gave me the impetus to pursue and land interviews with Ed Koch, former New York City mayor, and legendary jazz musician Lionel Hampton.

While making these interviews a reality, I was inspired by President Ikeda's dialogue with Rosa Parks — so much so that I made a determination to interview Mrs. Parks myself. I knew she lived in Detroit, my hometown. My sister, who

works for the city paper there, located the address and I wrote a letter of invitation. I continued to chant, call, write and read about Mrs. Parks' life to prepare myself for this interview. But I could not seem to get a straight answer: Yes. Maybe. Call Back. Who again?

At times giving up was a definite possibility, because for me not knowing is torturous. I'm the type of person who's just got to know what's happening. Everything was unsettled for so long, but thanks to what I have learned in the SGI I just kept trying.

Six months went by. During President Ikeda's visit to New York last June,

while this interview was still up in the air, I worked with the Exchange Members Committee. Inspired by President Ikeda and the efforts of all the members, I determined to act as if the interview were all set and be ready to interview Mrs. Parks at a moment's notice.

I had done all my research and preparation when I called Mrs. Parks' assistant, Ms. Elaine Steele, as arranged on July 5. At first she suggested July 7 for the interview, but then said: "Oh, but you're in New York. How about Aug. 22 or 23? But call back in August." I was grateful for the lead time, because my budget couldn't handle last-minute airfares.

Although the waiting was difficult, I received an extra benefit. The day I would have been interviewing Mrs. Parks in July, I interviewed Les Brown, the motivational speaker. Mr. Brown was another person I had been pursuing for several months.

This business is hectic, ever-changing, unpredictable. Being persistent, patient, spontaneous, adaptable and persevering are necessary. I had none of these qualities, or had not accessed these qualities, before I practiced Buddhism. But these are exactly the qualities I have now, which were tested by and which landed me the Rosa Parks interview.

It happened! On Aug. 22, I had the honor of interviewing Mrs. Parks. There were tremendous benefits from the efforts I'd put forth: I could film four additional shows while I was in Michigan. The studio crew and staff worked gratis. I could

bring my director along and make a funding pitch. All that happened echoed what a leader told me early in my practice: "Strong determination produces incredible results beyond our wildest comprehension."

And President Ikeda has said: "To resolve to accomplish your goals is what counts. If you earnestly put your mind to something, your brain, your body, your environment — everything — will start working toward achieving that end." As proof of these words, after my interview with Mrs. Parks her assistant



Anne Marie Offer's talk show, 'Something To Offer,' seeks to bring value to television.

cars, boyfriends and glamour jobs. But this was not the type of benefit I looked for or received. My benefits and challenges have been "inside jobs." It hasn't been a picnic to do my human revolution, but I have successfully overcome a very negative relationship with my father, an eating disorder, many career challenges, family illnesses, deaths and more. I value each of these opportunities, which have strengthened me and enabled me to become a more compassionate person.

My greatest benefits have resulted from developing qualities such as true

later, while I was running a theater company, members of the company would say, "You should have your own talk show." It was just a dream.

About seven years ago, though, I started thinking about this seriously: "Other people may want to parachute out of a plane. I want to do a talk show. You should do everything you want to at least once in your life." I just wanted to do it once — produce a talk show that would make a positive difference on television.

I was impressed and influenced by SGI President Ikeda's dialogues with world leaders and other individuals and

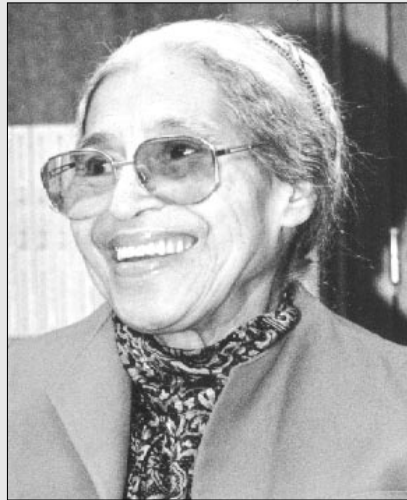
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I started thinking about this seriously: 'Other people may want to parachute out of a plane. I want to do a talk show. You should do everything you want to at least once in your life.' I just wanted to do it once — produce a talk show that would make a positive difference on television.”

Forty Years of Faithful Effort

Highlights of Anne Marie Offer's Dialogue With Rosa Parks & Elaine Steele

By BRIGID WITKOWSKI
NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Rosa Parks

Since I don't have cable television, seeing a videotape was my first opportunity to view the fruits of Anne Marie Offer's long sought-after interview with Rosa Parks and her assistant, Elaine Steele. During their 15-minute on-air dialogue, Anne Marie asked Mrs. Parks questions that delved into the formation of her character and her motivation for the activities she has undertaken over the past 40 years. The questions showed the care and diligence of Anne Marie's research into Mrs. Parks' life and work.

For example, she asked Mrs. Parks, "What were your dreams as a little girl?" Mrs. Parks responded that her dream was for society to be free of racial segregation and discrimination and for all people to have the same opportunities.

Another question was, "Who were some of your role models?" Mrs. Parks replied: "My mother, because she believed in freedom and equality and education. She was a teacher in a rural area of Alabama. She wanted her students to know their lessons and believed we should respect not only ourselves but other people, too."

Ms. Steele and Mrs. Parks explained how they came to work together and about Pathways to Freedom, the organization for students ages 11-17 that the two women now work on together.

Asked whether she had any words of wisdom on becoming a valuable citizen, Mrs. Parks answered: "Develop a spiritual awareness; stay in school and get good grades; make the best of your education; register and vote and take part in the government, perhaps even becoming a candidate for public office." Mrs. Parks seemed to believe that freedom, equality and education are inseparable. Her refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Ala., bus 40 years ago led to a highly successful boycott of city buses. More importantly, her actions led to a Supreme Court

ruling against the Jim Crow laws in the South, which had legalized discrimination against African-Americans.

The answer that most inspired me was to this question: "Mrs. Parks, you could be taking it easy, sitting on your veranda sipping lemonade. I know why you do what you do, but how do you keep going?"

Mrs. Parks answered simply: "I don't dwell on any personal problems that I might have. We all feel, as time goes on, that we can't do as much as we would like to. But I haven't given up yet and I don't plan to. As long as I can get up everyday, I want to contribute. I do hope that, after I pass on, my work will be taken up and improved on by others."

Mrs. Parks speaks in a humble, quiet way, but her passion burns constantly within her heart, always propelling her forward. I think Nichiren Daishonin called this faith like flowing water.

EXPERIENCE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

said: "I need a copy of this tape to show other people how they should interview. You really do your homework and ask intelligent questions."

This rare praise is nothing but actual proof from the Gohonzon. I feel I have found my mission. I now have the ability to draw the best out of my guests, to provide them a safe

place for dialogue that encourages viewers to challenge themselves as well.

To share this gift with more viewers, we are discussing future production of the show with a small station in New Jersey, as well as additional airings in the New York suburbs. I have just completed a demo that I hope will move this show into an even larger viewership.

I want to "offer" television

the spirit of the SGI — value creation. I am determined to have a Value Creation Network in the near future.

I wish to thank the founders of this Buddhism, especially President Ikeda, for all their efforts which have inspired me so. Because of President Ikeda's example, I'm a special dreamer — with a wealth of successes behind me and many more to come.

*Yours Truly,
Betty B.*

DEAR BETTY: I barely have time to fire up the remote before my wife is after me to do gongyo or, worse yet, "talk." Much as I love her, I'm beat after work — it's not like I'm lounging around the house with two preschoolers all day.

— WORKINGMAN

DEAR COUCH POTATO: Where have you been, back in the '50s?

When it comes to preschoolers, there's very little "lounging," as your charming wife has no doubt said — and said and said. After a day with Lamb Chop and Kermit (delightful as their companionship is to the younger set), it's a wonder she can speak in complete sentences. On the other hand, it's not easy bringing home the bacon (close your ears, Miss Piggy).

Granted, it's tough doing gongyo after fighting rush-hour traffic — and perhaps the boss — but it can energize you and put the day's struggles into perspective. That doesn't mean your wife should greet you at the door with beads and a sutra book.

Find the time that works best: after dinner, perhaps, or following the bath-time-read-me-a-story routine (you know, the bonding thing — as many of your enlightened buddies already know).

As for "talking" — what, *Cat in the Hat* got your tongue? In *The Creative Family*, SGI President Ikeda remarks:

The kind of home I fervently hope for is a place for warm interaction between people... To talk with someone else about those things that move him or her most, or things that are pleasurable or bitter, and to talk honestly, from the heart, will produce an inexhaustible round of subjects.

A marriage is a relationship in process, not a relic in a wax museum. It's amazing how

quickly two people in love can grow apart without mental and, well, other kinds of stimulation. Better a discussion on current events than a future one on current affairs. It takes effort to keep those wedding bells ringing, but even your best friends will tell you, it sure beats nights home alone with a remote.

DEAR BETTY: Whenever I miss morning gongyo, I feel so guilty. Like my leaders say, I'll never change my karma that way. But sometimes I get to bed so late, when the alarm goes off I can't move. And then I'm mad at myself all day.

— SNOOZE CONTROL

DEAR ALARMED: Why don't you flog yourself with a whip while you're at it? General Director Zaitzu recently suggested we look at things this way:

Since doing gongyo is a privilege (not a duty), if we are forced to skip it, it's as if we missed out on something we really enjoy. For instance, you may like playing racquetball. If something comes up and you miss your regularly scheduled match, you don't feel guilty about it — you look forward even more to going next time.

Don't creep around like some wretched sinner in a Renaissance fresco. A positive practice based on self-respect will move you closer to your goals — even if you don't win the Cal Ripken award for consecutive gongyos.

That doesn't mean you should party your life away (unless you invite me, naturally) instead of making efforts in faith. But the road to happiness is long. And the point is to enjoy every stage of the journey.

NOTE: Thanks for writing! I'll try to address your concerns in upcoming columns.

What Do You Think?

Please write to us and let us know your thoughts on the World Tribune. What articles do you like or don't like? Which types would you like to see more of, less of? Do you have ideas to make us better? Do you have questions you'd like answered? Would you like to get involved in your local area? We welcome all letters at: Mailbox, World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401.

After breakfast, the group wired the Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo to inform them of their safe arrival in Tehran. A little later, Hideo Ueno came by to pick them up. He was alone.

"Is your wife all right?" Shin'ichi asked, concerned.

Mr. Ueno confirmed that Yoriko was feeling slightly under the weather and was resting at home.

The group spent the day touring the city, with Mr. Ueno as their guide. The women in the streets all wore the traditional black Islamic cloak called *chador*, which covered them entirely from head to toe. The visitors were struck by how, when the hour of worship came, everyone would stop what they were doing and simultaneously bow in prayer. It brought home to them how deeply rooted Islam was in the people's daily lives.

They visited the Golestan (Rose Garden) Palace, a structure begun by Agha Mohammad Khan (1742–97), the founder of the Qajar Dynasty, who had made Tehran his capital in the late 18th century. They also went to the Crown Jewels Museum housed in the basement of the Bank Melli Iran, to the Bazaar and other noteworthy sites. While the palace had impressed them with its ornate splendor, Shin'ichi was captivated by the lively energy and bustling noise of the Bazaar.

As Ueno drove them around the city, Shin'ichi asked him about his wife's condition. Ueno felt that his wife's ill health was emotional in origin. She seemed to have trouble adapting to life in Iran.

"Would it be all right if we stopped by your home?" Shin'ichi asked. "I'd really like to encourage her in some way."

"I'm sure she'd be delighted to have you visit her. But do you have time? I know you're extremely busy."

Shin'ichi's schedule that day was in fact very full. They had planned to visit a number of other museums and places of interest before going to purchase some Persian rugs for the Grand Reception Hall and then meet with Japanese trading company officials and other business representatives in Tehran.

But Shin'ichi replied immediately: "The primary purpose of my visits overseas is to encourage the members living in each country. Especially since your wife is suffering, it is my foremost duty to visit her."

When her husband arrived home with Shin'ichi and the other leaders, Yoriko Ueno was surprised and somewhat embarrassed.

"President Yamamoto!" she exclaimed. "You've come all this way! I don't know what to say. Thank you. I'm very sorry that I couldn't show you around today."

The New Human Revolution

By HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 1

Treasure Land

Translation of parts 12–17 of the 'Treasure Land' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

Yoriko Ueno smiled happily, but looked pale. Urging her not to go to any trouble on his behalf, Shin'ichi explained: "Your husband told me you're not feeling well, so we just thought we'd drop by to see how you are doing. Perhaps, if you like, we could chant some daimoku together."

"Yes, I would like that."

They chanted for about 10 minutes, with Shin'ichi leading. Though it was only for a short time, Shin'ichi prayed earnestly for Yoriko's recovery. When they finished, some color had returned to her cheeks.

With a warm, understanding smile, Shin'ichi said: "Iran is a long way from Japan and many things are different — the language, the food, the weather, the customs. I'm sure it's been a difficult change for you."

"Yes, this place is not for me," she readily agreed. "Honestly speaking, I'd like to go back to Japan as soon as possible."

"What is it about Iran that you don't like?"

"Just about everything. Besides, I have no friends here I can really talk to."

Looking somewhat embarrassed, Hideo Ueno said: "She always goes on like this. And I'm at a loss what to do. You see, my work here won't be finished for at least another year or two..."

Shin'ichi gazed sympathetically at Yoriko and said: "You've had a hard time. I'm sure it's been very trying for you. But, you know, it doesn't matter where you are. It's ultimately your attitude and outlook that determine whether you see your situation as a painful ordeal or try to find meaning and value in it, feeling a sense of joy and fulfillment."

"Even in prison during the war, Mr. Makiguchi, the Gakkai's first president, declared, 'Depending on one's outlook, even hell can be enjoyable.'"

"Nowadays, Iran is only a day away by plane from Japan. That's not so far really,

when you think about it. Compared to the universe itself, the Earth is but a tiny, insignificant planet and the island-country of Japan far smaller still. Don't you think it would be much more exciting to spend a decade or two in a spacious country, rather than spending your whole life cooped up on a small island?"

A Buddhist's work lies in earnestly striving to enable individuals they see suffering to advance toward happiness. This has been the source of the Soka Gakkai's development.

Giving careful consideration to Yoriko Ueno's state of mind, Shin'ichi continued, with all his energy, to encourage her:

"When people become pessimistic, it is as if they obscure themselves behind



dark clouds that prevent all happiness, joy and hope from entering their hearts. Buddhism is a teaching of supreme optimism. It describes the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light¹ as existing in the midst of this strife-filled *saha* world² and that even the most heinous villain or most deeply suffering individual can become a Buddha. It is a teaching in which there is no despair. Instead there is boundless hope, opening the possibility for boundless happiness.

"Don't you think you may be idealizing your life in Japan and, by constantly comparing it with your life in Tehran, making yourself miserable and de-

pressed? I'm sure you also had your fair share of problems when you were living in Japan, didn't you?"

"Yes, that's right," Hideo agreed. "In Japan, we lived with my mother. My wife wanted us to live on our own. She and my mother didn't get along very well, but my wife tried to make it work. And so, I think, did my mother. Still, my wife tends to be a perfectionist. When her efforts didn't bring exactly the results she'd hoped for, she lost confidence and became depressed."

Nodding in understanding, Shin'ichi said to Yoriko: "Nobody's perfect. Nor is

there a perfect living environment where everything will be just the way you want it. It seems to me that you may be setting impossibly high standards for yourself as a wife, for your mother-in-law and for your everyday circumstances. You are then trying to make everything measure up to these unrealistic standards.

"But reality invariably never quite matches the ideal vision or image of what you want it to be. So you end up finding fault with everything, adding to your despair and amplifying your discontent and dissatisfaction."

"It's kind of like looking at a plum tree expecting it to be a cherry tree. You say, 'What a strange-looking cherry tree!' and end up being disappointed. Instead, you should try to see things more flexibly. Don't get caught up in the rigid idea that things must be just the way you have painted in your mind."

Shin'ichi patiently continued to address Yoriko: "I realize it may be difficult for you because you can't get used to living here in Tehran. But no matter where you go, there will be some degree of difficulty or unpleasantness. It's the same for everyone, no matter where or under what circumstances. No place or person is 100 percent perfect."

"You should set life here — not life in Japan — as your standard. Since this is your reality, you first have to accept it as it is. And then take a close look at it."

"The Sutra speaks of 'perceiving the truth exactly as it is.'³ Though this describes the Buddha's wisdom, it also describes our lives. Rather than being attached to and constrained by idealistic standards that you've created, you should look hard at reality just as it is, then try to discover some positive or enjoyable aspects and turn them to good account."

"The same goes for you yourself. You are you, no matter where you go. Nothing is served by envying others. All peo-

PLEASE SEE TREASURE LAND, NEXT PAGE

TREASURE LAND, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

ple have strengths and shortcomings. Therefore, all you have to do is look at yourself, discover your good points and then try to develop them further. This, too, will create something of value."

Yoriko responded: "Yes, I know you're right. But although I can understand what you're saying intellectually, when I think of having to stay on here, my feelings of dislike for this place get the better of me."

"That's precisely why faith is so important," Shin'ichi continued. "When you reach a deadlock, that's the time to chant daimoku. When you chant, you can see yourself and your environment exactly as they are. You can also bring forth strong life force, gaining the strength you need not to be defeated by your weaknesses. And more importantly, you'll awaken to the mission that has brought you to Iran."

"Do you mean I've come here because I have some kind of mission or purpose to fulfill?" she asked.

"Of course," Shin'ichi assured her. "All children of the Buddha have a mission. From now on, more and more Japanese will be coming to Iran to work and live. Among them, there are bound to be other Gakkai members and women like yourself, who feel lonely in a strange land. It would be wonderful if you could some day use your experience of living in this country to help and encourage such people."

Yoriko's eyes gradually brightened. Shin'ichi continued: "There is one more important thing to remember. While there are many Japanese, only the handful who actually come to live here can develop real friendships with the people of Iran. If you make friends with this country's people, Japan will seem familiar to them. They'll be more apt to open their hearts to other Japanese they meet."

"Bonds of friendship and trust between individuals transcend national

boundaries and bring the world closer together. Nothing could be more wonderful than this for the prospect of peace — not only for Japan and Iran, but for the world. If you develop and carefully nurture many friendships among those around you, then Iran will definitely become a beautiful, green oasis of the heart for you."

Mrs. Ueno smiled.

Returning her smile, Shin'ichi said: "True Buddhism does not teach that we will become happy at some indeterminate time or place in the future. It is a teaching for creating happiness where

cheeks. Her husband's eyes were also moist with tears.

"Teheran is a beautiful city," Shin'ichi said. "It has a vast, sprawling landscape and clear blue skies the likes of which you don't often see in Japan. Please enjoy and appreciate this blue sky. Write a beautiful page of happiness here."

When it was time for Shin'ichi and his companions to leave, they joined with the Uenos in chanting three daimoku. Mrs. Ueno's voice resounded with strong determination.

Shin'ichi and the others went on to visit a museum, meet with several Japanese trading company representatives living in Teheran, and purchase a Persian carpet for the Grand Reception Hall.

Their first hectic day in Teheran seemed to pass in no time.



In Shin'ichi's room at the hotel, the group shared their impressions of Iran until late that evening. Shin'ichi and Youth Division Chief Eisuke Akizuki had seen mosques before, during their visit to India, but for

Yusuke Yoshikawa and Akira Kuroki, this firsthand encounter with Islamic culture was full of surprises.

Yoshikawa spoke excitedly: "We perform gongyo twice daily, in the morning and evening, but followers of Islam worship five times a day. I was surprised to see that everyone observes this practice so faithfully. And the women follow the Islamic tradition of wearing a dark *chador*, covering themselves from head to toe. This shows that Islam is deeply rooted in the people's daily lives. I had always thought of Islam as a rather frightening religion because of the phrase 'The Koran or the sword,' but now that I have actually visited an Islamic country, I can see that my impression was off the mark."

Shin'ichi responded: "I have heard that the phrase 'The Koran or the sword'

seems to have been invented by Europeans who believed that when Islamic soldiers attacked they offered the conquered the choice of conversion to their religion or death. But I think that is based on a mistaken view of Islam.

"It is true that Islam has used armed force, but on the other hand, it has also displayed considerable tolerance toward non-Muslims. Islamic nations have traditionally respected the life and property of non-Muslims who resided within their borders, as long as they have upheld obligations such as tax payment. And the Koran does state that religion should not be forced on anyone."

"Is that so?" asked Yoshikawa. "I didn't know that."

"Just think about it a moment," replied Shin'ichi. "It is impossible to propagate a religion throughout the world by armed force. When a religion spreads widely, it is always because it possesses elements that evoke faith and a sympathetic response in the people."

"From now on, we of the Soka Gakkai must thoroughly study the other religions of the world. When we encounter such a statement, we should know who said it, where it came from, and whether it is true or not."

"British historian Thomas Carlyle, in his *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, depicted Muhammad as a hero. He wrote this in the mid-19th century, a time when most Europeans regarded Muhammad as a deplorable scoundrel. But Carlyle realized that such great numbers of people would not have faith in Muhammad for over 10 centuries had he not possessed a genuine integrity and honest commitment to his beliefs."

(To be continued)

1. Land of Eternally Tranquil Light: According to T'ien-t'ai's analysis, one of four kinds of lands mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures, denoting a land where a Buddha dwells.
2. *Saha* world: This world, which is full of sufferings. The Sanskrit word *saha* means "endurance," indicating a world where people must endure many sufferings stemming from desire and illusion.
3. From the Lotus Sutra passage "The Thus Come One perceives the true aspect of the threefold world exactly as it is" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 226).

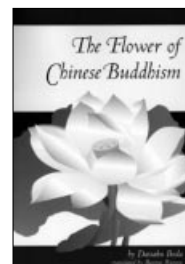
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SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Enjoying It!

By VALERIE THOMAS

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, no matter what happens. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p.161)

I have always liked this passage and often turn to it when I am suffering. I am reassured by Nichiren Daishonin's encouragement to challenge my life by overcoming my sufferings with continuous practice.

However, I recently found myself drawing on this quote in regards to happiness — "Enjoy what there is to enjoy."

I spoke with a member who had challenged a difficult work situation and was now enjoying a great new job. But it was with some hesitation that she shared her new happy situation with me. She seemed to be looking for more suffering at her job instead of appreciating the fortune she had worked so hard for. Through our conversation it became clear that because she deeply believes facing challenges is the way to change karma, it was difficult for her to appreciate the benefit that she had created.

This made me really stop and think. I know I have sometimes had this same feeling, looking for obstacles to motivate my practice instead of appreciating what I have accomplished — and using that appreciation and joy as the motivation to advance.

A period without major obstacles can be the most challenging time to progress in my practice and create fortune. It is difficult to have the self-motivation to continue practicing with the same focus as when I am motivated by a desperate challenge. But I feel that taking the opportunity to appreciate and enjoy my benefits — while continuing to advance — also deepens my faith and practice.

I have always found it easier to practice when I am "suffering what there is to suffer" than when I am "enjoying what there is to enjoy." Nichiren Daishonin makes clear in this passage, though, the importance of chanting throughout our lives, in all circumstances — both those of suffering and joy. ☸

WINNING IN LIFE: THE BASICS OF THE PRACTICE OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM

Striking a Balance

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Mahatma Gandhi had a tremendous spirit to work for the people. He once said, "[It] is impossible for us to establish a living vital connection with the masses unless we work for them, through them and in their midst, not as their patrons but as their servants." Shakyamuni, Nichiren Daishonin and the successive presidents of the Soka Gakkai have all embodied this spirit.

But these men seem to be leaders of a special stock, who have no desires, who were born of a mission to give others their very lives. "It would be great to be someone like that," we may sometimes think, "but I am just an ordinary person." Most of us want to help others — but we also have personal desires we want to fulfill. And often those come first.

All the great Buddhist leaders, while selfless, have fulfilled what Nichiren Daishonin calls practice for oneself and practice for others. This is actually not two separate kinds of practice but a single practice that benefits both oneself and others.

Through serving the people, our leaders have also developed their lives.

Participating in the SGI-USA organization allows us to do the same thing. SGI-USA activities, such as district meetings, may not seem spectacular, but here we learn something spectacular: this interrelatedness of helping others and developing ourselves. We need both.

Linda Johnson, a women's division secretariat member, says that "whenever I take the time to encourage another person — even if it's just by phone — my day goes better, my life seems to be in a much higher rhythm and I am much more effective, period." When she does not make that effort, she finds it easy to get swayed by the ups and downs of her life. Particularly the downs. "I desperately need the members because they continually force me to grow," she says. "They force me many times to give when I don't want to, when I'd rather stay in the house. In essence, there is no doubt in my mind that the reason I have grown over my 21 years of practice is the members."

Another women's division secretariat member, Theresa Hauber, realized how crucial it was to care for oth-

ers when she had achieved all her dreams. "Then there is a tendency to take the fact that you are going to overcome everything for granted," she explains. "But without actively thinking about how other people are doing — even though my life is very comfortable, with no problems — I totally lack joy."

Sometimes we think of others as separate from us, other times we think of them as deeply connected to our lives. The second is the Buddhist view. The profound Buddhist concept of dependent origination sets forth how our individual existence is intrinsically linked to all other human lives.

The *New Yorker* writer Joseph Mitchell had this spirit to see others as linked to his life. Mitchell, who died last year, wrote profiles on the common people he met in the Bowery and Village, celebrating their triumphs and sharing their woes. Looking back over his articles once, he said, "It turns out, when I look at these things, just about everybody is me."

Doing Buddhist activities with this spirit is a clear path to our personal growth. Activities and personal growth — they go hand in hand. ☸

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON FAITH

What Is the Correct Way To Pray?

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT CHIEF

Q What is the correct way to pray to the Gohonzon?

A In "Rebuking Slander of the Law and Eradicating Sins," Nichiren Daishonin states, "I am praying that, no matter how troubled the times may become, the Lotus Sutra and the ten demon daughters will protect all of you, praying as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood or to obtain water from parched ground" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 74). Based on this passage, we can say that a strong determination on our part is vital when offering prayers. The type of daimoku that comes from the deep resolve that "I will make it happen" or "I will win" constitutes the essence of correct prayer to the Gohonzon.

Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the law of life — the pure, boundless energy of life — which permeates oneself and the universe. When a river runs to the

ocean, its waters merge with the tide, becoming one with the vast abyss. In a similar way, when we express our resolve by wholeheartedly chanting daimoku, we harmonize our innate Buddhahood with the infinite life of the universe. At that moment, the cause for our prayers' fulfillment has been made.

This is explained in Buddhism as the simultaneity of cause and effect. Once we wholly understand this, we can strengthen our resolve to overcome any problem or accomplish any goal.

The critical factor, then, becomes our ability to continue praying until we make our prayers come true. Making them come true requires more than just positive thinking — continuous prayer is necessary. Buddhism teaches that we have the power within us to attract all the positive forces in the universe, which protect and nurture life, through continuous prayer.

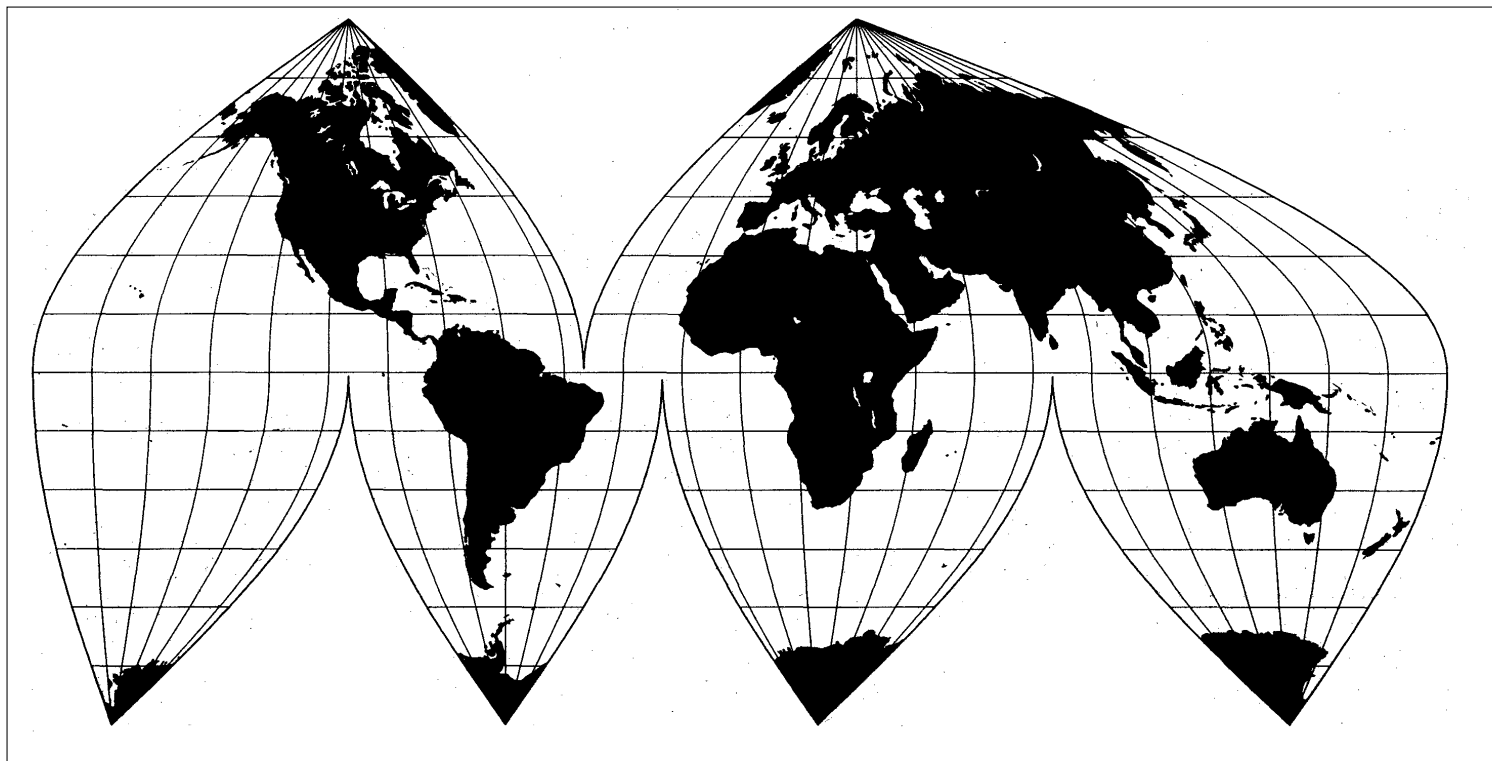
Nothing is more important in this regard than strengthening our inherent enlightened nature. We strengthen it by praying not only for ourselves but for

others, too. Praying for others "as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood or to obtain water from parched ground" elevates our lives. By thus solidifying our compassion and wisdom, we enrich our lives to the point where we positively influence our environment. We become people whose personal desires are naturally realized. SGI President Ikeda thus stresses that "prayer in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism means to chant daimoku based on a pledge or vow. At its very core, this vow is to attain kosen-rufu..." (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 250).

The fulfillment of our prayers always depends on the strength of our determination, the condition of our lives. In the Daishonin's famous phrase "Faith alone is what really matters" (MW-1, 246), *faith* denotes the condition of our minds, lives and hearts. Do we have a strong determination or not? When we approach life from this Buddhist perspective, immense joy and appreciation cannot help welling up from the depths of our beings, even under the most difficult circumstances. ☸

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

What Is a World Citizen?



This is the 9th installment in a series of discussions on youth among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division chiefs Hidenobu Kimura (young men's chief) and Kazue Igeta (young women's chief), representing the members of the high school division. In this installment, SGI English interpreter Yumiko Tomioka joins the discussion.

Ikeda: Let's continue our discussion. Today's topic is what it means to be a world citizen, right?

Kimura: Yes. We've invited Ms. Yumiko Tomioka, an official SGI English interpreter, to join us.

Tomioka: I'm glad to be here. I was once a member of the high school division myself.

Ikeda: Welcome, Ms. Tomioka. Let me start by asking

what everyone thinks a world citizen is.

Igeta: I asked some high school division members about this, and by far the most common reply was a person fluent in a foreign language. Other answers included a person who can easily make friends with people from other countries, a person who doesn't assume that the values of his or her own nation apply everywhere else in the world, and someone who can adopt a global perspective, looking beyond the boundaries of their ethnicity.

Kimura: Some students also identified a person as international if the work he or she does is directly linked to other nations, or if they are confident, self-assertive and can view things fairly and objectively.

Ikeda: Those are excellent responses, indeed. I agree with all of them. But I'd like to add that all those working for kosen-rufu,

people like your parents, are also truly world citizens. They are praying earnestly for the happiness of all humanity and selflessly working for the sake of others.

In spite of their busy day-to-day schedules, they are studying Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, a great universal philosophy. Even if they never leave their countries, such people are respected around the globe. Such a way of life is an inspiration to people everywhere. The international praise and recognition bestowed on the SGI demonstrate my point.

Kimura: The many awards and honorary degrees you have received are certainly proof of that, aren't they?

Ikeda: I accept those awards and honors as a representative of your mothers and fathers. When I receive such awards, it is just as if they were being conferred on them. In effect, people all around the world are applauding their efforts and achievements.

Tomioka: I have traveled to many countries, and I'm always astonished at the high expectations people have for the SGI. In 1996, I went to India as a member of an SGI youth delegation. When we visited the president of the West Bengal Federation of the U.N. Association, one of the officials said, out of the blue: "I always read SGI President Ikeda's annual peace proposals regarding the United Nations with great interest. Why don't we discuss them today?" He asked us to tell him more about President Ikeda's philosophy. I was surprised at this because it was not part of the agenda.

Igeta: I think people who feel a sense of responsibility toward the world's future can understand those who are earnestly taking action based on the same concern.

Ikeda: Your parents and seniors in the SGI never sought fame or honors, nor did they

seek ease or comfort. They simply remained true to the principles they believed in, devoting their energy to working for the happiness of themselves and others. This is the most noble life a person can live. The foremost requirement to be a true world citizen is outstanding character.

Kimura: People deficient in such human qualities, even if they are proficient in a foreign language, can never hope to win respect or admiration, no matter where they go in the world. People are more likely to dismiss such people.

Ikeda: Of course language ability is important, but remember language is only a means not an ends. What matters is the use you put this ability to.

I have heard the opinion many times that Japanese people lack altruism. This must change. Not only will other nations not

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trust us, but we will isolate ourselves from others and become spiritually impoverished.

To work for the welfare of people and society is the most basic path of humanism. Yet this is something that today's Japanese educational system fails to teach. Your fathers and mothers in the SGI, however, are doing just that. They are truly noble.

Igeta: So, essentially, to become a world citizen, you must develop your character and humanity.

Ikeda: When I visited the United Kingdom, someone made the offhand remark, "When a bomb drops the British rush to the scene to see if anyone is hurt, but the Japanese run away from the scene." Another person commented, "The Japanese believe everything they hear, but people from other countries think seeing is believing."

Many Japanese people seem to lack independence and a solid sense of self. They accept things at face value without thinking for themselves or acting on their convictions. They appear to be more worried about how they will look, what others will think and how it will affect their standing.

Tomioka: A diplomat who was posted in Japan once said to me that he really disliked the way Japanese people changed their attitude toward him when they learned of his position. Apparently on weekends he would dress casually, go fishing or eat out at small local restaurants with the desire to get to know the Japanese. Of course, he never mentioned to anyone he met on these excursions that he was a diplomat.

One day at a restaurant, he had a long, interesting talk with a fellow diner. After the meal, the Japanese man insisted on exchanging business cards. Reluctantly the diplomat agreed. When the Japanese man saw that he was a high-ranking diplomat, he began apologizing so vehemently that it seemed he might drop to the floor and begin to grovel right there. The diplomat was both surprised and saddened to discover how far Japanese education still has to go.

Kimura: That's a telling story.

Ikeda: It is time that Japan become a country of more broad-minded, open people.

There is a famous story about Chiune Sugihara (1900-86), who helped Jewish refugees escape the Holocaust during World War II. In 1940 when the Nazis were proceeding with the extermination of European Jews, Sugihara was acting consul at the Japanese consulate in Lithuania. A wave of Jewish refugees from Poland, where Jews were being massacred, came to Sugihara to apply for transit visas to pass through Japan to a third country.

Sugihara asked the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs three times to give him the green light to issue the visas, but each time the ministry refused. He was deeply troubled, but finally came to a decision: "I couldn't abandon those who have come to me for help. If I did, I would be turning my back on God."¹ So he ignored the ministry's orders and issued the visas, saving nearly 6,000 lives.

After the war, Sugihara was forced to resign from the ministry for disobeying orders. In 1991, the ministry posthumously restored his good name.

His wife, Sachiko, said: "The lives of all people are precious, irrespective of race. My husband believed it was not right for a human being to refuse to help those in need, especially when in a position to do something.... Today Japan is wealthy and at peace. But I hope people will not grow complacent and forget to think about the rest of the world. If young people only think of their own enjoyment, Japan is bound to go downhill."²

Igeta: That is so true. Why is it that so many Japanese refuse to open their hearts and minds to the world around them?

Kimura: I think problems within the Japanese educational system have a lot to do with it. Also, since the Meiji Restoration [1868], the Japanese have had a very warped, unbalanced view of the rest of the world, having suffered from an inferiority complex toward Westerners while feeling superior to other Asians and Africans. As a result, we have failed to interact with the people of other nations as equals.

Ikeda: There are many different viewpoints on this subject. Without going into detail, I will share something that the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy said: "The religion of those who do not recognize religion is to follow everything the powerful majority does. Simply put, it is the religion of submission to

those currently in power."³ By religion, I believe Tolstoy means philosophy in the broadest sense.

Kimura: Sugihara refused to obey those in authority in Japan because he felt that by failing to help those who came to him, he would be betraying his faith and most cherished beliefs.

Igeta: He had the courage to act in accord with his conscience, with what he believed was right, no matter how severely he was pressured. That kind of courage comes from deep conviction, from the philosophy or religious beliefs one holds dear.

Ikeda: The term *philosophy* might seem difficult, but what we're really talking about is an intrinsic belief that cannot be compromised.

My mentor, Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, had a well-known definition of the word:

Philosophy isn't something complicated and hard to understand, like Descartes or Kant. Some may say they don't know anything about philosophy because they didn't go to university, but to philosophize is simply to think.

One of the most basic examples of philosophy can be found in the travel diary of Mito Mitsukuni [a feudal-period lord who traveled throughout Japan in disguise, righting wrongs and defending the helpless]. During his travels, he once asked an old peasant woman for some water and then sat down on a bale of rice. The woman, not recognizing who he was, flew into a rage, saying that he was sitting on a bale of rice that was to go to Lord Mito. Abashed, Lord Mito bowed his head and apologized.

It was an ironic situation, of course, but for the old peasant woman, proudly offering this rice she had carefully harvested to the lord of her domain was her philosophy.

Philosophy comes down to standing up for the principles you believe in, no matter what.

Though thrown into prison by the military authorities, Mr. Toda refused to compromise his beliefs, holding fast to his commitment to peace. The same is true of the founding Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. Today their life-and-death struggles have earned them respect worldwide. Neither of them ever left Japan, but

more than 90 years ago Mr. Makiguchi declared himself a world citizen. And in the 1950s, Mr. Toda, focusing on the future of Asia and the entire world, spoke of humanity as a "global family."

The bottom line is that it makes no difference what a person's nationality is. The true world citizen can share, as a fellow human being, the sufferings and sadness as well as the happiness and joy of others. This person can unite with others to promote common human interests.

Igeta: I feel like I'm getting a clearer picture of what it means to be a world citizen. Before I shared the shallow interpretation of many people in Japan — that being a world citizen means being fluent in a foreign language, outgoing, fashionable and sophisticated.

Kimura: When you think about it, there's not much value in knowing a foreign language if one only uses it to hurt people.

Ikeda: Keeping one's word is an important responsibility of a world citizen. Japanese politicians have a reputation for making promises when they visit other countries, then forgetting them as soon as they step back on Japanese soil. That's certainly no way to earn others' trust.

Kimura: I'm sure that the absolute trust and friendship that people outside Japan feel toward you, President Ikeda, is because you have always kept the promises you have made.

Ikeda: Friendship is the key. I have found that people in other countries treasure friendship much more deeply than most Japanese are aware. It is a core part of their lives. To never betray one's friendship, to nurture and develop strong, amicable ties — these are the qualities required of a world citizen.

Perhaps there are some among you thinking, "I hate studying foreign languages" or "What's being a world citizen got to do with me?" But the fact is, like it or not, in the coming century when you take your place in society the world is going to become even more integrated.

When I met Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, he shared the following observation by Poland's president: A single country today can't even produce a box of matches by itself. The match stick comes from one nation, the sulfur from another,

the box from another and the glue from yet another. Many, many countries must cooperate to produce even a single box of matches.

The globalization of goods and production is taking place incredibly swiftly, as is the globalization of information, especially with the growth of the Internet. For these reasons, the globalization of heart-to-heart, grass-roots exchange is absolutely critical in guiding these rapid changes in the direction of peace. That is why the SGI is working to promote peace, culture and education around the world.

Kimura: I think it's precisely because such efforts are needed that the SGI is praised across the globe. The way in which many Japanese, on the other hand, unjustly criticize our movement — without even trying to understand it — is evidence of just how far behind Japan is in the process of internationalization.

Ikeda: This is where the importance of language ability comes in. Proficiency in a foreign language is necessary so that all of you, who embrace a global philosophy, can play an active role on the international stage.

I have visited more than 50 nations and made friends in all of them. If you were to ask me what I regret the most, I would probably have to say not being able to converse with the leading figures of those various countries in their languages. In fact, when I was a young man I realized the importance of gaining proficiency in a foreign language and made an effort to study English. But being wartime, English was the language of the "enemy." We weren't allowed to speak it in Japan.

After the war, I was still suffering from tuberculosis. I started working for Mr. Toda, whose business was failing. In those days, I never seemed to have enough to eat. In fact, I was so thin that my ribs were sticking out and I often coughed up blood. Even so, I poured all my energy into working for Mr. Toda, taking only a little time to sleep.

Under such circumstances, it was impossible for me to go to university. So Mr. Toda decided to teach me. And for 10 years, every morning, he instructed me in a variety of subjects. He had an excellent grasp of the basics of many areas of learning, including mathematics. Genius

DIALOGUE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

though he was, he was not very strong in English. When he was a young man in the early part of this century, it was not a required subject.

I hired a private instructor, but all he was interested in was money and wasn't a good teacher. In the end, I was so busy with other duties that I finally had to content myself with using interpreters.

All of you, on the other hand, are fortunate to be in an environment that allows you, if you wish, to study foreign languages to your heart's content. It's all up to you.

Tomioka: I am often invited to speak at junior high and high school meetings. When I ask, "Who likes English?" only a few students raise their hands. But when I ask, "Who doesn't like English?" almost the entire room replies, "Me!"

Ikeda: You graduated from Soka University and also studied at the University of Arizona, didn't you?

Tomioka: Yes, that's right.

Ikeda: Could you please share with us a few of your "secrets" for learning English?

Tomioka: Certainly. But as an interpreter, I'm still in training. I have a lot more to learn.

Ikeda: How did you come to like English?

Tomioka: Actually, it was through music. I used to listen to Beatles albums over and over and to FEN (Far East Network) radio broadcasts in English —

though I could hardly understand a word of either!

After a while, I began to notice that the pronunciation on records and the radio was different from what I was learning in school. I also used to sing along with my records, following the lyrics in the liner notes.

I read my school textbooks over and over, too, until I memorized them. Reading aloud is very useful, I think. We also had weekly vocabulary tests in school, which helped me build my vocabulary. It's a gradual, accumulative process. Keeping at it is important.

After going to university, I used to listen to the brief news broadcasts on FEN and use them as dictation exercises. A friend whom I respected told me that I shouldn't give up trying to understand a broadcast until I had listened to it at least 100 times.

I also watched a lot of movies in English. I used to go to the first showing and sit through a film as many as three times. By the third time, I generally had the feeling that I understood most of the dialogue without the subtitles. It's a lot easier now that there are VCRs and videotapes.

Igeta: Even so, English is a foreign language, so we don't use it every day. Is there some trick to mastering it?

Tomioka: I think the secret is to study intensively for a certain period. You have to keep trying, keep working at it, until it suddenly clicks. Learning a language is not a passive activity. Casual efforts will get you nowhere.

You can find a book you are already familiar with in your

language, like *The Little Prince* or a well-known fairy tale, and read it in the foreign language you're studying. Videos are good learning material, too — anything that you're interested in and care about is a good starting point.

Igeta: How much time do you recommend should be set aside for such concentrated study?

Tomioka: It's different from person to person, but I can say that there will definitely be a point when you unexpectedly make a breakthrough. You have to keep up with your intensive efforts patiently until that moment. It happens much the same way a baby starts forming words all of a sudden, after months of only making sounds.

There are all sorts of textbooks and learning materials, but it is important not to skip from one to another. Follow through with one until you've really mastered it.

Kimura: I have heard that completely memorizing a junior high-level language textbook can really help discouraged high school students who feel they just can't keep up with the rest of the class.

Ikeda: You mustn't let your aversion to a subject get the better of you. No special talent is needed to learn a language. You're all fluent in your native language, aren't you? You have to decide, first, that you can do it. And then just challenge yourself, one step at a time.

Kimura: More and more students are thinking they have a better chance to learn a foreign

language if they go overseas and as a result enter a study abroad program. I have also been asked by a lot by students recently if it's a good idea to study overseas while still in high school.

Ikeda: Living in another country can be meaningful — it can widen your horizons. I don't by any means oppose studying abroad. But it's all too easy to be swept away by your environment if you don't have a clearly defined purpose and objective you wish to achieve.

If you are going to a school or university overseas just because everyone else is, you probably won't stick to your studies and won't gain anything to make you outstanding in your field in the future. You should always give the matter of studying abroad careful thought. There is no need to rush going abroad either. There is plenty of time to do so later if you wish.

Kimura: Many people complain that the English taught in Japanese schools today is useless.

Tomioka: I thought that before I went abroad. But I later found that I was seriously mistaken. Unless you've got the basics under your belt, including grammar, you won't learn any foreign language properly when you go abroad. Of course study in a foreign country will help you gain proficiency in everyday conversation. But without a strong foundation, it's difficult to progress beyond that level. And if conversational ability in a foreign language is all you're aiming for, you can easily accomplish that without leaving your home country.

Igeta: What should we do about our friends who, in spite of everything we have said today, insist that foreign language is the one subject they just can't learn to like?

Ikeda: That's a tough question. We can't expect people who don't speak our language to understand us through some kind of telepathy. They won't. One has to say what one wants to clearly and correctly to get one's point across.

But for those who really dislike learning languages, there are other ways of communicating with people around the world. Music and other forms of art are nonverbal forms of communication. So are sports. Mathematics is a universal language. You can master some art or science and gain respect for achievement in that field. The important thing is to acquire some skill, some means to enable you to hold your own on the world stage.

My dream is for all of you to be active and successful in every corner of the globe. But everything has a proper order. A novel must be read page by page or you won't understand the story. In the same way, this is the time in your lives for building a solid foundation. I hope all of you can open your minds and challenge yourselves to develop ability in a foreign language. ❖

1. Sachiko Sugihara, *Rokusen-nin no Inochi no Biza* (Visas That Saved 6,000 Lives) (Tokyo: Asahi Sonorama, 1990), p. 204.
2. "Sunday Interview," Dec. 15, 1991, *Seikyo Shimbun*.
3. Translated from Japanese: *Torusutoi Zenshu* (Complete Works of Tolstoy), trans. Toru Nakamura (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1974), vol. 15, pp. 135-36.

GLOSSARY

Buddha: One who perceives the true nature of all life and leads others to attain the same enlightenment. The Buddha nature is inherent in all beings and is characterized by the qualities of wisdom, courage, compassion, spiritual strength, hope and unshakable happiness.

daimoku: Literally, "title." Refers to the invocation, or chanting, of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Gohonzon: The embodiment of the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and the life of Nichiren Daishonin in the form of a mandala. *Honzon* means "object of fundamental respect"; *go* means "worthy of honor." The *Gohonzon* takes the form of a paper scroll inscribed with Chinese and two Sanskrit characters. Together, these characters represent life in its highest condition: Buddhahood. "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nichiren" is written

down the center of the Gohonzon.

gongyo: Literally, "assiduous practice." In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, gongyo means to recite the "Expedient Means" (2nd) chapter and the "Life Span of the Tathagata" (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in front of the Gohonzon.

Gosho: Literally, "writing worthy of great respect": the writings of Nichiren Daishonin.

ichinen: Literally, "one mind." The life-moment, or ultimate reality, that is manifested at each moment in common mortals.

karma: Sanskrit word meaning "action." The life tendency or destiny that each individual creates through thoughts, words and deeds. One's actions in the

past have shaped one's reality at present, and actions in the present

determine in turn one's future. This is the law of cause and effect at work.

kosen-rufu: Literally, to "widely declare and spread (Buddhism)." To secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind through the propagation of true Buddhism.

Latter Day of the Law: The period beginning 2,000 years after Shakyamuni's death, when his teachings lose their power and the true Buddha appears to lead all people to enlightenment.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo: The fundamental component of Buddhist practice, which expresses the ultimate truth of life and allows each individual to tap his or her innate enlightened nature directly. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is revealed only

through the practice of chanting it, there is a literal definition for each of the component words: *nam* (devotion) means to fuse one's life with the universal law; *myoho* (Mystic Law) is the fundamental principle of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; *renge* (lotus flower) refers to the lotus, which blooms and seeds at the same time, symbolizing the simultaneity of cause and effect; and *kyo* (sutra, or teaching of a Buddha) broadly indicates all phenomena or the activities of all living beings.

Nichiren Daishonin (1222-82): The true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. *Daishonin* literally means "great sage" and is used as an honorific title for Nichiren. He inscribed the Gohonzon and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the universal practice to attain Buddhahood.

It Isn't Easy...

Overcoming prejudice is hard work, but it's worth doing — and Buddhist practice helps all parties win.

By MICHAEL LISAGOR
VIENNA, VA.

This article was inspired by a letter in the World Tribune from Robin Azi of Richmond, Calif. ("Mailbox," March 7). She questioned the absence of published experiences by Caucasian and Japanese members about overcoming their biases against people with other ethnic backgrounds. I appreciate and respect her sincere expression of concern and offer this experience in response.

Speaking publicly about bigotry can be very difficult for Caucasians. We experience guilt about the past treatment of minorities in this country. It's hard not to feel that most minorities are viewing us with a certain amount of anger and suspicion.

Who are we to speak about such a subject? What do we know about being persecuted? About being followed around in a store because of our skin color?

We're also afraid of being misunderstood or accidentally saying something wrong. For instance, we're not sure if we should say "African-American" or "Black," "Chinese American" or "Chinese." Or even what we should call ourselves!

Hopefully, all of us can use our Buddhist organization as a place to explore and then overcome these fears. A place where we can discuss our differences, appreciate our similarities and learn how to encourage — as opposed to discourage — each other. It's hard work.

But we'll never create a peaceful world or even achieve our individual happiness if we avoid communicating with people from different backgrounds. That's really avoiding our human revolution.

I've thought a lot over the years about ethnic and racial prejudice. My Jewish parents, to my sorrow, sometimes behaved in a racist manner. This is ironic considering that the Jewish people have suffered much persecution themselves.

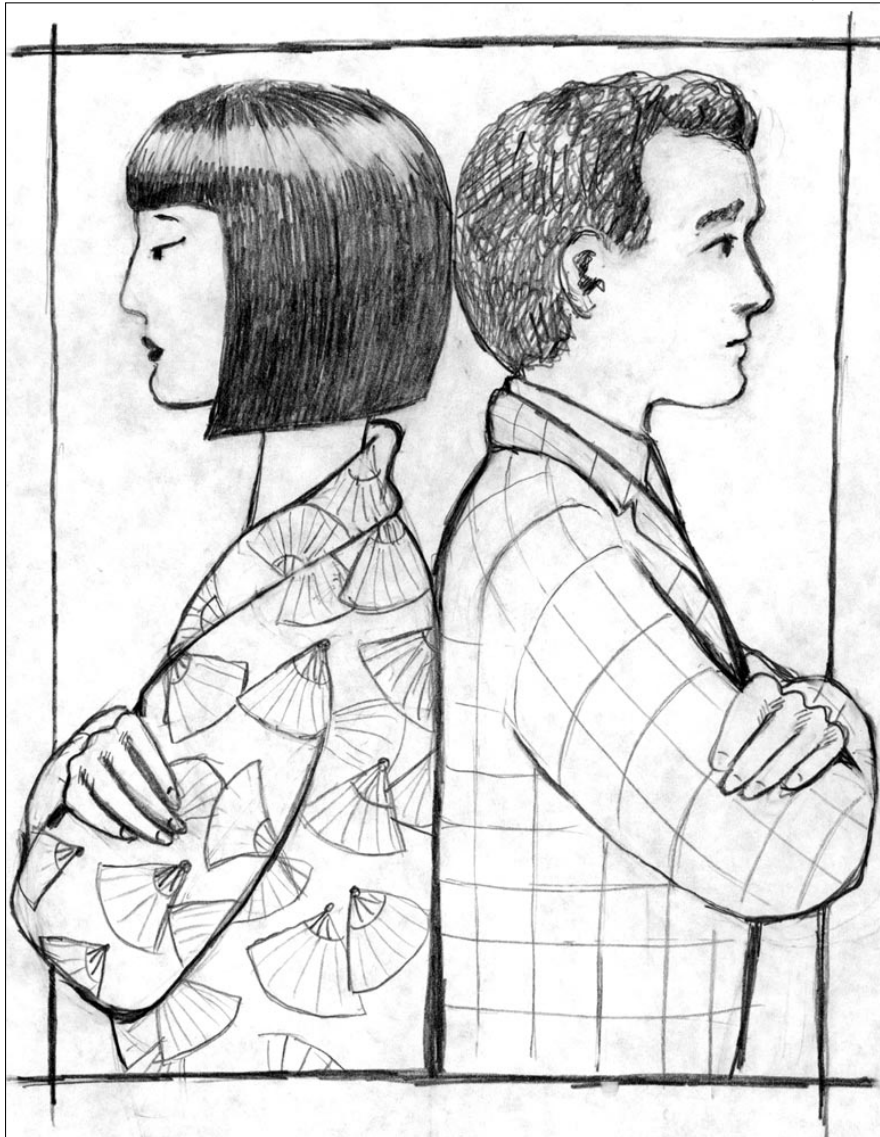


Illustration by MARION DIES

'My co-district leader, Michiko, and I have made significant progress in developing a deep respect for each other. This was only accomplished through painful dialogue and abundant chanting. I really had to want to change for this to happen. I had always felt that Japanese-born women's division members believed Americans to have weak faith, that our suffering and dedication for world peace were somehow less severe or sincere than theirs.'

My parents never admitted they were prejudiced. I specifically recall confronting them in the late '60s about the way they viewed people of other ethnic backgrounds. They took exception to my accusations, insisting that they treated all people with respect. And, intellectually, I'm

sure they believed this to be true. But their actions betrayed them.

In 1966, I had a crush on a girl named Teresa. We were in the 10th grade. She was a statuesque black girl with big, beautiful eyes. We flirted for a few months until I got up the courage to ask her out.

I decided it would be a great idea for Teresa to meet my mother.

My mother was so excited that I finally had a girlfriend and that I wanted them to meet. So in we walked. I called out to my mother, "Mom." She came into the living room, took one look at Teresa's color and ran into her

bedroom crying hysterically. Terry was, justifiably so, extremely upset and had me take her home.

Both my parents have died, so I can't ask them why they thought the way they did. My mother grew up in New York and was one of the Radio City Hall Rockette dancers. The daughter of an immigrant carpenter, she had this obsessive vision of me, her youngest son, growing up to be a successful eye doctor with a Caucasian-Jewish wife. So I guess the thought of me with someone from a different background was more than she could handle.

My father grew up in the South and, like his father, held a very narrow view of the world. He didn't trust people who were different. And he disguised his fear with thinly veiled humor. Of course, ethnic jokes have been around since before I was born. But I've come to realize that this insidious humor can subconsciously contribute to impressionable children growing into prejudiced adults.

When my mom died in the mid-'80s, my father moved from Los Angeles to Richmond, Va. I can vividly remember taking him to see a movie a few years ago. He made a derogatory remark as we passed a mixed-race couple. And my daughters were incredulous. But he couldn't understand their discomfort. While I respected him as a human being and my father, his attitude towards minorities left a lot to be desired and little to emulate.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is based on the premise that all human beings are essentially equal and deserving of the utmost respect. I firmly believe this to be true. One of Shakyamuni Buddha's most impressive disciples was Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. He spent almost his entire life greeting every person he encountered with complete respect, regardless of their condition or how they might have treated him. In my ideal world, we would all be race- and

My Recollections



Chang Shuhong, Custodian of the Treasures of Dunhuang

By SGI President Ikeda

Chang Shuhong (1904–94) said the heavenly maidens spoke to him in a dream. Flying down from the wall paintings of the Dunhuang Caves, these celestial beauties, or *apsaras*, glowing forms with fluttering robes, beseeched him: “Your wife has

there. They all said: ‘What are you going to do there? You’ll die!’ Some compared it to serving a life sentence.

“But I wasn’t going for my own sake. I was doing it for my country, for the cultural heritage of all humanity. I wanted to do whatever possible to protect the magnificent art of Dunhuang.”

Chang had studied Western painting in Paris. The many

duty to protect these treasures of my homeland.” He returned to China, but it was only after seven years of bitter struggle that he at last opened the road to Dunhuang.

He turned his back on fame and honor as an artist. And finally, after an arduous month-long journey, he and a small group of comrades arrived at the great art museum in the desert, their destination.

But everywhere they looked, they encountered destruction and desolation: Walls had crumbled and fallen, pagodas stood roofless, caves had been plundered and were buried in sand and rubble. Where would they begin?

Dunhuang is 1,200 miles from Beijing. It is a lonely island in a sea of desert where the highest temperature on record is 111 and the lowest, -72. It is regularly battered by the desert storms called black winds.

Chang’s wife at first refused to go with him, but he finally managed to persuade her. Some time later, she joined him at Dunhuang with their two children. But one day not long after her arrival, Chang returned home from work to find that she had gone, leaving behind their 13-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son.

On top of that, the Kuomintang government had just declared that the newly established Dunhuang Relics Research Institute was to be shut down. Even before this announcement, it had sent no funding and effectively had left Chang and his comrades to fend for themselves in the harsh desert environment.

All these worries kept Chang awake at night. Then one day when he returned from work, his children were missing. He rushed about to find them. The long shadow of the emaciated Chang stretched across the desert sand.

At last he found them. His daughter threw her arms around him. “Where is Mother?” she asked. The children had left home in search of her. His daughter carried a cloth sack containing four corn dumplings and some pieces of sugar candy. His son also entreated him:

“Where’s Mama? I want my Mama!” Chang embraced both children and wept.

He endured many hardships.

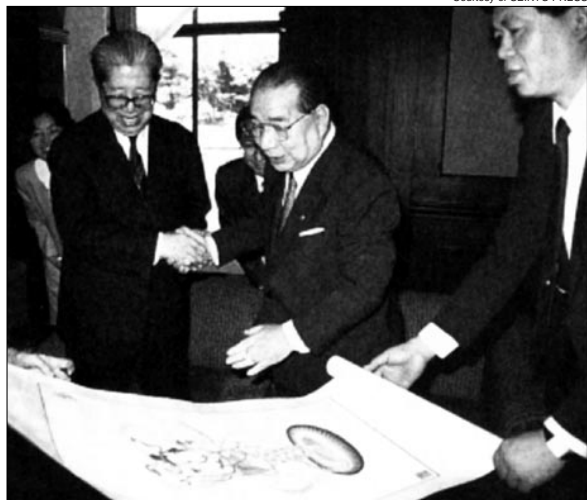
There is a famous painting from the Northern Wei Dynasty (founded around 386 A.C.E.) in the Mogao Caves that depicts Shakyamuni Buddha, as a bodhisattva in a previous existence, offering his life to save a starving mother tiger and her cubs. “The bodhisattva gave his life to help the tigress,” Chang thought. “Why don’t I give my life to save this great treasure trove of art? In these days of strife and warfare, it is crucial that someone do this!”

Chang roused himself with these thoughts: “Shuhong, why is it that you came back to China? Why did you come to this isolated desert post? Be strong! If you and your wife do not have the same goals, then perhaps you should not be husband and wife. Life is a continual struggle. Though you may have fallen now, just rise up again and keep advancing as

Behind every brilliant achievement, there are always dedicated individuals. Dunhuang, one of the miracles of human civilization, was created by nameless artists who worked in that harsh environment with no thought of fame or applause.

Today once more Dunhuang lives up to its name, which means “to shine far and wide.” It has been designated by UNESCO as a world heritage site. It has also become a tourist destination, with people from all parts of the globe lining up to view exhibitions of its art. Behind this recognition that Dunhuang enjoys today lie the indescribable efforts of Chang, his family and others who have worked hard to preserve this precious treasure of humankind.

Some time after his wife left him, Chang married Li Chengxian, who came to Dunhuang as a fellow researcher. She was the daughter of a revolutionary, one of the leaders of the alliance established by Sun Yat-sen, the father of modern China.



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

President Ikeda expresses his appreciation to Chang Shuhong (l).

left you and gone. But you must not leave us.”

It was the middle of the night. Frozen stars twinkled like mother-of-pearl in the deep blue-black sky. The Cave of the Thousand Buddhas was asleep. The only sound was the ringing of the wind bells from the eaves of the nine-story pagoda.

Chang heard this somber clamor day and night. It was a monotonous, unvaried sound, like that of a camel’s bells. Now, like weeping, like pleading, it struck deep in his heart.

The year was 1945. The war between China and Japan was still in progress. Chang Shuhong had just passed age 40. It was two years since he had arrived in Dunhuang, an isolated, uninhabited desert spot far from the hearth fires of human dwellings.

“They were very hard times,” Chang remembered. “In the beginning, we didn’t have any water. We didn’t have any food. Everyone was against us going

prizes and accolades bestowed on him assured a promising future as an artist. But his life was changed forever by a chance encounter with a book at a used-book stall on the banks of the Seine. It was a collection of illustrative plates by Paul Pelliot titled *Les Grottos de Touen-houang* (The Grottos of Dunhuang). Suddenly, 10 centuries of glorious Chinese art from the 4th century onward danced before his excited gaze.

“These are incredible!” thought the young Chang. “Miraculous! They far surpass the paintings of the Renaissance that I have been so enraptured with!” At the same time, he was angered and distressed to realize that his country’s greatest treasures had been plundered by Pelliot and other Westerners who had ventured to Dunhuang.

“I will go home to China,” Chang decided. “I will protect these treasures with my own hands. I am Chinese and have a



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

‘Apsaras,’ or celestial beauties, depicted on Dunhuang’s frescoes.

long as you live. You must not retreat. You cannot.”

The moonlight streamed in through his window. In the sound sleep that followed his decision, hundreds of *apsaras*, the heavenly beauties adorning Dunhuang’s frescoes, seemed to fly out from the caves and fill the night sky.

When Chang first interviewed Li for the position of a researcher at Dunhuang, he said: “Dunhuang is a very isolated place. In ancient times, the only people who lived there were soldiers or exiles. Life there is very hard. Do you think you can stand it?”

PLEASE SEE CHANG, NEXT PAGE

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

CHANG, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

She replied: "I am prepared to give my life for art. I would never refuse to go simply because it's too hard."

And go to Dunhuang she did. They later married and spent close to a half-century together.

I met Chang and his wife again at the State Guesthouse in Beijing in June 1990. That was 10 years after our first meeting. They were accompanied by their son, Chang Jiahuang, a renowned artist. In those 10 years, Chang and I had forged a deep friendship, working together on an exhibition called "Dunhuang" at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum in 1985 and a dialogue, *Tonko no Kosai* (The Brilliance of Dunhuang), published by Tokuma Publishing Company.

"My artist's name," confided Chang, "is Damo Chiren (Desert Freak) — in other words, Crazy for Dunhuang. Life in Dunhuang was very hard. We had to battle our way through many painful struggles. And my wife was at my side the whole time."

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), the Dunhuang Relics Research Institute was denounced for "spreading poison" among the people, with Chang condemned as the chief perpetrator of the evil. His persecutors drew a big black X through a certificate of commendation he received from the government — a precious award that Chinese premier Zhou Enlai, who always encouraged and supported him in his endeavors, had personally bestowed on him and suggested the text for. Chang's family was driven from their home and forced to live in a pigsty. Such is the madness of power run amok.

Mr. Chang's words moved me deeply. "Whenever I meet you, President Ikeda, I am swept by a powerful emotion that touches the very depths of my soul," he said. "I see in you, a person who has fought against all obstacles and withstood every attack for the sake of world peace, culture, art and friendly Chinese-Japanese relations, a mirror image of my life. "When people strive to real-

ize an ideal, they encounter difficulties others do not see. They suffer again and again, though others are not aware of it. When I see what you have accomplished, I know, from my experience, what it has cost you. And when I think of that, I am overcome with emotion."

Then I responded: "I am deeply moved by your generous words. I feel I have been embraced by your towering spirit. I will never forget, as long as I live, the vibrant sincerity of your life, far surpassing words." True friendship is rare indeed.

I humbly set down these words for posterity and as a memento of my friendship with the late Chang Shuhong.

Chang once said that the last half-century had passed all too quickly. He still had far to go to realize his dreams. Much remained to be accomplished. I asked him what profession he would like to devote himself to if he were born again. His response was symbolic of the victorious life he had led. "If I re-



The nine-story pagoda at Dunhuang.

ally could be reborn as a human being," he replied, "I would once more choose to be Chang Shuhong and finish the work that I have started."

Fifty years of devotion —

18,000 days and nights. I feel I can hear the sound of the wind bells that filled his life, ringing across the distance from Dunhuang. ❧

ESSAY, FROM PAGE 13

color-blind. Yet, in my real world, I have had to confront and overcome many of my own stereotypes of people of other races.

About two years ago, I finally determined to stop disparaging Japanese members. That wasn't easy. Members who joined the SGI in Japan seemed to have a different perspective on the practice than I did. Their approach to dealing with issues was more indirect than mine.

And I viewed their tendency toward formality and rigid interpretation of certain aspects of the practice as incompatible with my more laissez-faire approach. Eventually, I came to realize that my concept of lais-

sez-faire too often meant lazy-fair and that the reason I was practicing with them was because there was much for us to learn from one another.

My co-district leader, Michiko, and I have made significant progress in developing a deep respect for each other. This was only accomplished through painful dialogue and abundant chanting. I really had to want to change for this to happen. I had always felt that Japanese-born women's division members believed Americans to have weak faith, that our suffering and dedication for world peace were somehow less severe or sincere than theirs.

They also seemed unable to be flexible in different situations, giving strict guidance at

every occasion. On the other hand, their dedication to helping every member, even ones who didn't want to be helped, was inspiring. My lack of consistency in helping others caused me to be uncomfortable with this...to feel pressured.

From the beginning of my practice, I have sensed an invisible wall between the Japanese and American-born members. And though the wall has become thinner over the years, I was still afraid to discuss these issues. It was much easier to believe it was her fault, that I was too busy or that she would be angry with me if I told her how I really felt.

It was only after we spent many hours together appreciating each other's struggles and sincerity that we tran-

scended our differences and misunderstandings and developed strong unity. I discovered, to my surprise, that she was just as frustrated as I was. And, that like me, she really wanted to change. Once we deeply realized that we both had faced difficulties in our lives, that both of us had sincere intentions, we could begin to concentrate on our common goals and dreams and less on our differences.

Our closeness has resulted in measurable growth in our district. My faith is much stronger because of her. Now I can truly say she is a friend for life. A few years ago I would have declared this impossible.

I think perhaps the only way to

really overcome our fear of others is to get to know one another as individuals...to understand our differences and similarities, our sufferings and dreams, and, yes, even our weaknesses. This takes real effort. But most meaningful things do.

SGI President Ikeda has pointed out that while destruction can take place in only a moment, construction requires a tremendous struggle. The same can be said for overcoming prejudice. Taking the time to communicate honestly with the people around us is essential to our human development. So is working on becoming more like Bodhisattva Never Disparaging — it isn't easy, but it's definitely worth doing. ❧

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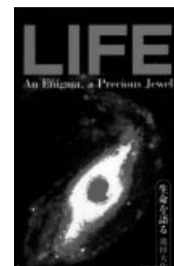
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The Silent Community

Photo by VICTOR GOLDEN



Susan Reyna in her office at Organized Migrants in Community Action, a grassroots agency founded by farm workers to give voice to this silent community. She has created the group Women United in Justice, Education and Reform, which works to empower women through domestic violence intervention and other education programs. Above: Susan (l) as a child. Children of migrant farm workers begin picking crops at 5 or 6.

By AILEEN SMEDY

TAMPA, FLA., CORRESPONDENT

The invisible people, the people with no voice. That's what migrant workers, the harvesters of our nation's food, are called as they travel through Texas, California and Florida following the crops.

Susan Reyna of Homestead, Fla., knows that way of life well. Born in Texas, she was raised as a third-generation Mexican-American migrant farm worker, seeing the country from the back of a pickup truck. She appreciated the small things that came her way. She remembers stopping on the side of the road, eating baloney sandwiches and drinking sodas, as a real treat.

Life as a kid was kind of fun, she says, with a large extended family and a sense of community. But that life also had a down side. Ms. Reyna and others like her began working at the age of 5 or 6, picking crops alongside their parents, cooking for their families and taking care of siblings. The domestic violence she witnessed toward her mother, sisters and herself was not to be discussed.

At 19, Ms. Reyna felt her life was over. Married and divorced with two small children, a ninth-grade education, no marketable skills and low self-esteem, she felt hopeless that she could make a life for herself. That's when she encountered Organized Migrants in Community Action, a grassroots agency founded by farm workers to give a voice to this silent community.

"They saw a spark in me, they gave me an opportunity to learn and time to give back," she says. They taught her how to type and gave her a job. She went back to school, got her G.E.D. and went on to earn a college degree. Today, Ms. Reyna has in turn created the group *Mujeres Unidas en Justicia, Educacion y Reforma* (MUJER), or Women United in Justice, Education and Reform.

MUJER is comprised of 29 women representing 11 Hispanic *culturas*, or cultures. Most of these women, like Reyna, have come from the migrant farming community and have overcome adversities in life which made them strong and sensitive to the needs of others. Their work is aimed not only toward empowering women through domestic violence intervention but also toward promoting family through parenting, relationship and youth education programs. In the last two years, they have reached 700 people through public forums and thousands more who've contacted them individually.

At first, Ms. Reyna's attitude was that women had to stand up for themselves and tell their husbands they were not going to put up with the violence anymore. Now, after 20 years of advocacy work, she says: "You don't tell people what to do or what not to do. You show them different options and how they can take advantage of those options.... This is a way for women to be self-sufficient, so they can become change agents in their families and their communities."

Looking back at how far she has come, it seems Susan Reyna has done just that.

