

World Tribune

No. 3144

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

JUNE 20, 1997

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Opportunities Available for FNCC Retreats

Spaces generally open to all areas for any conference at Florida Center. Check with joint territory for information.

By DAVE McNEILL
MANAGING EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., June 12

"I am refreshed. I am clear now on several points that were foggy before. That clarity gives new meaning to how and why I practice."

"I really want to go back and study more and share what I learned with all the members."

"For the first time in my practice everything spoke directly to my life."

"This is better than the conferences I've attended for work."

"Thank you for a wonderful experience. I am refreshed and ready to continue."

"So much fun!"

These are just a few of the hundreds of comments from people who've attended the various conferences at the Florida Nature and Culture Center this year.

Each weekend promises camaraderie, relaxation and inspiration in faith that will last long after you get back home. Goshu lectures by national

PLEASE SEE FLORIDA, 4

By JIM CELER
CORRESPONDENT
Omaha, Neb.

Nebraskans have a reputation for being awkward and reserved in the company of strangers and very fond of formality in their relationships with others. But the SGI-USA's Nebraska Headquarters has found a way to change all this.

In 1990 SGI President Ikeda urged SGI-USA to become a model organization based on friendship and dialogue. Soon after that, Nebraska Headquarters began a series of District Leaders Forums. "The motivation was to see that everyone was free to express their ideas," Headquarters Chief Ralph Hicken said. "Also, when the temple issue started, we felt it important to see that everyone's



Photos by KIRK CONDYLES



The conferences at the Florida Nature and Culture Center offer time for contemplation and study as well as for heartfelt discussions and sharing of experiences. The remaining conferences of the year still have spaces available.

Open Dialogue Opens a Headquarters

Nebraska Headquarters' Members Forum Generates New Ideas and Deeper Trust

opinions were expressed, to use open dialogue to combat the negative effects of the temples' actions." In time these meetings were opened to group chiefs.

Last year the SGI president, talking further about building a model organization, used the analogy of buffalo and geese. "In a buffalo herd," he said, "all the individuals follow the lead buffalo.... In other words, they merely wait for the instructions of the leader." But in a flock of geese different individuals take

turns leading the formation. "It is a model in which everyone takes responsibility, everyone is equal and everyone unites solidly for a shared objective," he said. (SGI President Ikeda's Addresses In The United States, June/July 1996, pp. 111-112)

Pondering how to apply this guidance, Mr. Hicken concluded that the headquarters, which he considers a living entity, ought to create its own goals. "I refused to set them myself as headquarters chief," he said.

"All the members together could formulate goals."

In the summer of 1996, what were once District Leaders Forums became Members Forums, with the express purpose of determining where the organization should be going and finding ways for all levels of the organization to support the districts and members.

Bill and Nina Schweikart have been participating from the beginning. "The forums are really fun," Mrs. Schweikart said. "You feel like part of the organization, like you have a say in it. And if you feel you're part of it, it makes you more aware and involved so you get involved in everything else."

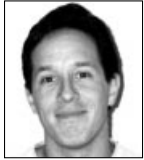
Mr. Schweikart likes the fo-

PLEASE SEE NEBRASKA, 4

VOICES

Independence Day is coming soon. What does freedom mean to you?

Members from Palm Beach (Fla.) Territory respond:



When I think of freedom, I think of choice. By using this practice you have the opportunity to choose how circumstances affect your life. For example, when President Toda was imprisoned, they didn't take away his freedom; they took away his liberty. These are two entirely different things. He didn't have the liberty to leave the prison, but he had the freedom to think and feel as he wished. I think this practice is so great because it gives people freedom to feel and be their true selves in any situation.

— DOMINIQUE FLORES, Boca Raton, Fla.



When I think of freedom, I think of responsibility. In this practice we chant to take responsibility for our lives. In this act we are liberating ourselves from restrictions. We gain the freedom to let go of anger and the barriers we've placed in our hearts that prevent us from being happy.

Yes, we have freedom of speech and for the most part freedom of action, but you cannot have true freedom without consideration of others. This includes taking responsibility for our environment.

— LINDA TEALLOW, West Palm Beach, Fla.



When I think of Independence Day I feel a tremendous debt of gratitude to those who gave their lives for freedom. Due to their courageous action, we can practice Buddhism freely in our country. The advantages of freedom may sometimes be loosely defined as the ability to do anything you want, when you want. I believe

with freedom comes the responsibility to create the most value one can, to cherish life, to blossom and manifest your highest life-condition. In short, freedom is the ability to evolve into a humane individual.

— MILES LAVENTHAL, Lantana, Fla.



To me freedom means removing suffering. With freedom comes responsibility because you cannot run from suffering if you want to change it into happiness. You must take responsibility for your life. Then you can learn how to be free and enjoy your life. From this practice, I've learned how to overcome my suffering

and be truly free. Freedom of speech and doing what you want is the surface. True freedom is having a free spirit and creating value.

— BOBBIE COURRIER, West Palm Beach, Fla.



It's hard to imagine not having freedom since I have never lived in a country that prohibits freedom. On another level, we can create our own prison within our minds. I believe it's my practice that gives me a deeper sense of freedom. Whatever situation you're in, whether or not you are

free is really based on your perception of reality. Our practice removes the barriers we have put on ourselves, and it provides us with the freedom to make choices. Freedom is the realization that we have unlimited potential.

— TOM TURBYNE, Boca Raton, Fla.

Expressions

Look! Up in the Sky!



Manhattan Skyline, Manhattan Bridge. Photo by Kirk Condyles.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: *'What has Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism taught you about independence?'*

Please be specific and limit your responses to 50 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**

Careful With Money

After 22 years of practice with the SGI organization, I am more impressed each day by the incredible benefits of this practice. I am especially grateful for the progress that the *World Tribune* has made in becoming a truly useful publication. The "Mailbox" is my favorite section because it keeps me in touch with other members. Not only do I occasionally recognize names, but I feel that this section keeps our finger on the pulse of the membership nationwide.

I want to thank the *World Tribune* for adding the "Sign Posts" column. What could be more inspiring in the middle of a hectic day than opening up the newspaper at a restaurant or in line at the ATM and reading the writings of Nichiren Daishonin! This is really getting to the core of practice — applying the Buddha's teachings to daily life, while we are living it.

I want to comment on the "Perspective" by Marion Wheeler in the May 23 issue. I can certainly relate to this article, having struggled with my own attitudes about money my whole life, culminating in a fulfilling career as a financial planner. First of all — great article! Secondly, I think we need to use caution when we tell people that making contributions has increased our financial fortune. It may be true, but it is important to fill in the missing details: for example, that making contributions has caused us to change something inside of ourselves, which has brought about a corresponding change in the environment (the principle of the oneness of self and environment). I think that this type of explanation is really doing *shakubuku*, and this is precisely one of the reasons we need to study Buddhism — so that we can explain it to others.

We need to be careful not to be manipulative when we encourage people to make contributions. It's fine to give experiences on how we feel about giving money to support our organization, but let's try to give in-depth explanations and let's be very open about what we are doing: for example, raising money to keep our community centers running, or whatever the case might be. Each person's circumstance is different; no one should compare themselves to anyone else. And if one wants financial stability, one has to use the very best common sense.

— NATHEN BANNE, San Francisco

30 Years of Music Corps

As a past Fife and Drum Corps member, I was encouraged to read Tony Gregg's article on the 30-year history of the newly renamed Music Corps (May 30 *World Tribune*).

My participation in the Fife and Drum Corps was from 1972-87, and it was such a golden memory to play for SGI President Ikeda, the members and the people on my flute, or piccolo or glock! I remember also what Robert Dixon describes so vividly: "To take a seemingly unattainable goal, in an unreasonable amount of time, and make it happen." The spirit of the Brass Band and Fife and Drum Corps — I'm so proud to have been part of that history!

It's been 10 years since I graduated from the Fife and Drum Corps, and with a name as broad as the SGI-USA Music Corps will the Fife and Drum Corps (previously Kotekitai) share that name? Is it up to local areas? Is the National Support Committee made up of both young men and young women? Here's to the next 30 years!

— CATHI KING, Hyattsville, Md.

Editor's Note: The Music Corps is the new name for the Brass Band. The Fife and Drum Corps remains a separate entity. In July, there will be special pages on the establishment of that group.

No Need for Revenge

PERSPECTIVE

By GAIL EDMONDS-BUNN
WATERVLIET, N.Y.

Dear Diary: It has been so long since I wrote to you. For some time now I have been trying to figure out what happens next. Where does my life go from here?

Last night I started thinking about all the people I hated and why. The list was long, and I began to realize since I was 18 I had lived my life trying to prove something to these people. They had all slighted me or abused me or made me feel I was worthless. Each time they did, I filed them away under the heading of "I'll show you one day." And there they sat and there I sat, trying desperately to prove them wrong.

For 29 years I ran — chasing fame, chasing stardom, chasing wealth — with the determination to prove them wrong. Never realizing these were not my dreams, not my goals, but my way of getting revenge.

I never quite succeeded in my goals. I was this far from being a star, and it drifted out of sight. Along the way, I had only my revenge. My life was dedicated to proving them wrong.

Through daimoku, I realized that all my personal power laid in the hands of people whom I remembered and hated, but who really didn't know or care if I was even alive.

I now realize power exists in the moment, this moment we are living right now. It is the most important moment of our lives. It is what we do with this moment that determines who we are, what we will be, and what

we want. Unless your past is a source of wisdom, it is not a source of benefit.

For the past seven years, I have been studying the Goshō "Letter to Misawa." My headquarters leader gave it to me the night my husband left me and explained that within this Goshō was the key to understanding obstacles, mission and why bad things happen to good people. One passage reads, "Although one studies Buddhism, it is difficult to practice it correctly because of the foolishness of his mind..." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 251).

For two years my sister De-lores was on my list of those I had to prove something to. In my eyes, she became this mean, evil person who looked down on me. Then, after my mother came to California and saw a production of my play, *An African American Tale*, and loved it, I decided I had accomplished something good enough to warrant passage back home.

Around the same time, my uncle died. I looked for phone numbers to call my family, and realized I had none. It made me realize how distant I was from my family. I got my sister's phone number and called home in tears and made up.

Six months later, I went to visit her. We hugged, and from that moment on, she became my best friend and supporter. She told me she had always admired me, believed in me and loved me. Watching her life and the enjoyment she got out of living clearly showed me how much time I had wasted. I had spent so many years of my life and my practice choosing the wrong road. I had spent very little time enjoying my present or building the future.

While I had been out conquering the world, my sister had been at home creating a life worth living. She had all the things I wanted — a nice home, a good job, a husband who loved her and two wonderful children.

Today, I am halfway to fulfilling my dream. I have three wonderful children who love me to death. Now I just have to create a future and a legacy to pass on to them. I appreciate that they have tolerated and supported me as I have wandered aimlessly through life — and now I have found the right road.

On May 18, I graduated from the State University of New York at Albany with a 3.9 grade point average. In addition, I received five academic awards, was inducted into a national honor society, received a scholarship and a fellowship, and was admitted into a master's program for educational technology.

I have finally gone back to complete what should have been the first building block in my mission to build a happy life. I never would have had the courage to go back and finish what I started without the Gohonzon. Standing on the edge of tomorrow, facing forward, diploma in hand, I am determined that as of today I am going to live my life, enjoy my life and do the things I want to do. Not pursue dreams just to spite others, but redefine my dreams based on who I am and what I want to be.

Don't worry, be happy: I think that is what Nichiren Daishonin is saying. Enjoy your life and others will follow. This alone will affect the world. This is my one life, the one I know about, the one I can enjoy. I want to spend it well and savor each moment in time.

From this moment on. **W**

What Do You Think?

Please write to us and let us know your thoughts on the World Tribune.

What articles do you like or dislike? Which types would you like to see more of, less of? Do you have ideas to make the paper 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.

Correction —

We have misnumbered the past four issues. Beginning with this issue, the numbering is again correct. We apologize for the error.

Contact us via the Internet . . . SGI-USA Web Page: <http://www.sgi-usa.org>
E-mail to Editorial: SokaNews@aol.com or Subscriptions: SGI SUBS@aol.com

1997 Conference Schedule at the Florida Nature and Culture Center

While each joint territory has specific allotments for certain conferences, additional space is generally available beyond those allotments. This allows members from other joint territories to participate as well. If you're interested in attending a conference other than the one your joint territory is assigned to, check with your joint territory leaders for space availability.

Dates	Type	Joint Territories
July 10-13	Young Men's Division	Nationwide (no spaces available)
July 17-20	Young Women's Division	Nationwide (no spaces available)
July 31-Aug. 3	Jr. High/High School Div.	Nationwide (no spaces available)
Aug. 7-10	Brass Band/Fife & Drum	Nationwide
Aug. 21-24	Men's Division	Nationwide
Aug. 28-31	Culture Dept.	Nationwide
Sept. 11-14	Atlanta Joint Terr.	Carribbean General Meeting
Sept. 18-21	General: "Our Mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth"	LA#1, LA#5, SF#1, Seattle, Chicago, Boston, NY#1, Atlanta
Oct. 2-5	General: "Our Mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth"	Hawaii #1, LA#2, LA#3, NY#2 San Diego, Midwest, Texas, Wash., D.C.
Oct. 9-12	Women's Division	Nationwide
Oct. 23-26	General: "Our Mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth"	Hawaii #2, LA#4, SF#2, Rocky Mtn., Florida, NY#3, NY#4, Phila.
Oct. 30-Nov. 2	Chapter, HQ & Terr. Leaders: "The Spirit of SGI Leadership"	LA#1, LA#5, SF#1, Seattle, Chicago, Boston, NY#1, Atlanta
Nov. 13-16	Chapter, HQ & Terr. Leaders: "The Spirit of SGI Leadership"	Hawaii #1, LA#2, LA#3, NY#2, San Diego, Midwest, Texas, Wash., D.C.
Nov. 20-23	Chapter, HQ & Terr. Leaders: "The Spirit of SGI Leadership"	Hawaii #2, LA#4, SF#2, Rocky Mtn., Florida, NY#3, NY#4, Phila.
Dec. 11-14	Pioneers	Nationwide

Spaces Available for Florida Nature Center Conferences

FLORIDA, FROM PAGE 1

leaders; sessions on developing a sense of mission, faith equals daily life and growing your organization; a question and answer session on the priesthood issue; and ample opportunity for small group and one-on-one dialogue — each weekend has something for everyone.

There's also plenty of time to enjoy the center's scenic campus and recreational facilities and do some sightseeing.

With the year nearly half over, there are plenty more chances to attend.

The rest of 1997 will see several conferences by division, three more conferences for general participants and three for chapter, headquarters and territory leaders.

The theme for the general conferences will be "Our Missions as Bodhisattvas of the

Earth"; the chapter, headquarters and territory leaders will discuss "The Spirit of SGI Leadership."

While each joint territory has specific allotments for certain conferences, additional space is generally available beyond those allotments.

This allows members from other joint territories to participate as well.

If you're interested in attending any conference, including ones your joint territory isn't assigned to, check with your joint territory leaders for space availability. (Please see box above for schedule.)

All conferences last from Thursday to Sunday, with a package price of \$330 plus airfare.

The package price is inclusive of ground transportation, lodging, meals, and conference materials. ❧

NEBRASKA, FROM PAGE 1

forums because people can speak their minds. "Sometimes it's contentious because people lay it all out," he said. "Any perceived 'bureaucracy' or 'thought control' is just stripped away. People are fearless. We question things I thought were swept under the rug or we weren't supposed to discuss. Usually when someone's opinion differs from yours you keep your mouth shut, but here everyone listens and talks honestly. It's like a 'hyper discussion meeting.'"

Beth Dean, another frequent participant, feels the forums have helped her human revolution. "You're in a group, having a conversation of ideas — sometimes when we have an idea we want to protect, we get emotional about it," she said. "But here you have to check yourself. It's like that analogy of potatoes and getting against each other and getting cleaned as a result."

One of the major results of the

Brazilian City Names Park After Josei Toda

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER

The Brazilian city of São José dos Campos, in the state of São Paulo, has announced its decision to designate a park in honor of Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, in a letter sent to SGI President Ikeda from City Councilor Florivaldo Rocha.

This announcement follows recent plans to name a thoroughfare in Curitiba, in the Brazilian state of Paraná, Josei Toda Road.

Brazil has also honored the memory of the first Soka Gakkai president with the establishment of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Park in the city of Curitiba and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Road in Itapeva, a suburb of São Paulo.

Situated about 62 miles northeast of São Paulo with a population of 600,000, São José dos Campos is a burgeoning center of aerospace technology and research.

Josei Toda Park, also in close proximity to the SGI of Brazil São José dos Campos Community Center, will be nestled in between a planned residential district and an in-

dustrial sector.

In his letter, Councilor Rocha noted the SGI's worldwide activities' focus on peace, culture and education. He further stated that the SGI is a model for people everywhere who possess a sense of social responsibility.

Mr. Rocha also declared that the park is a crystallization of the esteem held by the citizens of São José dos Campos toward Josei Toda for his strong sense of duty and selfless struggle, laying the foundation for the Soka Gakkai to develop into a global organization.

BSGI General Director Eduardo Taguchi expressed his deep joy and gratitude at seeing the great efforts of presidents Makiguchi and Toda recognized in a country so far away from Japan.

This is evidence that the SGI's activities have become highly regarded throughout the world, Mr. Taguchi said.

The park's announcement coincides with the 40th anniversary this year of President Toda's famous declaration for the abolition of nuclear weapons. ❧

forums came out of the very first meeting. A woman said she hated being reminded of the schedule again and again "like I was some little kid." But another said she was forgetful and appreciated more than one reminder. Soon the discussion turned to the necessity of being aware of individual personalities. This led to the headquarters' first Fall Leadership Conference, last October, with sessions on motivation, sensitivity and the role of district leaders.

In May, also at the suggestion of the Members Forum, the headquarters published its first newsletter, allowing schedules and suggestions for successful meetings to flow easily among districts.

Other issues still in the discussion stage include organizational activities in society and physical changes to the community center to make it feel more like a home.

Jennifer Eddy, the women's division vice headquarters chief, pointed out that "suggestions from the forum are taken quite seriously by the Planning Board. The forum is not just a 'talking group,' something to make people feel better. Suggestions are acted on immediately."

As always, however, the greatest benefits have been inconspicuous. Ms. Eddy sees less formality and more "comfort." "There's real dialogue between members and their quote-unquote leaders," she said.

Mr. Hicken has noticed that people not accustomed to expressing opinions are learning how to; people are enjoying their responsibilities more. "Capable people are becoming very capable people," he said. "There's a lightened atmosphere throughout the headquarters because of the trust and respect accorded each person." ❧

Athens' political leaders were eager to be accepted by, to become popular with, the citizens. In this context the *demagogos* — from which the English word *demagogue* derived — first appeared. These politicians specialized in smearing the reputations of fine, noble people, people dedicated to truth and justice, by inventing scandals and spreading false rumors that were gleefully seized upon by the masses.

The *demagogos'* modus operandi was to falsely brand such individuals as villains in order to consign them to oblivion. Their only aim was to plant an image of their opponents as evil, whatever their true characters might be — their objective was to thwart the efforts of others, to triumph at their expense.

The fact that such demagogues were thriving in Athens meant that the city was already a society wracked by jealousy and rivalry. A good example of this development was the practice of ostracism. Originally instituted to prevent the rise to power of a tyrant, it was a means by which Athens' citizens could banish, for a period of 10 years, a person who appeared to have despotic ambitions.

The reason this form of banishment was called ostracism was that citizens voted by secret ballot, writing the name of the accused on shards of pottery or pieces of earthenware, called *ostrakon* in Greek. But this policy, originally designed to protect Athenian democracy, was perverted and used to cause the downfall of any person of outstanding ability. For example, the Greek statesman Aristides (c. 520–468 B.C.E.), who was praised by the populace as a man of principle for his just, moral actions, was also envied because of his high reputation and ostracized.

Plutarch recounts the following anecdote:¹

An illiterate man approached Aristides, ignorant of his identity, and handed him a pottery shard.

"Will you write a name on this for me?" he asked Aristides.

"Whose name shall I write?" Aristides asked.

"Aristides," replied the man.

"Why?" asked Aristides. "What harm has he done to you?"

"None," said the man. "In fact, I don't even know him. But wherever you go, you hear people calling him 'the Just.' And I've grown quite tired of it."

The great tragic dramatist Euripides (c. 484–406 B.C.E.) writes, "On the noblest objects / Is Envy wont to wreak her ruthless hate."² How true this was in the case of Aristides, who was ostracized for his moral excellence!

The New Human Revolution

BY HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 2

Long Journey

Translation of parts 13–18 of the 'Long Journey' 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.

Though a society may call itself democratic, if it is actually motivated not by justice and truth but by envy and rivalry, does it deserve the name it claims?

In 404 B.C.E., Athens was defeated in the Peloponnesian War, the struggle for control of the Greek Peninsula that it had waged against rival city-state Sparta over a period of 27 years, and was forced to surrender unconditionally. The real reason for Athens' defeat was its citizens' preoccupation with internal rivalries. This jealous society had begun its spiral of decline.

On two occasions, during the war and immediately after it, democracy was

would have a powerful, chilling affect on his opponents. This led to Socrates being accused of heresy and corrupting the minds of young people, two charges of which he was completely innocent.

Athens' conscience, the pillar of its spirit, was about to be toppled. But most of Athens' citizens in fact rejoiced at this. Because Socrates was such a man of principle, in reputation and deed, he had long been envied and the target of demagoguery. Over time, this had created the image in Athenians' minds that Socrates was somehow a danger to society.

For example, the famous playwright of the time, Aristophanes, made Socrates the leading figure in a comedy he wrote entitled *Clouds*, which exposed the great philosopher to public ridicule. In the play, Socrates is the leader of the Sophists who mislead youth and a heretic who declares: "What gods indeed will you swear by! For first of all, we don't credit gods."³

Of course, the exact opposite was true. Aristophanes had created a clever fake, a character whom he presented as Socrates but who was very different from the man. Still, the public believed the picture that Aristophanes

painted. Though others besmirched his name, Socrates remained a sole voice of truth.

Socrates' disciple Plato, who witnessed the proceedings, described his teacher's trial in great detail in the *Apology*. Socrates defended himself courageously and eloquently before 500 (some say 501) jurors and a large audience. He was neither cowed nor did he ask for forgiveness. Those who were to judge him were put on trial by his passionate defense.

What does a person know about himself, about his soul? he asked. Those who know their own ignorance and humbly

seek the truth are wise. Yet while most act as if they were wise, they lack true wisdom and remain unaware of their ignorance.

He cried: "As long as I breathe and am able to, I will certainly not stop philosophizing, and I will exhort you and explain this to whomever of you I happen to meet, and I will speak just the sort of things I am accustomed to: 'Best of men, you are an Athenian, from the city that is greatest and best reputed for wisdom and strength: are you not ashamed that you care for having as much money as

possible, and reputation, and honor, but that you neither care for nor give thought to prudence, and truth, and how your soul will be the best possible?'"⁴

Finally, Socrates declared that if the Athenians executed him, they were doing a great harm not to him but to themselves. He spoke with invincible conviction, which greatly moved many jurors. But the result of their vote was 280 guilty, 220 innocent. If another 30 had voted for his innocence, the outcome would have been the opposite.

Next, it came time to determine his sentence. According to the custom of the day, the accused had the right to suggest the punishment he thought appropriate. If Socrates had accepted the guilty verdict, shown an attitude of remorse and asked for a punishment other than execution, there is no doubt his life would have been spared. But when asked what his punishment should be he said, "I propose this: to be given my meals in the Prytaneum (the state guesthouse)."⁵ He insisted that, as a public benefactor, he should be rewarded with the highest dignity and honor by his country.

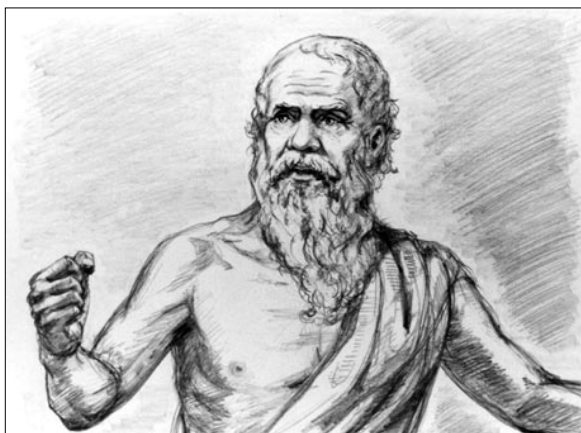
Such was the pride of Athens' pillar of principle, its king of the human spirit who resolutely upheld the truth.

But his unbending conviction was interpreted by jurors as an arrogant challenge to their authority. On the second vote, to determine Socrates' sentence, a resounding majority selected the death penalty.

Socrates chose death over compromising his principles. He gave his life to show others the lofty path of true humanity.

Socrates remained brave even in prison. Two days before his death, his friend Crito visited him, told him that his execution date was set and urged him to escape. But Socrates insisted that one injustice should not be answered with another. He refused to escape, calmly accepting his impending death.

Who is happier — one who suffers injustice or one who perpetrates it? Socrates believed "There is nothing bad for a good man, whether living or dead."⁶



JOURNEY, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

And he was afraid of nothing.

On his execution day, Socrates conducted a dialogue on the soul's immortality. In exploring this theme, he said that the pursuit of philosophy is "the practice of death,"⁷ encouraging his friends to perfect their souls by putting the virtues of thought, principle, courage, liberty and truth into practice. Perhaps Socrates shared a view of the eternal nature of life approximating that expounded in Buddhism. Whatever the case might be, without an awareness of life's eternity, no one can overcome the fear of death.

Socrates also warned his friends not to allow his death to make them "misologists or haters of argument, as people become misanthropists or haters of man; for no worse evil can happen to a man than to hate argument."⁸ Socrates wanted his friends to continue engaging in debate and dialogue, himself having followed this chosen path to his life's very end.

At dusk, word came that the time to carry out the execution had arrived. Socrates received a cup of poison hemlock from the official attendant and drank it down. The friends gathered around him were overcome with grief and began to weep and wail. He said: "What conduct is this, you strange men! I sent the women away chiefly for this very reason, that they might not behave in this absurd way; for I have heard that it is best to die in silence. Keep quiet and be brave."⁹

Comforting his friends, Socrates lay down on his deathbed, thus bringing to end a great philosopher's life.

Standing in front of the prison where Socrates had spent his last moments, Shin'ichi Yamamoto couldn't help but be overcome with profound emotion. The Athenians judged Socrates, but wasn't it really the Athenians who were judged? The story of their degeneration, of the dark stain they made on human history in this debasement of democratic ideals, would be talked of forever after.

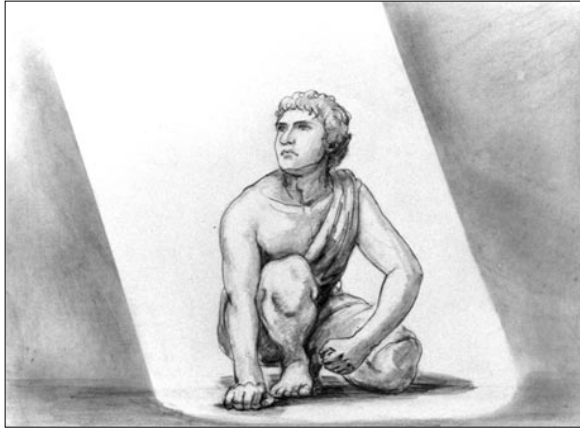
The young men with Shin'ichi Yamamoto were all well acquainted with Socrates' story. They stood quietly before the cave cell, recalling this great thinker's life and martyrdom.

Deeply moved, Eisuke Akizuki said: "Socrates' story reminds me of Mr. Makiguchi's struggle. The Japanese military government caused his death in prison. Mr. Makiguchi bravely endured their harsh treatment and laid down his life for his beliefs.... Truly great people have much in common, don't they?"

"Yes, that's true," Shin'ichi agreed. "And the disciples of such great teachers always stand up to carry on their teachers' work. Socrates had such a disciple in

Plato. He predicted that the jurors who condemned him would all experience retribution immediately after his death. What Socrates meant by this was that his followers would rise up to fight for the truth, and right the wrong the jurors had perpetrated.

"Socrates most assuredly had confidence that Plato would transmit his teachings faithfully and prove he was right. As he awaited death, I am sure the image of his brave young disciple, Plato, shone brightly in his heart. The same was true of Mr. Makiguchi. Even in prison, he was



at ease because he knew that he had Mr. Toda. And Mr. Toda told me he could rest assured because he could count on me. For my part, my only course is to devote all my energies to cultivating young people of whom I can say the same.

"If the Gakkai ever falls under the control of self-serving individuals who have ambitions of fame or power, or who seek to gain a high position so that they can just sit back and relax, it will be very unfortunate for our members. That is why I am determined to foster genuine disciples. That is why I must nurture 'lions of truth' — disciples of Plato's quality...."

Plato was 28 at the time of Socrates' trial. He had been under Socrates' tutelage for nearly nine years, from the time he was 20, spending his youth alongside his teacher. Plato was furious at Socrates' outrageous trial. According to one account, he asked to testify in his teacher's defense but the judge forbid him to do so.

His beloved teacher's execution was a tremendous shock to Plato, so much so that he fell ill. But he wiped away his tears of rage and arose with a powerful resolve: to devote his life to letting the world know that his teacher had been right, to making his nation just and principled, his mentor's dearest wish.

Over about 50 years, until his death at 80, Plato produced an enormous body of work, including the *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo* — all to record Socrates' true story for the ages. Through this he waged a great battle of philosophy and debate.

He also founded the Academy, devoting himself to educating youth and nur-

ture talent. The theme to which Plato dedicated his life was how to achieve a just world. The conclusion he arrived at was the ideal of rule by those who earnestly pursue philosophy.

In his great work *The Republic*,¹⁰ he specifically maintained that the rule of a philosopher-king was the best path, the one requiring the least change to bring the state to a government for the nation and its people's true welfare.¹¹ He also ranked the other various types of government, placing aristocracy first after rule of the philosopher-king, followed in descending order by timocracy,¹² oligarchy,¹³ democracy and tyranny. Plato had a low opinion of democracy, which he ranked fourth.

Democracy is the creation and product of the people's great wisdom. But unless the people who actually comprise the democracy know how to control their egoism and discipline themselves, Plato astutely pointed out, it can easily lapse into a vicious, self-destructive form of mob rule — a far cry from democracy.

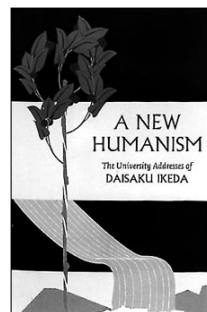
Plato said that democracies proudly trumpet liberty as the highest virtue: "You may hear it said that this [liberty] is best managed in a democratic city, and for this reason that is the only city in which a man of free spirit will care to live."¹⁴ But, he goes on, the insatiable, all-consuming pursuit of freedom leads to the birth of a greedy populace. Soon corrupting desires "seize the citadel of the young man's soul."¹⁵ Young people then become confused about the true meaning of freedom, coming to name "reverence and awe 'folly,'" Plato charges; "Temperance they call 'want of manhood'" and "moderation and orderly expenditure are 'rusticity' and 'illiberality.'"¹⁶

Thereby genuine virtues are demeaned and banished from young minds.

At the same time, he asserts, they "euphemistically denominate insolence 'good breeding,' license 'liberty,' prodigality 'magnificence,' and shamelessness 'manly spirit,'" lavishly praising all manner of vices as virtues — until vices become rampant among the populace. According to Plato, the chaos created by such unchecked freedom eventually becomes uncontrollable. And to bring order to the land, the people begin to seek a strong leader. When they find such a leader, he or she inevitably falls victim to power's temptations, becoming a tyrant, the kind of ruler Plato ranked last.

(To be continued)

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2. *The Nineteen Tragedies and Fragments of Euripides*, trans. Michael Wodhull (London: E. Blaekader, Printer, 1809), p. 344.
3. Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito and Aristophanes' Clouds*, trans. Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 125.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
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8. Plato, "Phaedo," *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 309.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 401.
10. In *The Republic*, Plato speaks through his protagonist, Socrates.
11. Plato, *The Republic: Books I-V*, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 507.
12. Timocracy: rule by those motivated by ambition for power and honor.
13. Oligarchy: rule by a small group that exercises control, especially for corrupt and selfish purposes.
14. Plato, *The Republic: Books VI-X*, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 305.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 297.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 299.
17. *Ibid.*



A New Humanism (softcover version)

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Thirteen years back, as a high school student, scoring straight A's, adjusting well to my early teens, and with a great family, I thought I did not have too much reason to practice Buddhism. But touched by the solemn rhythm of gongyo and daimoku, I started chanting. It was probably an unconscious search for meaning and purpose in life that carried me through the first six months with practically no study or activities.

A chronic problem with bronchial asthma, which improved greatly over this period, finally forced me to take this wonderful practice more seriously. Gradually, as I studied the literature, engaged myself in activities in India's fledgling SGI organization, and struggled to understand what was being repeatedly termed my mission, I started to realize the tremendous profundity of this faith. My mother and brother also started chanting, and slowly in a remote corner of northeast India, a small sapling of the Daishonin's Buddhism took root.

The Goshō states: "As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge, vying with one another to interfere" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 145). Problems started appearing in my life as never before. Graduation from high school left me confused about my career path; my brother failed twice in his undergraduate program; my mother was having an undiagnosed health problem; and my father was confronted with an unprecedented legal issue regarding our property that could cost us a huge sum of money.

We suddenly felt our safe and secure world receiving a big jolt. My district chief encouraged all three of us that it was a great chance to change karma for the entire family, to create value for all eternity.

We united together and, while struggling in our daily lives, also fought for the growth of the district. We supported my mother to



Satyaki (Ron) Saikia and his wife, Monica.

SATYAKI SAIKIA, CLEVELAND, OHIO

Don't Settle for Less

attend an SGI General Meeting in Tokyo, and that is when we received our family Gohonzon.

Gradually as our district grew stronger, we felt our own problems sorting themselves out. I developed a desire to delve into the human body and psyche and entered medical school; my brother went for graduate study to one of India's most reputed schools; my mother was diagnosed with hypertension and, with treatment, all her other problems disappeared; and our property issue turned out to be a tax department mistake.

Medical school was tough but very interesting. The more I learned about the nuances of life, the more deeply engrossed I became in Buddhism. Concepts like the oneness of body and mind and the oneness of life and environment took on new meaning. Medicine and Buddhism expanded my perspective of life. For the first time, studying, which had always been an endless chore in the past, took on an entirely new and profound meaning from which I could derive

pleasure and satisfaction.

Around this time, due to sociopolitical unrest in my state, we were forced to temporarily suspend meetings and all group activities. We could only keep in contact through the phone or occasional home visits. But what had originally seemed to be a very trying period for the district turned out to be a time of tremendous growth — not in numbers, but in spirit. All of us decided to chant at a particular time every day, for peace and harmony in the state. We seized all the time we could to read about the fundamentals of Buddhism and tried to apply them in our lives.

Though there were only 30 of us, we determined to develop into lions laying an unshakable foundation of kosen-rufu in northeast India. Four years later, when we finally started activities again, we expanded explosively — by three or four times in just six months. All 30 of us still fondly look back at those four years of struggle when we built the foundation for our district and consequently es-

tablished a core of conviction and confidence in our lives.

In 1994, having excelled in medical school and dreaming of a rosy career, I went to New Delhi, determined to work in one of the finest hospitals in the country. My spirits were high and I was brimming with confidence. However, five months later, having failed four qualification exams in a row, I was desperately trying to gather the broken pieces of my dream.

Having never tasted academic failure, I couldn't believe this was happening to me. In another month, I was seriously doubting if I would ever pursue graduate medical training. Staying alone in a small room, daimoku, SGI President Ikeda's guidance and my fiancée's encouragement were my sole companions. Finally, in utter desperation, I sought guidance.

My senior told me: "If you want to create value in your profession, you must go where the education is best. Don't settle for less than the best medical training

in the world! In Buddhism, victory or defeat starts in the mind. If you give in to doubt, you have already lost."

On Jan. 1, 1995, I made up my mind to pursue my graduate training in the United States, a step that involved a study course of 35 books, two exams to be taken in Thailand and a huge sum of money. It also meant that I had to go back to my state without having achieved anything remarkable. When I told my brother that I couldn't go back home like a loser, he told me: "A lion takes two steps forward, one step backward and then leaps. You are taking your step backward to prepare for the final leap. That is not defeat, it's preparation for victory!"

I started a one-year ordeal where my sole purpose in life was to study and save money. Daimoku and *The New Human Revolution* provided the much-needed motivation and helped me keep my goal in sight. Surmounting impossible financial odds and work hours, I went to Bangkok twice for the two steps of my test. Though I stayed in the cheapest hotels and ate free food, the entire experience was fantastic. To top it all off, I passed my exams with great scores and got interview calls from 15 U.S. hospitals.

I flew to the United States in late November, just after I got married, and went on a month's tour to a number of cities all over the Northeast interviewing in different hospitals. Greyhound buses, miles of highways and differing lifestyles were all in all a very enriching experience.

When I finally signed a contract in Cleveland on New Year's Day, 1997, I looked back over the last two years and reminisced about what my senior had told me: "Victory or defeat is all in the mind." Today, I redetermine to continue developing into a more compassionate and humane physician with a deep commitment toward the SGI's vision of global kosen-rufu. ■

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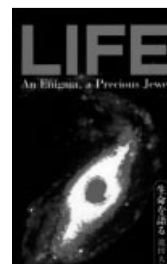
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SIGN POSTS APPLYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS TO DAILY LIFE

No Guilt in Buddhism?

By MALINA MOORE
SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE


When it comes to the Lotus Sutra, whether one recites all eight volumes...or simply the daimoku or title, you should understand that all the blessings that result are in all cases the same. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 6)

There is no guilt in Buddhism!" a friend reassures me as I lament that I didn't chant as much as I wanted to or only did an "A & C" gongyo that morning. If there is no guilt in Buddhism, then why do we sometimes feel so guilty?

At the community center during the May commemorative contribution, a fellow member was expressing her regret and ambivalence at what to do. She had made it her goal to increase her contribution each year, but was extremely tight financially — it looked like she wasn't going to do it this year.

I couldn't help referring to SGI President Ikeda's guidance that Buddhism is common sense. While her intentions were extremely noble and sincere, the fact remained that if she made a contribution that wouldn't allow her to take care of her financial obligations, she would suffer. I told her this and shared my feelings of guilt about chanting and gongyo.

Dealing with these feelings is an exercise in becoming masters of the middle way. Although it is true that we should consistently check ourselves so as not to become lax, we shouldn't go to the other extreme where we are unreasonably uptight about things. That's easy to say (and write!), but hard to do.

Guilt feelings often result when we become so taken with the format or structure of things that we forget the substance and heart. When Nichiren Daishonin states that "all the blessings that result are in all cases the same," it's a reminder that our sincerity is what counts most. 

UNDERSTANDING MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

Unity — the Key to Victory

By AMELIA MORAN
NEW YORK

The key to victory lies in unity. This is one of the precious lessons I've learned from my mentor, SGI President Ikeda, and through practicing in the SGI-USA. People who strive to work together in harmonious unity accumulate the benefit and fortune to be protected by all around them in lifetime after lifetime.

Because of the remarkable unity displayed in the mentor-disciple relationship among presidents Makiguchi, Toda and Ikeda, the SGI has developed into what it is today, surmounting all obstacles. An example of this unity was shown when Makiguchi was pondering who would help him publish his manuscript *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*. Without the slightest hesitation, Toda said: "I'll do it, no matter what the effort required.... I want to do it for you, Sensei!"

In turn, President Ikeda, as he explained last year in his Columbia University speech, resolved to follow Mr. Toda as his mentor in life when he learned that Toda and Makiguchi had been jailed for opposing Japan's militarist government.

Indeed, throughout his visit to the United States last year, President Ikeda introduced and explained Makiguchi's work during his major speeches. This had been Mr. Toda's wish — to spread Makiguchi's ideals throughout the world. Thus, President Ikeda's work for world peace today is in honor of the mentor-disciple relationship. President Ikeda has said:

The uncompromising relationship of master and disciple cannot be based on partial or incomplete efforts. Only by fully realizing the vision of the master can one call himself a true disciple.

The true disciple is one who is totally committed to fulfilling the master's ideals. He lives by the truth in his heart, swayed by neither praise nor blame. This shows the true measure of a person.

Throughout my practice, I have tried to maintain this attitude and set an example so that others can see what it means to have a mentor in life. Sometimes, though, I've needed my seniors to remind me of President Ikeda's guidance.



SGI President Ikeda speaking at Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1996.

As a new member I did my best to practice correctly, yet I somehow was always finding fault with my leader. She, in turn, was always finding fault with me.

Our leader invited us to dinner one evening. He explained how our lack of appreciation and unity was not only impacting negatively on our lives but was also discouraging our members. He urged us to overcome this tendency and learn to see each other's good points.

After that, we both learned how to talk with appreciation about each other. Even today, although we do not practice in the same area, we ask about each other's welfare.

In his book *Learning From the Goshō*, President Ikeda writes: "When we base ourselves on this spirit of 'one in mind,' there is neither envy nor backbiting. Nor is there shirking of responsibility. Instead, we can manifest strong, broad-minded faith, and our lives will overflow with benefit."


I am so glad my leaders helped me understand this early in my practice, thereby enhancing my seeking spirit to continuously learn President Ikeda's intent and apply it to my practice.

I have found that emulating my mentor by trying to unite with others is not always easy, but the dividends make it worthwhile. For instance, when I became a leader, two very capable women's di-

vision members found it almost impossible to get along with each other. Yet, by chanting, home visiting them and continuously urging them to talk with each other and me, we gradually built bonds of appreciation and trust.

In my family, too, my husband and I, over the many years of our practice, have learned how to apply President Ikeda's guidance about unity to our family life. With chanting and seeking guidance, we have learned to be more patient and tolerant of each other — and to disagree while maintaining a sense of mutual appreciation.

To my son, our resulting family life has been so encouraging that he is spontaneously chanting every day to live up to his potential. Although we introduced him to the practice as a child, he stopped when he became a teenager. He told me that based on how he saw his parents grow and develop he was encouraged to start practicing again. Now, people ask him what makes him act the way he does. So, he is constantly introducing people to this Buddhism — because he has seen how it unites people.

Throughout my practice, my spirit to unite with others has given me the courage and determination to carry out, to the best of my ability, whatever I can for the sake of the members and kosen-rufu. The mentor-disciple relationship has taught me this spirit. 

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Development Depends on Selflessly Dedicated Individuals

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the presentation ceremony of an honorary professorship from Shanghai University, China, held at the auditorium of the university's main campus, May 12.

Honored Chancellor Qian Weichang and Madame Kong Xi-angying, esteemed faculty of Shanghai University, distinguished guests, beloved students:

With deep appreciation and a sense of profound honor I humbly accept the title of honorary professor conferred by Shanghai University — this proud institution of higher learning and hope, this dynamic driving force behind the extraordinary development of the great nation of China into the 21st century. I express my most heartfelt gratitude to all at Shanghai University. *Xie xie* (thank you).

In the spring month of May, 25 years ago, the great British historian Arnold Toynbee and I discussed our views of what the future would hold. We agreed that China would undoubtedly play a leading role in future world history.

Today, just as we predicted, your nation — perhaps nowhere more so than in this thriving city of Shanghai — stands tall with dignity, confidence and courage as a key player in the international arena. Beholding China today, witnessing the magnificent growth and prosperity it has achieved after weathering and triumphing over so many vicissitudes and bitter challenges, brings me inexpressible joy.

I have the highest esteem for Shanghai University, a dynamic



The Yangtze River, Asia's longest river, travels 3,450 miles to the East China Sea. The city of Shanghai is near the river's mouth.

center powering this growth by producing so many young men and women of outstanding talent and ability who are actively contributing to China's development.

I have spoken a great deal recently to a worldwide audience of young people about the valiant struggles of pioneering Chinese figures. Just as the respected writer and father of the modern Chinese spirit, Lu Xun (1881–1936), declared, your country has “people who quietly immerse themselves in hard work, people who desperately strive beyond the limits of their being, people who champion the cause of the people, and people who give their lives to seek truth.”¹

Lu Xun is describing great lives — lives undaunted by superficial disturbances, that reach for the heavens and embrace the depths of the ocean. I wish to impress upon the youth that modern China's triumph has been a result of the shining spirit of people of genuine character and humanity.

On my first trip to Shanghai

[1974], I visited the tomb of Lu Xun and the house where he lived in his later years. When I entered the house, I was drawn to some handwritten words by Lu Xun displayed on the wall: “Should I survive, then of course I will study further.” They were from a letter he had written only two months before his death.

I am deeply moved to see how this passionate, indefatigable spirit has been proudly, solemnly carried on by Shanghai University. Your university's motto, “Be Strong and Untiring,” is the perfect embodiment of this spirit.

One of the major reasons for the dead-end that Japan and many other contemporary societies now face is that our leaders have become arrogant and lazy. They have lost the humility and earnestness that inspire one to continue learning throughout life. That is precisely why the following words of rousing encouragement that Chancellor Qian, a world-renowned physicist, once delivered to some young people reverberate in my heart: “Effort will never betray you.... Whoever the person, whatever their talents, however much they have achieved until now, once they stop making efforts, all progress will immediately cease.”²

When he was young, Lu Xun studied in Japan at the Kobun Gakuin, a school for students from China. As a matter of fact, the founder of value-creating education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first president of the Soka Gakkai, taught at Kobun Gakuin the year after Lu Xun completed his studies there. One of the students was so deeply

impressed by Mr. Makiguchi's class that he later translated lectures Mr. Makiguchi gave on his landmark work, *The Geography of Human Life*, into Chinese and published them. This attests to the bond that must have grown between Mr. Makiguchi and the Chinese students.

In his dissertation written in Japan, Lu Xun said, “One must proceed with dedication toward the goal one believes in,...without being discouraged by criticism,...without being afraid to stand alone though one is surrounded by ridicule and abuse. Only such a person can illuminate the darkness and enable the sunshine within people's hearts to shine forth.”³

Mr. Makiguchi was of the same belief: “If you cannot be a courageous enemy of those who are evil, you cannot be a friend to the good,”⁴ he said. With the heart of a lion, with righteous indignation, he fought against Japanese militarism, dying for his beliefs in prison at 73. As Lu Xun said, “Those who are ahead of their times are never accepted in their native land and indeed are persecuted by their contemporaries.”⁵

Mr. Makiguchi refused to back down from the truth, even under the rigorous interrogation of Japan's Special Higher Police. His immovable insistence that Japan's invasion of China was a fundamental, unconscionable mistake survives in police transcripts of his interrogation. In my work for peace and friendship between our two nations, the spirit of Mr. Makiguchi is always in my thoughts and heart.

In recent years, archaeologists and other researchers have turned increased attention to the ancient civilization of the Yangtze River valley, of which Shanghai is a part. There can be no question that Shanghai will play an increasingly important role as a center for the new global civilization and the fusion of East and West into the next millennium. I am convinced that Shanghai University will be a major force in creating and sustaining that role. The world is watching your endeavors with great expectations.

Your university motto embodies a profound Chinese philosophical tradition. One of the Five Confucian Classics, the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*,

states: “The movement of heaven is full of power. / Thus the superior man makes himself strong and untiring.”⁶ In this we see a clear statement of the mystical unity and harmony of heaven and humanity, nature and the individual. Dr. Toynbee identified this philosophy of symbiosis, a vital part of Chinese thought, as the secret to solving the many global problems that confront and seriously threaten contemporary civilization.

At a memorial service commemorating the 10th anniversary of Lu Xun's death, held in Shanghai in 1946, Premier Zhou Enlai stood before a photograph of the great writer and delivered these impassioned words: “There have been many tyrants, emperors and dictators throughout history, but they have all fallen one by one. But the even greater number of slaves, the oppressed and the peasants throughout history have firmly held their ground and developed. The century of the people is already here. That is why, like oxen, we must exert ourselves in the struggle, unite as one and be ready to lay down our lives for the people.”⁷

From today, as a member of your illustrious university, as a student filled with creativity, I determine to work even harder with all of you to build the new century of the people.

In closing, I once again express my deepest thanks and offer my wishes for the continuing glory and prosperity of your fine university and the health of all present today. *Xie xie*. ☐



Lu Xun talks with youth in a picture taken 11 days prior to his death.

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SYLVIA RODRIGUEZ, PUERTO RICO

Determinación de Nutrir una Actitud de Compasión

Llevo cerca de 8 años practicando este Budismo. Un día de noviembre del 1996 recibí la noticia de que mi madre fue diagnosticada con cáncer. Fue una noticia muy terrible, ya que ella siempre había sido una persona saludable y activa. Además siempre se ha cuidado mucho. Verdaderamente, esto entristeció a toda mi familia.

Ese mismo día tuve la buena fortuna de recibir en mi casa la visita de la Sra. Tomoe Kudamarsu, dirigente de la División de Damas del Territorio Unido de Atlanta. Le pedí orientación para poder ayudar a mi madre. Ella me alentó a entonar daimoku por la salud de mi madre, y para que mi determinación fuera más fuerte que el cáncer de ella. También me orientó a entonar daimoku para que ella recibiera el tratamiento adecuado. La orientación parecía sencilla, pues orar por la salud de la madre debe ser algo que pueda salir con naturalidad y sin esfuerzo. Pero en este caso, no lo fue.

Mi relación con mi madre nunca fue fácil, más bien todo lo contrario. Estuvo llena de rechazos, maltrato físico y emocional. Era como si yo llevara una herida abierta que siempre sangraba. Cuando comencé a practicar, tomé la decisión de ignorar esta parte de mi vida y poner mi atención a otras cosas. Así lo hice, pero, como todo, tarde o temprano tendría que en-

frentar este aspecto de mi vida y resolverlo; este era el momento.

Cuando me senté frente al Go-honzon a entonar daimoku por mi madre, descubrí que no tenía ningún deseo de hacerlo, y peor todavía, sentía que ella no se lo merecía, así que terminaba entonando daimoku por otras cosas que no tenían nada que ver con ella. Esto sacó a relucir una terrible lucha interna en mi vida. Comencé a tener pesadillas y a dudar de mi humanidad; era mi madre y se estaba muriendo, tenía que hacer algo. En una ocasión, desahogandome con mi hermana, tuve una crisis en la que me cuenta que no había perdonado y estaba tan resentida que ni siquiera era capaz de ver nada positivo en ella. Ese mismo día llamé a una gran amiga que tengo en los Estados Unidos; ella había sido dirigente de nuestra organización durante muchos años y me conoce como la palma de su mano. Le confíé todo lo que me ocurría. (Estas cosas son muy difíciles de compartir.) Dentro de la conversación, me dijo algo muy significativo: "Nuestro trabajo para que las personas no puede depender de sentimentalismos, ni de preferencias personales, nuestro trabajo para que otras personas logren su felicidad, tiene que ser hecho sin discriminación," de hecho, la última oración silenciosa del gongyo es por la felicidad de toda la humanidad.

Con este aliento, fui al go-honzon con mis resentimientos



Sylvia Rodriguez

y si, también con mi humanidad. Decidí orar con la determinación de que ella se recuperara, porque era un ser humano que merecía la oportunidad de seguir viviendo. No involucré mis sentimientos, sino mi compromiso con ella, como un ser humano. Comencé a entonar daimoku con honestidad por mi y por ella, a medida que oraba por ella, comencé a aceptar en mi proceso que con el pasado no se puede hacer nada y que el futuro era brillante y lleno de esperanza. También, entoné daimoku para que mi corazón sanara de una forma natural, así como cuando nos raspamos una rodilla o un codo y dejamos la piel al descubierto para que cicatrice y sane rápidamente, aunque nos duela un poquito.

Mi madre continuó con sus tratamientos mientras yo continuaba orando por ella. La llamaba y le decía que contara con mis

oraciones, que ella iba a salir bien. Un día, entonando daimoku (ya llevaba bastante tiempo en ello,) comencé a darme cuenta de cómo mi madre se había enfrentado a su enfermedad con tanto valor. Ella pasó por todos los procesos posibles, miedo, negación, ira, manipulación, de todo; sin embargo, nunca se rindió. Sintióse como se sintiera, nunca faltó a su tratamiento, se le quemo la piel, vomitaba... pero nunca se rindió, ella es valiente. Esta nueva percepción, me hizo reflexionar en el pasado y pude ver los actos de valentía que mi madre había realizado y quedé sorprendida, los errores que ella había cometido, habían sido su proceso de aprendizaje, de ignorancia.

Desde que sentí que mi herida estaba sanando, ella también comenzó a sanar. Respondió magníficamente al tratamiento, (dicho sea de paso, ella estaba en una etapa bastante avanzada) y la etapa final de su

Esta nueva percepción, me hizo reflexionar en el pasado y pude ver los actos de valentía que mi madre había realizado.

tratamiento dependía de una operación; y en ese momento me dí cuenta que me sentía muy tranquila con ella, y que la había aceptado tal como ella era, en la misma forma que yo espero que me acepten a mí, con mis fortalezas y debilidades.

La operación fue un éxito, el mínimo tiempo de recuperación, era de 15 días, pero a los 7 ya ella estaba en la casa, tuve la oportunidad de entonar mucho daimoku a su lado para que ella tuviera una recuperación rápida.

He atravesado un proceso de gran reto, en el cual he alcanzado una victoria crucial en mi vida, al igual que mi madre, tampoco me dí por vencida, de ella heredó esa característica, la cual es una calidad tan crucial para llevar a cabo mi misión ¡Cuanto se lo agradezco!

Mi determinación es mantener y nutrir esta actitud de compasión no sólo hacia ella, sino hacia todas las personas. III

El líder de la SGI comenzó su discurso felicitando a los representantes de la juventud que asistieron a esa reunión también les expresó su expectativa y esperanza hacia el futuro. Llamándoles "La agrupación de jóvenes mas prominente del mundo" les dijo:

Para la SGI, estos próximos años serán la época de confiar a la División de jóvenes el futuro del Kosen-rufu. Todo depende de los jóvenes. Habrá un momento

¡Tomen Conciencia de Su Misión! ¡Dejen Salir Su Fortaleza Interna!

A continuación un breve resumen del discurso pronunciado por el presidente de la SGI, Daisaku Ikeda, durante la primera reunión nacional para responsables de las Divisiones Juveniles Femenina y Masculina, realizadas conjuntamente en el Auditorio Toda, Tokio, el 11 de enero.

en que ellos asumirán plenamente la responsabilidad. Por lo tanto, ¡felicitaciones a todos ustedes por este encuentro nacional de responsables, que es una cer-

emonia donde se les transfiere el cetro de los sucesores para la centuria próxima!

Continuando su discurso en-

fatizó la gran misión que tiene la juventud, como los verdaderos sucesores de esta gran organización, la SGI; la cual se ha manifestado en el mundo como

el fruto del deseo y la voluntad del Buda.

En cuanto a la felicidad en la vida, Ikeda señaló "¿Qué es la verdadera felicidad? Probablemente todos crean saberlo, pero en realidad son muy pocos los que pueden asegurarlo con certeza... La "falsa felicidad" es la que deriva de fuentes externas. Por otro lado, la "verdadera felicidad" es la que brota del interior, de lo más profundo

POR FAVOR VEA MISIÓN, 11

PREGUNTAS Y RESPUESTAS SOBRE LA FE

¿Cómo Puedo Profundizar Mi Perspectiva
Ante el Gohonzon?

Por TED MORINO

DIRIGENTE DEL DEPARTAMENTO DE ESTUDIO
DE LA SGI-USATraducción por Andy Sanchez
Puerto Rico
'World Tribune,'
17 de enero, pág 7.

P. A veces siento que el Gohonzon no es más que un pergamino de papel. ¿Cómo puedo profundizar mi perspectiva ante él?

R. Cómo vemos al Gohonzon, es fundamentalmente una función de nuestra condición de vida. Percibir la esencia del Gohonzon de acuerdo a la intención del Daishonin, es el reto crucial para cada uno de nosotros.

La esencia del Gohonzon se extiende más allá de lo que comúnmente podamos percibir a través de nuestros sentidos. Por lo tanto, para poder entender, pienso que tenemos que hacer esfuerzos extraordinarios, esfuerzos que vayan más allá de aquellos esfuerzos que surgen del hábito y de la formalidad. Tenemos que hacer un esfuerzo consciente para confiar en la Ley Mística cada vez más y más. Como dice Nichiren Daishonin en "El Verdadero Aspecto del Gohonzon." "El Gohonzon sólo se encuentra en la fe. Como afirma el sutra. 'Sólo mediante a la fe uno puede ingresar a la Budeidad' (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol 1, pág 213) {Los Escritos Principales de Nichiren Daishonin}.

Lo importante es entonar daimoku con una oración clara para poder despertar aún más nuestra naturaleza inherente de Buda, y así experimentar un sentido de enriquecimiento en nuestras vidas.

Al principio podría ser difícil enfocar de esta manera, pero lo que cuenta es que tratemos. De-

pués de todo, el Budismo requiere "práctica." Estamos en el proceso de desarrollar nuestra capacidad budista.

Con el tiempo, llegaremos a experimentar el poder de la naturaleza de Buda más y más, tal y como lo describe el Daishonin.

En el "Verdadero Aspecto del Gohonzon" él también escribe: "Jamás busque este Gohonzon fuera de usted misma. El Gohonzon existe sólo en la carne mortal de nosotros, las personas comunes que abrazamos el Sutra del Loto e invocamos Nam-Myoho-enge-kyo (Los principales escrito de Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, pág 217).

A veces, puede que nos parezca imposible creer que el Gohonzon, que incorpora la Ley Fundamental del universo, existe dentro de nosotros. Podríamos sentirnos tentados a ceder a un sentido de insuficiencia o de duda.

Sin embargo, la iluminación existe en lo más profundo de nuestro ser. Despertar a esta realidad es un proceso natural. Profundizamos nuestra fe en el Gohonzon en el momento en que presenciamos la iluminación funcionar en nuestras vidas- algo que puede ser tan sencillo como colmarnos de alegría cuando entonamos daimoku o cuando sentimos una compasión genuina al orar por un amigo que sufre.

En el momento que reconocemos esta iluminación en nuestras vidas, podemos a la vez, percibir la esencia del Gohonzon.

Como resultado, comenzamos a incorporar la sabiduría, la valentía y la esperanza representadas en el Gohonzon.

miembros con alegría y confianza. El Líder de la SGI concluyó diciendo:

"¿Quiénes son los auténticos vencedores en la vida? Los que trabajan sin descanso y triunfan sobre las dificultades. Las personas que eluden la dificultad sufrirán el día de mañana. Los que practiquen la esencia del Budismo de acuerdo con el Goshō y con el espíritu de la Soka Gakkai serán los que se

En su carta a Horen" Nichiren Daishonin escribe:

En cuanto a los caracteres del Sutra del Loto, un ciego no los puede ver. Una persona con los ojos de un mortal común los ve de color negro, a personas de los dos vehículos los ven como un vacío. Los Bodhisatvas ven varios diferentes colores, mientras que una persona cuyas semillas del estado de Buda hayan alcanzado la madurez plena, los ve como Budas. Así que el sutra afirma: "Si uno puede sostener este [sutra], estará sosteniendo el cuerpo del Buda." (MW-7, pág 112)

**Profundizamos
nuestra fe en el
Gohonzon en el
momento en que
presenciamos la
iluminación funcionar
en nuestras vidas.**

Nuestra percepción siempre afecta la manera como interactuamos con nuestro medio ambiente. Por consiguiente, el Daishonin comprendió que el significado del Gohonzon cambia de acuerdo a los cambios de nuestra condición de vida.

Por lo tanto, es necesario abrir nuestros corazones y constantemente buscar ampliar nuestras vidas para captar la esencia de algo tan profundo como lo es la iluminación, que lo abarca todo, que se ha incorporado en el Gohonzon. Logramos esto a través de nuestras acciones en la fe día a día, es un proceso continuo, igual que cualquier campo de estudio.

Tomemos como ejemplo un

joven estudiante que ha determinado estudiar astronomía. Al mirar hacia el firmamento en una noche clara, los cielos, al principio, parecen ser un objeto plano e inanimado, una enorme pantalla de cine iluminada por mil millones de estrellas.

Pero después de estudiar durante algunos años, el estudiante comienza a verle cierta lógica al desorden, llegando hasta reconocer estrellas específicas y a hacer mapas de las galaxias en su mente. A la larga, el estudiante podría involucrarse en investigaciones avanzadas, al haber desarrollado una pasión

por revelar los principios que funcionan en el universo.

El astrónomo que una vez fue un estudiante, ahora tiene un sentimiento intuitivo en cuanto a cómo funciona el universo, sin embargo, mantiene un profundo sentido de admiración y agradecimiento por su ambiente. Su pasión vino desde adentro, aunque su entendimiento estuvo fomentado por las interacciones con profesores y colegas, por sus experiencias personales y por la lectura de libros científicos.

De la misma forma, elevamos nuestra condición de vida y ampliamos nuestra percepción del Gohonzon al entonar daimoku con la determinación de refrescar nuestras vidas, a la vez que nos hacemos receptivos al crecimiento asociándonos con nuestras amistades en la SGI, a través de las experiencias en la vida y el estudio del Budismo.

A medida que continuamos practicando, llegamos a comprender que, en cierto sentido, el Gohonzon es la forma más pura de vida. Éste incorpora la vida, o

la Ley fundamental de universo.

El objeto de veneración del Daishonin es "único en el Budismo. El Presidente Ikeda explicó en una ocasión:

Tradicionalmente, los objetos de veneración en Budismo eran, con más frecuencia, imágenes de Buda... La gente común... despertaba a la fe en el Buda y la reverencia hacia éste a través de tales obras de arte. Pero el objeto básico de veneración de Nichiren Daishonin consiste de escritos, de palabras. En vez de venerar una imagen gráfica, el Daishonin hizo que la expresión escrita del mundo del intelecto, la grandiosa y encumbrada sabiduría del Buda del Último Día de la Ley, fuera el objeto de la máxima reverencia

Sólo en este aspecto, el objeto de veneración del Daishonin difiere fundamentalmente a lo que tradicionalmente se ha venerado en el Budismo. (*Seikyo Times*, marzo 1990, págs 44-45)

Mientras más desarrollemos nuestra Budeidad innata, más podremos percibir la veracidad del siguiente pasaje del goshō: "Estar 'dotado de los diez mundos' quiere decir que todos los diez mundos, sin excepción, están incluidos en el mundo singular de la Budeidad.

Es por esto que al gohonzon se le llama un mandala. Mandala es una palabra sánscrita que quiere decir 'perfectamente dotado' o 'racimo de bendiciones'" (MW-1, pág 123).

Para explicaciones adicionales de lo que está escrito en el Gohonzon, favor de referirse al artículo "The Gohonzon: A Treasure Map of Life and the Universe" ("El Gohonzon: Un Mapa de Tesoro de la Vida y el Universo," *World Tribune*, 12 de mayo del 1995). III

MISIÓN, DE PÁG. 10s

de nuestro ser. Su muestra más acabada sería manifestar el estado de Budeidad que yace latente en nuestras vidas.²

Enfatizando la importancia de fijar metas concretas y claras en una vida, incluyendo el mundo de la fe, instó a los líderes a desafiar metas sensatas, con objetivos razonables y aceptables por todos, para que así puedan avanzar junto a los

lleven la victoria final. En lo que concierne a la fe, los que practiquen con sinceridad generosa y abnegada serán los que cosecharán los mayores beneficios y la más sólida buena fortuna. Ellos conquistarán una felicidad indestructible. Es la conclusión a la que llegué al cabo de medio siglo de observar y conocer toda clase de personas.

Desde ahora hasta el comienzo del siglo XXI, hagamos que cada reunión mensual de responsables

de las Divisiones Juveniles sea una magnífica "ceremonia para transferir el kosen-rufu.

¡Ansio contemplar su maravillosa victoria!" III

Resumen por Cesarina Caro,
Nueva York

1. En ese momento, un grupo de jóvenes de la SGI-USA, en representación de los miembros de todo el mundo, interpretó una canción como obsequio a los jóvenes del japon. La Banda ju-

venil masculina de Kanto correspondió, a su vez, tocando la marcha "Alte Kameraden" (Viejos camaradas) compuesto por Karl Teike (1884-1922)

2. El presidente Toda dijo una vez: "Hay dos clases de felicidad: la absoluta y la relativa. Lograr la felicidad absoluta es la alegría más inmensa de la vida, y consiste en llevar a cabo nuestra revolución humana. El secreto para ser felices sin falta está en cultivar una fe renovada y enérgica. (Comentario del 20 de agosto de 1955)

Giving Something Back

By SHIRLEY ZAGOREC

ORLANDO, FLA., CORRESPONDENT

Henri Landwirth walks into the dining hall of his foundation, Give Kids the World, where terminally ill children and their families have just finished breakfast and headed out for a day of fun at Orlando-area attractions. He shakes hands with the volunteers who served the meals, thanking them for their efforts. As he moves, you can't help noticing his warm smile, his brilliant blue eyes.

And the number B4343 tattooed in blue ink on the inside of his arm.

Having survived the worst of times, he looks at every day with wonder: "I love life," he says. "I shouldn't be here — by all rights, I should have died."

Born the son of a Jewish diamond-cutter from Antwerp, Belgium, Landwirth was 13 when his family was taken away by the Nazis to Auschwitz. He never saw his parents again.

"I was in the camp for five years," says Landwirth. "I was in Auschwitz and then a camp called Mauthausen. It was one of the very worst camps. Then they sent me somewhere in Germany, near Leipzig, to an underground camp where I never saw light for a year. This camp was an anti-aircraft factory. We all got very sick with typhus. Out of 2,500 prisoners and Germans, only 300 survived."

When he was 18, two German soldiers marched him and four other Jewish prisoners from the concentration camp into the woods to be shot. Once in the woods, one soldier turned to the other and said: "The war is almost over. Why don't we just let them go?"

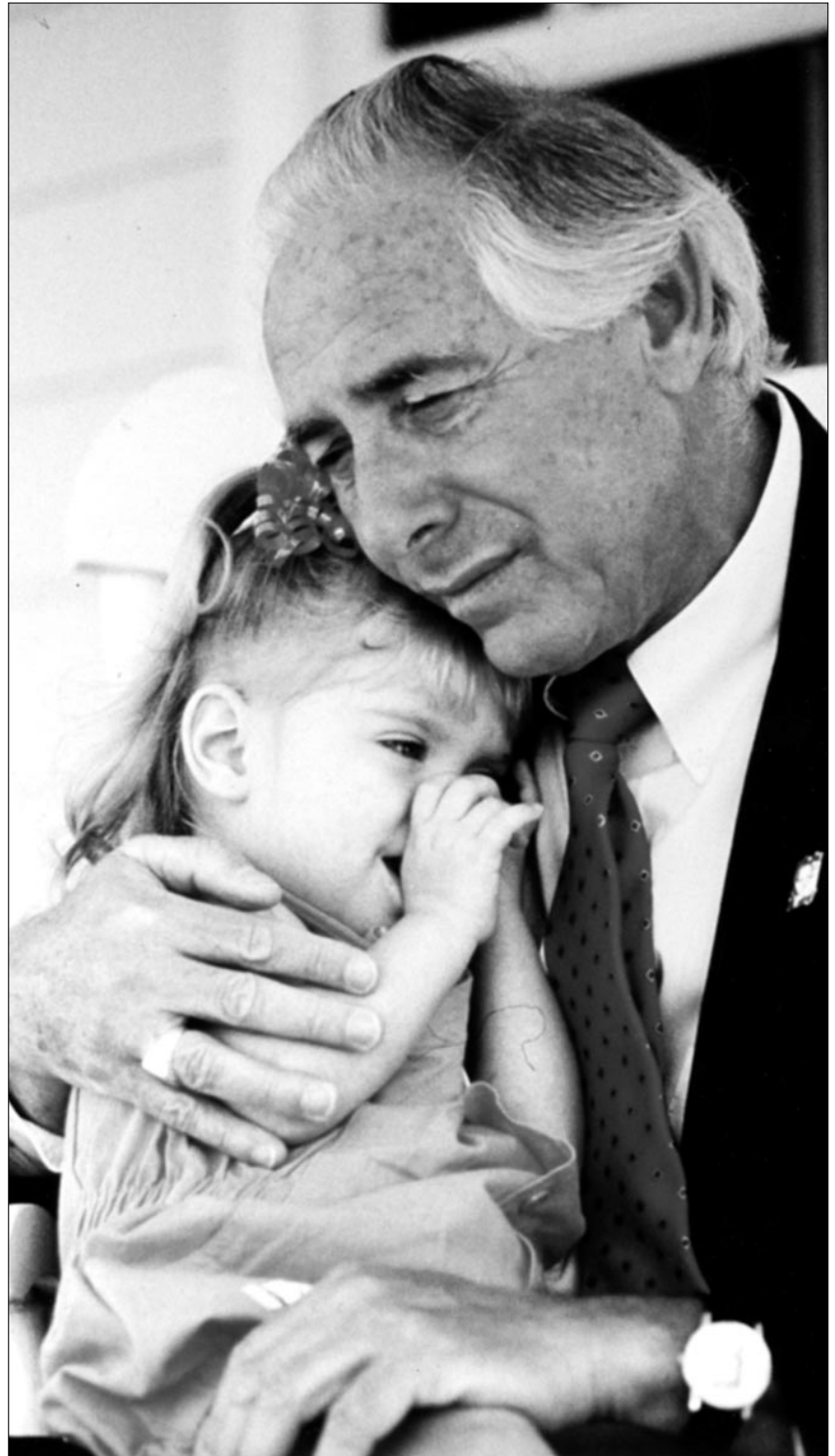
The other soldier agreed, so they untied the prisoners and yelled, "Run!" Whether by fate, luck or miracle, Landwirth believes his life was spared for a reason, some greater purpose. He was given a second chance at life — and he has used it well.

In 1949, a new world opened up for Landwirth. That year he found his twin sister, Margo, alive in Germany and crossed the Atlantic Ocean with \$20 in his pocket. A year later, unable to read or write English, Landwirth was drafted. Instead of being assigned to the war zone in Korea, he was sent to New Jersey, where the Army thought his skills as a diamond cutter would be useful in cutting crystals used in field radios. He finished his tour of duty and then used the G.I. Bill to study hotel management.

The ideas behind Give Kids the World grew in Landwirth's mind during the early 1980s while he was hosting terminally ill children at his hotel in Kissimmee, Fla., near Disney World. His dreamland for children materialized in 1986. Give Kids the World Village opened on 35 acres of land with 56 custom-designed villas for visiting families, a restaurant in the shape of a gingerbread house, a stocked fishing pond, a swimming pool, a playground, nature trails, an ice-cream parlor, a chapel — and its own mascot, Mr. Clayton, a five-foot gray rabbit with a top hat, who greets the kids and tucks them in at night.

The village provides free housing, food, transportation and attraction tickets to more than 300 families a month — more than 4,000 each year. Volunteerism is the heart of all this. Most of the staff is selected each week from about 1,200 names on the village's volunteer database: 500 people each week.

"My life is a miracle," Landwirth says. "I feel it is my duty to give something back. You have got to give of yourself — not money but the essence of yourself. That is what makes life meaningful."



Henri Landwirth, a holocaust survivor, embraces terminally ill children through Give Kids the World.

TEEN TIMES

A SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION OF THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE'

By, For and About the Junior High and High School Divisions

Issue No. 10, June 20, 1997



Amy Son

Amy Son, New York

Adjusting to Life in America

I am 17 years old and a senior in high school. I am very happy to share this experience with you. I came to the United States four years ago with my family, but due to differences in language and culture I had a very difficult time adjusting. However, because of the members' support, I overcame many problems.

I joined the high school division when I was 14. At first, I didn't know anything about this group so I just attended the meetings. As my English improved, I participated more in the division and helped plan for big meetings.

One of my best experiences was last June, when

SGI President Ikeda visited New York. I noticed everyone who had met President Ikeda before cried as soon as they saw him. I wondered why they did that. I knew President Ikeda was this wonderful person who cared, but why would they cry just from looking at him? I couldn't understand it.

Strangely enough, when I saw President Ikeda, I finally understood. I reflected on my recent struggles and realized I had fought so hard to overcome a lot of my problems. I started to cry because I was able to say I won! Just the way President Ikeda always encourages us to.

Before President Ikeda came to New York, I was in a great deal of pain and suffering. I had lost my lovely father three years earlier and with him I lost all my hopes

and dreams. I did not know what I was doing or where I was headed.

I never gave up on my practice. I continued to chant and have confidence in myself. I soon realized how important it is to have hopes and dreams. Without them it would be difficult to find my way. This was not my only problem. I also had trouble with my family, school and Buddhist practice.

As a teenager, I hated study and I thought I would never like it. I fought with my mom. We had a difference of opinion about all sorts of things. I never tried to understand my mom. I would either fight with her until she gave in or else I would ignore her. It was terrible.

PLEASE SEE SON, C

PARKER MAYNARD, LAS VEGAS

Can't Cruise to Our Goals

I want to share with you an experience from my wonderful life at 13 years. First, how many of you think, "My life is going pretty good — not many problems, just about right"?

Just cruisin' along in life and you're starting to get a little lenient with your practice. Then a little speed bump comes along: an obstacle. You practice vigorously until you obtain that cruisin' state of life again.

The way I feel is that when things are cruisin', we get lazy and settle for a life-condition that could be much more.

This is what occurred when my father and I endured this experience. It has been just me and my dad since I

was 7 years old. We maintain a very good friendship as well as a great father-son relationship.

It wasn't but a year ago that my dad was laid off because of management changes. Until then we had achieved a cruisin' state of life. My dad and I were happy with our status. My dad had always reassured me that everything was OK and that there was nothing to worry about.

Now, because of being laid off, my dad started to chant vigorously in front of

the Gohonzon. I soon realized that I also must make a cause to start to see benefits. After count-

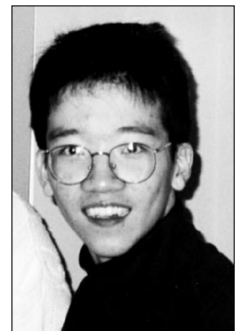
'The way I feel is that when things are cruisin', we get lazy and settle for a life-condition that could be much more.'

PLEASE SEE MAYNARD, C

Know the Enemy II

The War Against Teen Depression — A Victorious Struggle

Introduced by JOHN WEN
New York City



John Wen

The following was written as a high school project. (The first of this three-part project appeared in the May 16 "Teen Times.")

Many teens suffer from depression in high school. The following is one student's recent personal experience. He is 17 years old, a senior, his major is chemistry, he has a 85.2 average on his most recent transcript and attends Brooklyn Technical High School:

My depression went from the summer of '95 to the beginning of '96. During the summer I realized that I couldn't focus on the task at hand. As a result I wasted the entire summer vacation. Realizing that I hadn't accomplished my goals, I went to talk to people for advice even though I did not really know them. The advice was not to

PLEASE SEE DEPRESSION, B

DEPRESSION, FROM PAGE A

my satisfaction. I felt worse when I could not find someone who could help me. The situation worsened when I went back to school in September.

During the first semester I was under much stress from my classes. I had two Advanced Placement classes and one honors class. All these demanded a lot from me. Besides that, I had some hard teachers for my regular classes. Due to so much work, I only had a maximum of three hours of sleep every day including weekends for the first 90 days. I became lost because I had so much to do and so little time to do it. I had no sense of direction and no target or goal. I even thought about suicide sometimes. I thought that it would be so much easier if all my pain just ended.

Besides having problems in school, I had domestic problems as well. The cause of the problem was my father. As far back as I can recall, my father would usually come home to eat dinner and then leave after he was finished. Consequently, I could never have a quiet dinner with the entire family. My father would also criticize my grades no matter how good they were, and my ethnic origin since I am an Asian American. He painted a broad picture on certain ethnic groups with what little information he had.

Recently my family — brother, sister and mother — told me the truth about my family. They did this because they thought it was time that I knew the truth and they believed that I could handle it. I found out the truth about my parents' marital status. They have been divorced since I was in my mother's womb. I always thought that they were married. In addition, I was told of all the pain and suffering that my family had gone through.

I decided to call one of my friends for advice. He asked how I felt about my current situation and what my reactions were. I finally found a person that would listen to me as a friend, who experienced what I experienced, who would talk to me and not down at me. I learned so much in that one hour.

My friend called me a week

later. This time I talked to him about my problems in school. When I finished talking, the first thing he told me was to take care of my health. If I did not, he said, then I would not be able to focus or stay awake in my classes. He



Teenage stress

Youths between age 15 and 18 from 41 countries have been asked what they worry about.

Getting a good job	70%
Parents' health	63%
Loss of a loved one	57%
Ending education	54%
Own health	54%
University exams	52%

SOURCES: News reports, KRT Photo

was right because I kept falling asleep in my classes. One time, the teacher was standing right in front of my desk when I woke up from my nap.

My friend said that by staying up late frequently to study, my mind would be blank the next day. He said that sleep will eventually catch up to me no matter how long I attempted to ignore it. The human body needs to recharge so it will be prepared for the next day.

He suggested that since I wanted to change my attitude, then I should start by being more appreciative of what I have. He reminded me how lucky I was to have friends and a family that cared so much about me. He said that to boost up my confidence, I could try to set some small challenges or goals for myself. For example, he suggested that I write down all the things that I wanted to accomplish in a day the night before, put them into categories like school, friends, home, etc., then prioritize them from most important to least. He said that if I can get at least most or all of the important ones, then I have accomplished a lot. If not, then just try again the next day. He told me that I should never give up.

He also suggested that I could picture myself looking at the office of what I wanted to be. Everything was there — my secretary, desk and my first customer. All I had to do was to step through the door.

Another technique was to ask myself questions about my goals when I lose focus — questions like "What do I want to accomplish?" "How am I going to achieve my goals?" and "Why do I want to achieve my goals?" Once I know


flexible with my priorities. I should stick to my priorities, but if something urgent happens, I should adjust confidently.

My friend suggested that for my domestic problems, my family should stick together and be open with one another. When he told me this, the thoughts of suicide vanished because I began to think of the sadness and pain I would cause my friends and family. I realized that it would be a coward's way out. I thought that to face all my problems would be a challenge, and I will conquer each one. Also, I realized that if I did commit suicide, then I would live with regrets, knowing that I have yet to fulfill my dream or do the things I want to do.

Sometime later, my family decided that it would be best that we separate from my father. My mother told him not to come back unless he changed his ways.

My close buddy called me later to check on me. I told him what transpired, and he asked my feelings about the situation. I told him that I was relieved because I could never really communicate with my father without him criticizing me. I still respect and love him as a father. If it wasn't for him, I would not have been born.

'One important thing, [my friend] said, was that when I choose my goals, always ask myself who am I doing this for.... If I am doing it for someone else, then I am not following my dreams, so then I will not be eternally happy. He also said that I should follow my own path in life. If I follow another person's path, then there would be no challenge in my life.'

Well, it has been a few months since this 17-year-old student wrote this story. He is still talking with his friend. During this time he has become more organized, but not enough; become more appreciative of what he has; changed his attitude toward life; and taken better care of his health. Now he always tries to keep a smile on his face, no matter what happens. He has related with his friends who are suffering from similar situations. Some have even asked him for advice on relationships even though he has never had a girlfriend. He tries to give his best opinion, and lo and behold the advice works. Now people ask him why does he always have a smile on his face? As of now his domestic life has improved, and he is more open with his family as they are with him. His life in school has improved as well. The consequences from this depression have all been good. He knows that he will be prepared to handle it if another one comes lurking about. 

how and why I do things, I should act on them.

One important thing, he said, was that when I choose my goals, always ask myself who am I doing this for. If I am doing it for myself, then I will be eternally happy. However, if I am doing it for someone else, then I am not following my dreams, so then I will not be eternally happy. He also said that I should follow my own path in life. If I follow another person's path, then there would be no challenge in my life. Last, he suggested that I should be strict but

SON, FROM PAGE A

I had another problem. Even though I had been practicing Buddhism for 13 years, I never told my school friends that I am Buddhist.

Whenever they would ask me what my religion was, I would say I didn't have a religion or that I was going to church. I did not have the courage or confidence to tell my friends the truth.

I finally determined that I wanted to be happy. I chanted to overcome all my problems. Every time I got angry and felt like hitting someone, I would chant. I found this to be the best way to calm myself down and to understand what I was doing.

I finally began to understand my mother's pain. I began to communicate more with her. Now I feel we have the best relationship in the world.

Regarding my practice, I reflected on the Gohonzon's power. I saw that when I was struggling and didn't know what to do, my members and leaders would be there for me and continually support me. I now see, with daimoku and support, I overcame all my obstacles.

Nowadays, I have confidence in this Buddhism and can tell my friends how proud I am to be a member of the SGI-USA. Because of what I have learned by showing actual proof in my daily life, people look up to me and respect my religion.

I have built my connection to President Ikeda by reading his guidance. He said:

Suffering is to be found in any age. Irrespective of the era, youth is a time of problems, pains and confusion. Your future depends on the efforts you make and whether or not you are walking the correct path. It's not important how you compare to others, but how you compare to who you were yesterday. If you see that you've advanced even one step, then you've achieved a victory.

Like President Ikeda said, the most important thing is to never give up. No matter how difficult the problems we may face, I have come to realize that if we try and don't give up, we will succeed. I'm sure of that!

MAYNARD, PAGE A

less hours in front of the Gohonzon, my dad started to make the causes to see benefits.

We then started to see benefits in many ways.

Soon after, my dad received a job in one of the local hotel casinos as an entertainer and waiter.

This may not seem to you to be such a great benefit since many people have acquired jobs by chanting. But I truly developed and learned many things from this experience, one being that no matter how good things may be going I must always keep practicing vigorously to achieve a higher life-condition.



Parker Maynard

An "OK" life-condition or "pretty good" one is not good enough.

Don't settle for how things are going; keep making causes and never give up.

Dedication to My Mother

By LESLIE LEGRA
Houston, Tex.

I love writing poetry. I started writing when I was 12 years old and I have had the fortune to have two of my poems published. This would have never happened if I were not practicing.

The following poem I wrote for my mother. She's been practicing for 15 years and she has never given up on me. She taught me how to practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, and I dedicate this to her.

I Know You'll Get Me Through

Karma condemns me from all that I know, but then comes a phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo Obstacles each day, disbelief And dismay painful walls to face Karma to be traced.

Failure or success, no room for the Rest only the strong survive only The faithful ones can be.

The ones who practice have the opportunity. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo A phrase so simple but sincere.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo A sound so sweet and pure.

I know you'll get me through Nam-myoho-renge-kyo It's sure to help you too!

By ART CONGDON
Lansdowne, PA.

SGI President Ikeda often says that for kosen-rufu to happen youth must possess the courage of a lion. Only with this spirit will world peace become a reality. As future leaders of the SGI, we must meet the challenge head-on.

Our society has traditionally placed little emphasis on giving youth leadership responsibilities. In addition, young people who are standing up for kosen-rufu face the added obstacle of peer pressure.

When I first heard about Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in February 1996, I was reluctant to chant. I wondered how my friends would react. Would they be accepting or laugh it off thinking "isn't Buddhism a bunch of monks in a

monastery praying to a statue of a little fat guy?"

In the year that I have been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism I have overcome the fear of criticism and I now tell others about chanting and bring them to meetings. I have seen major improvements in my life: becoming more composed, developing a more cheerful personality and opening up my life to people I encounter. I have received scholarship offers and have chosen to attend Temple University in Philadelphia this fall in the honor physics program.

I have learned through faith, practice and study to follow my ideals and not be swayed by negative influences.

I am determined to respond to President Ikeda by continuing to practice with the courage of a lion, no matter what!

**My
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By NORI KAJIYAMA
San Francisco

Significant Date: July 3 — Day of Mentor and Disciple

The Heart of a Disciple

Nichiren Daishonin established Buddhism for the sake of all people's happiness. Despite threats and persecutions by the government, he taught that by following his teachings one can overcome any obstacle and reach ultimate happiness in this lifetime.

In the spirit to teach all people about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (the mentor) and Josei Toda (the disciple) created the Soka Gakkai (Value-Creation Society). Mr. Toda was thoroughly impressed by Mr. Makiguchi's views on education and the importance of developing a humanistic and peaceful society based on value-creation. Together they propagated the Daishonin's teachings, with Mr. Makiguchi taking the role as president of the organization and Mr. Toda as general director.

In July 1943, Japanese authorities arrested Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda as they refused to give up their faith. Mr. Toda pleaded again and again for the release of his mentor, willing to accept all punishment on his behalf, but to no avail. Being harshly treated and aged, Mr. Makiguchi did not survive, dying on Nov. 18, 1944.

Mr. Toda, although deeply saddened, vowed to continue the task left unfinished by his mentor. It was on July 3, 1945, that Mr. Toda was released from prison. Ill

and having lost everything, he nevertheless stood alone to rebuild the Soka Gakkai in war-torn Japan.

In 1951, after enormous contemplation, self-reflection, and forsaking personal business interests, Mr. Toda accepted the position of president of the Soka Gakkai. In seven short years he surpassed his incredible pledge to convert 750,000 households before his death.

In August 1947 a young man of 19, Daisaku Ikeda, attended his first lecture on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism led by Mr. Toda. Ikeda had found the answer to his question on the correct way to live. From then on, he devoted himself to learn and work hard alongside Mr. Toda.

Years later, on July 3, 1957, Mr. Ikeda was arrested on false charges in connection with a vote-buying scheme. He plead guilty to the charges to protect Mr. Toda and the Soka Gakkai. The charges were later dropped after his innocence was proven in a court of law. This action of devotion reflected the heart of the disciple to be one with the mentor: to fight for justice and the sake of all people's happiness, without begrudging one's life. This mirrored the same conviction Mr. Toda had held for Mr. Makiguchi.

ships throughout the world are boundless.


As a disciple, how can I show my appreciation?

Thank you cards and gifts are thoughtful. But I believe that living a courageous, successful life based on the humanity of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the greatest thank you of all; not only to President Ikeda, but to my family, teachers, and friends alike.

It is my determination to learn how to fight for kosen-rufu alongside President Ikeda — not follow behind him. I will develop my faith, practice and study through prayer and action. I will declare: "Don't worry, President Ikeda, I will take care of kosen-rufu for my neighborhood, my town, my country, my world!"

I feel that it is our fortune to live in the same era as President Ikeda. I am determined to seek out his words, attend discussion meetings, participate in youth division activities, read SGI publications, and use President Ikeda's guidance and my experiences with this practice to encourage others as well.

As youth, we can grow and expand our limitations, develop our minds and abilities to be great human beings, and create a new history of civilization as great role models and mentors in the next millennium.

In my lifetime, I pledge to introduce hundreds of millions of people who have never experienced Nam-myoho-renge-kyo! 

The following is an excerpt from the monthly study material from the Baltimore Territory, junior high and high school divisions study group:

Nothing Stays the Same

Like Shakyamuni, Nichiren realized that nothing in life stays the same. In fact, the one thing he could count on was that everything would change. You might have come to this same realization, particularly if you have experienced the death of someone close to you, or if you have had to move, changing schools and making new friends. Just moving from grade school to middle school to high school involves the changing of friendships, new routines, new teachers to get used to.

Beyond this realization, however, Nichiren had become enlightened to an even deeper truth. Underlying this vast sea of change was a single


penetrating existence or entity that was constant throughout time and space. That is, this entity remained the same throughout the past, present and future (time) and permeated the entire universe (space). With this realization he set about studying for some 20 years to find documentary proof of his realization and to find the best way to make this accessible to everyone.

Suppose you look at old baby pictures of yourself. You can hardly recognize yourself in them. Turning the pages of your photo album you see your first-grade school picture. The person you were in first grade, what you wanted, what you thought about, is vastly different than the person you are now. Yet,

throughout all of that, you have still been *you*. That has never changed. Underlying this you who is you in this lifetime is the core of you that will never change throughout all of your lifetimes, no matter where you are born. That's the entity that Nichiren Daishonin discovered.

This single entity he discovered to be Myoho-renge-kyo. This is the title of all of the sutras (or books) taught by Shakyamuni. You've probably noticed this at the beginning of the different sections in gongyo (sometimes called part "A," part "B" and part "C"). Nichiren added *Nam*, meaning devotion, to Myoho-renge-kyo. This shows that the essential ingredient in activating Myoho-renge-kyo is the human

being, for it takes the human being to express devotion to — or practice — the Mystic Law. How did Nichiren decide that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo was the name of this entity?

Shakyamuni declared that the Lotus Sutra was his ultimate teaching. However, the key to reform individual lives was buried within the text. Nichiren unearthed this key, so to speak, and gave it a name — or rather, called it by its rightful name, the Buddha's name. When you try to call one of your friends on the phone, you will not connect if you don't dial the number exactly right. Similarly, without calling the Buddha's name, you will never unlock your potential. Everything has a correct name. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the correct name to reach the Buddha within. 

Contributed by Susan Daly