

World Tribune

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THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

JULY 18, 1997

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A bloodstained sidewalk in Philadelphia, marked by flowers after a homicide, is a reminder that violence is real for many families. A seminar by the SGI-USA's Youth Peace Conference focussed on raising people's awareness.

Stop! In the Name of Peace

By **LESLIE WINES**
CORRESPONDENT
New York, June 14

Gunshot wounds. The self-contempt of a child abuse survivor. An irrational fear of sudden movements and open spaces. Napalm scares. A terror of poorly lit urban streets. The decaying remains of a bombed-out village. A lifetime of exorbitant medical bills.

Every sane person is repelled by the effects of violence. Hardly anyone remains untouched these days. Thus the SGI-USA's Youth Peace Conference decided to sponsor Anti-Violence Awareness Day at the New York Culture Center today as a kickoff to its nationwide distribution of anti-violence videos and instructional kits. (Districts should receive them sometime this fall.)

A great deal of research preceded the event. Said YPC organizer Denise Royale: "We studied Gandhi and his philosophy of nonviolence and found that the desire to end violence and to promote justice is what Buddhism has been about for the last 3,000 years."

Because violence is a reality

for many Americans today, helping people protect themselves is a form of bodhisattva action, according to Tod Randolph, organizer of the event's 14 workshops. David Bogoslaw, a member of the event's steering

committee, elaborated: "The kosen-rufu movement exists to rid the world of its misery. In the past, some of us may have gotten the wrong idea, deciding Buddhism was about creating a safe little world to hide in. That's not it at all. Taking on the violence issue is in many ways like confronting the problems within the priesthood. It forces us to deal with the real problems in the world and not pretend that they don't exist."

The subject of violence isn't exactly upbeat, but daimoku infused the event with positive energy.

"I chanted and chanted that SGI President Ikeda's heart and Nichiren Daishonin's wisdom would permeate this event," remarked panel discussion coordinator Tabu Zalez.

Art and music helped promote a cheerful atmosphere, as did the rousing cultural performance that topped off the event. Lois Litvin said that the organizers worked hard to ensure that no one left feeling overwhelmed or depressed. "We made sure that everybody who came with a problem left with a new sense of possible solutions," she said.

Workshop organizers helped participants discover the positive lessons in grim realities. A workshop on structural violence, organized by Vietnam

'The desire to end violence and to promote justice is what Buddhism has been about for the last 3,000 years.'

— Denise Royale,
Youth Peace Conference

CEC Adopts Changes to Leadership Procedures

Major decisions clear the way for a revised leadership manual. SGI-USA Council must approve certain rule changes.

By **DAVE McNEILL**
MANAGING EDITOR

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., June 28

After more than 18 months of talks, the Central Executive Committee adopted this weekend several major reforms in the way the organization is run. The decisions, reached after two grueling marathon sessions, clear the way for a revised leadership manual to be finalized by year's end.

"I am very excited about the discussions here, because they mean a major reform to our organization," General Director Zaitusu said.

The changes, though in many ways technical, symbolize CEC efforts to make the organization one that better fits with American society. Responding to members suggestions, the CEC tentatively adopted, among others, changes that would modify the way leaders are appointed, implement for the first time terms for leaders and bring some of the language we use regarding leadership more in line with U.S. culture.

Appointment Process

One of the most important issues for many was the leadership appointment process itself, and the current system was simplified this weekend. The current system calls for three levels of leadership to be involved in any leadership appointment: a recommending level, a review level and an approval level. For example, to appoint a district leader, the chapter leaders would make a recommendation, which the headquarters would review and the territory approve.

The new system will require only two levels to make the appointment: a recommending level

PLEASE SEE VIOLENCE, 4

PLEASE SEE CEC, 6

VOICES

What do you like best about the new neighborhood meetings?

Members from the San Francisco joint territories respond:



I like the neighborhood meeting mainly because it saves time. Before, I had to leave 45 minutes or an hour before the meeting to drive across town and pick up someone I wanted to bring to the meeting. It is much more convenient to meet nearby. I have attended one chanting session with about 10 other members and have been chanting together with other people in my neighborhood. It's a good way to connect with people.

— KAREN McMILLAN, San Francisco



Our neighborhood is really great. We have a lot of pioneer women in it and they have such depth of faith. So it's like gold. It's really been positive for me!

— KATHY D'OR-REID, San Francisco



We have been having meetings at our place in Richmond District for about one year. It's better than traveling across town and helps develop roots where you live. The members are happy to walk to the meetings and the guests are mainly from the area. At the last meeting we had 15 members and one guest. We average from eight to 14 people. Each month the people who come have more to contribute.

— DENNIS WEATHERS, San Francisco



It's like a fresh start for our organization. There are no rules or traditions to follow — we can invent our own format and it's a very free interchange of ideas, feelings, stories and experiences. It also lets me look at the basics of my practice once again.

— GEORGE ROSS JR., San Francisco



There is an earthiness about the neighborhood meetings. We had about 20 people at the last one. There is a friendliness and frankness there. It feels like the SGI is unfolding new branches and our human connections are becoming broader and deeper through these meetings. It's refreshing to make new friends — that's what it's all about. I feel the organization is growing more naturally.

— FREEMAN CHEE, San Francisco



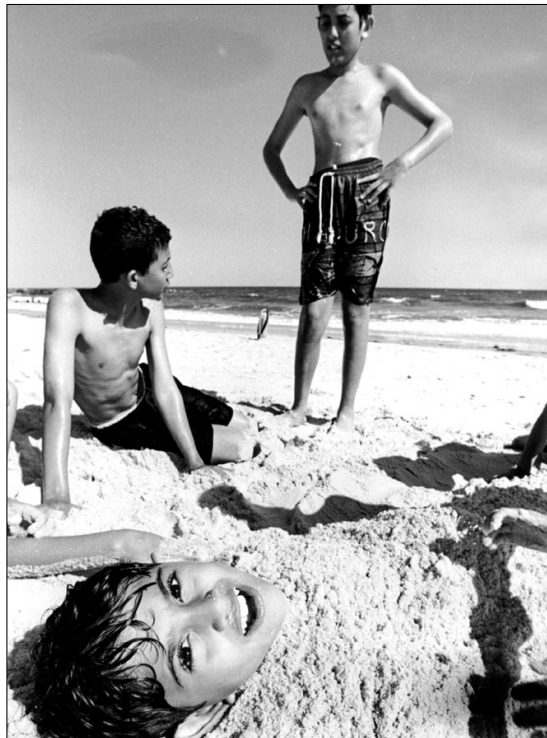
I get to meet new people. I've been practicing 24 years and now I see people who practice in other districts — it's encouraging to me! If I move to another location, I would feel the meeting there is already in place and I would feel comfortable going.

— SYLVIA CLARK, San Francisco

Each week (except when we run "Question of the Month"), members of one joint territory will respond to a question on life, Buddhism or the organization.

Expressions

Summer's Here



Children playing at Long Beach, N.Y. Photo by Kirk Condyles.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: 'How do you attract and support young people in your district?'

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, or e-mail us at: SokaNews@aol.com.

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

More On 'Opening'

In reflecting on the process of "opening the [Nebraska] headquarters through dialogue" (June 20 *World Tribune*, p. 1), it occurred to me that there were some important steps not included in the article.

Early in the process, I, as the headquarters chief, asked the planning board members if they participated in discussions to advance their own opinions or to support my opinions. About half of the leaders confessed to the latter. Expressing my gratitude for their support, I asked that they try to openly express their own thoughts on any agenda item.

Thinking that to be a partial solution, we then established an "executive board" of the headquarters men's and women's division leaders. We hoped that the other planning board members — chapter leaders and headquarters youth division leaders — could discuss items more openly if we were not participating.

When this youthful planning board came to the exec board for approval of their actions, it became clear that the exec board level would not work. If it was possible for the execs to overrule the planning board, which had discussed the items in earnest, this would be disrespectful on the part of the execs. If there were wisdom in the men's and women's headquarters leaders, that wisdom should be tested in open dialogue.

The next stage in our development recombined the planning board and executive board. As we met together then, I was pleasantly surprised how we could discuss all matters without consciousness of level or position. And if there were any wisdom in the senior members or important SGI tradition known only to the seniors, it would come out so all could see and evaluate. A great camaraderie developed; we all felt we were heading in the same direction.

This all occurred before the district leader forums were begun. I hope this additional information is useful.

— RALPH HICKEN, Omaha, Nebr.

You Go, Brass Band!

I agree with Cathi King's letter on the Brass Band and Music Corps in general (June 20 "Mailbox"). I've been practicing since late 1969 and was a so-called hippy during high school and my first semester in junior college. The Brass Band really made me straight and helped train me for society and being responsible as a young man and as an adult. I was in the Brass Band until 1977 and later joined the bagpipe band. I marched in Hawaii in 1975 and 1985 and New York in 1976. In 1972, I played trombone in the Los Angeles convention.

Because of the spirit of the SGI practice and the practice of my instrument, I could become a third trumpet and play in the Hollywood Bowl and Louis Armstrong Stadium in New York. I'm not and never was a professional musician, and never even played an instrument till I joined the Brass Band.

I'm glad there is a revival of the music movement in the SGI-USA now. This will really help youth and all the members.

Briefly, in our district, our men's division and young men's division members are creating a blues and pop rock-type band. We played at a district meeting and every member enjoyed it. When we practice, I try to relate my experience of the Brass Band to the younger members.

— PHILIP RAY, Santa Barbara, Calif.

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

In the "Mailbox," we will publish members' comments, suggestions and questions as they pertain to the World Tribune. Because of volume, not all letters can be printed, but they are all read. All letters are subject to condensation.

**Ode to Our
'Supporting Pioneers'**

PERSPECTIVE

By **FLETCHER DALTON**
BOSTON

Earlier this year I attended a Buddhist memorial service for a man I never heard recite gongyo or chant daimoku. Nonetheless, I had attended many discussion meetings in his home, chanted there before setting out on visits to members accompanied by his wife and daughter, and enjoyed many wonderful conversations with him and his family.

At the service he was remembered as a true gentleman, a person completely at ease with the members and the public at large. He was called a good neighbor, an exemplary worker, a fine husband and father.

Over the years, I've had the fortune to be acquainted with others like this man, people I like to call the "supporting pioneers" of world peace — men and women and children who do not participate in discussion or planning meetings, but who graciously allow their homes and cars to be used for our faith activities or who give up their time in countless ways, like driving family members to activities and taking messages on the phone.

It happens that some of these people were initially opposed to

the practice. But failing to coerce or bully their spouses into inactivity, they developed — perhaps grudgingly at first — an appreciation of the advances being made by their family members and gradually ceased opposition.

From the supporters' point of view, it must not have been easy to see people coming into their homes they had not invited and did not know — people, moreover, who seemed to have a multitude of troubles. As members' circumstances changed for the better and familiarity no longer bred contempt, the attitude of these non-practicing family members must have changed. It helped, too, I feel, that district members were always chanting for the happiness of the hosts.

I always found it encouraging that in this man's family there were never any excuses made for him. None were ever needed. When I inquired about him, his wife would say: "Oh, he's fine. He'd like you to come have dinner with us sometime." In other cases, I recall, my inquiry about a spouse would be met with an apologetic response, such as "He's OK, for someone who doesn't practice," or some similar disparagement.

Non-participation does not indicate a non-seeking mind. On the final night of his life, this supporting pioneer asked his daughter several questions about the Buddhist view of life

and eternity. He requested that he be carried into the living room so he could hear his wife recite gongyo one last time.

At the service, this couple was described as a perfect alliance. They respected each other and were respected by everyone who came into contact with them. Encountering each other was described as an example of mutual good fortune.

Twelve years ago, SGI President Ikeda said: "There are many senior members who have sunk their roots firmly into their local communities. These individuals do not perform their roles in the spotlight of center stage, but rather through their consistent efforts have gradually won the trust of the people in their communities. The presence of these individuals, who are now in their 50s and 60s, having matured as human beings and become sources of assurance to their families and communities, has greatly contributed to our growth." I feel this is also true of our supporting pioneers.

I really appreciate their efforts over the decades. I am encouraged when I think of the vast, inconspicuous network of support they have formed for our organization, from Maine to Hawaii. Through their good will, they have helped to create a nurturing, harmonious atmosphere in which our districts have flourished. ❖

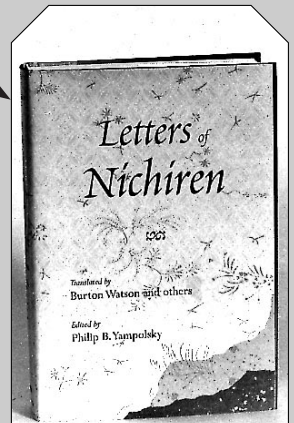
**ENJOY LIFE!
STUDY MORE OFTEN!**

(hardcover)

**Translated by Burton Watson and others
Edited by Phillip Yampolsky**

This final work of the late Prof. Yampolsky of Columbia University is an essential and comprehensive collection of more than 70 letters (Gosho) by Nichiren Daishonin. Translated for the general reader.

Price: \$39.00 M/O #: 0352



ANTI-VIOLENCE AWARENESS

How Can Violence Be Stopped at a Moment of Intense Crisis?

By KIM KASSIRA
NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

An outstanding group of professional actors approached this topic on Anti-Violence Awareness Day by presenting several scenes from the play *I Am a Man*, which depicts African American union workers in dispute with their city's mayor. The first scene opened in the union hall, with union president Mr. Jones (played by young men's division member Gordon Skinner) speaking to the union — plus several church leaders and a representative from the mayor's office — about asbestos health hazards. Since the hazards often resulted in death and continued to be ignored by the city, the workers decide to strike.

The mayor finally agrees to meet with the workers. At first the mayor tries to bribe Mr. Jones with a director's position for much more money. This infuriates the union members, including Mr. Jones, who refuses. He says he cannot be bought and that the union is prepared to strike. After a verbal outburst by the mayor, Mr. Jones becomes uncontrollably angry, knocks the mayor to the ground and screams: "I am a man! You hear what I say? I AM A MAN!"

At this moment in the presentation, Gordon Skinner stopped the scene and asked the audience to separate into two groups and discuss possible solutions.

Group A members observed that the workers had not pinpointed their specific goals, agendas or needs. The workers should have been less emotional and come to the bargaining table with a more solid foundation. Group A also felt that the mayor had no negotiating skills and was way out of line in attempting to bribe Mr. Jones.

Group A's resolution called for a mediator to aid communication. The group decided that Mr. Jones needed to apologize for his angry physical and verbal outburst toward the mayor and that he also needed to take that energy and put it into making sure his fellow workers had a solid agenda, educational program and health benefits.


Group B members also believed that the two parties needed to close the gap. They noticed the obvious conflict between the mayor's interests and the people's power. They viewed the union as a group of humanists who needed to make a humanistic connection with the mayor.

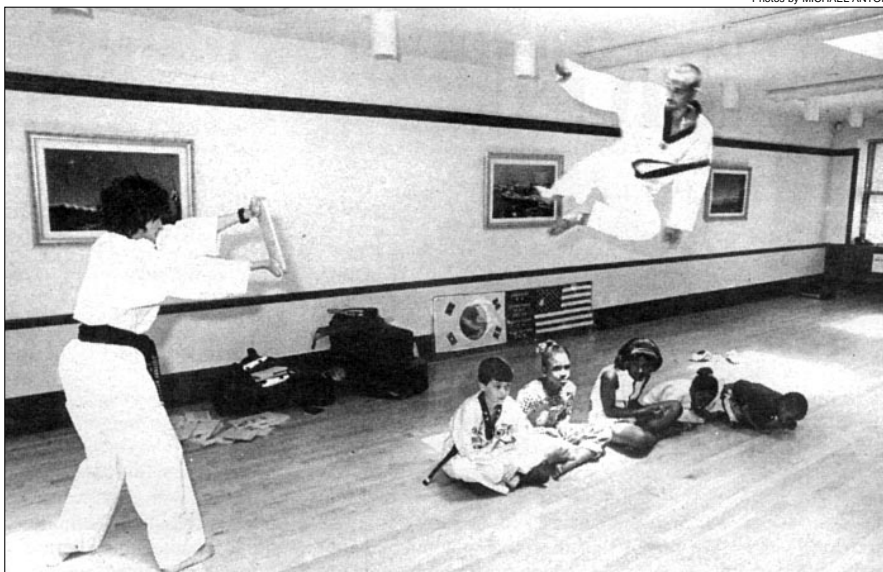
Group B's resolution included creating more of a joint coalition of issues and ideas. They thought the mayor and Mr. Jones should both exercise some restraint. The rest of the group's ideas included educational programs for the workers, each side listening to the needs of the other, and the mayor understanding the seriousness of the asbestos problem.

Groups A and B came together and shared their ideas with the actors, whereupon the actors left the room for a few minutes and went to work. When they returned to the stage, they replayed the scene, starting from the heated exchange between the mayor and Mr. Jones.

In the new scene, a minister from the community intervenes. She pleads for peace and proposes that the two gentlemen collect themselves. She then tells them of the ideas she has for the creation of an educational program for the workers and the mayor. She also informs everyone that the mayor just happens to be an old friend of the president of the NAACP.

The mayor realizes he would be in trouble if the union turns against him. Mr. Jones then extends his hand to the mayor and apologizes for his outburst. The mayor promises to set up an educational program for workers and management and asks Mr. Jones what else he and the union desire.

At that point, the audience applauded not only the more positive outcome of the scene but also the fine efforts of the actors — and themselves. 



On Anti-Violence Awareness Day, children duck in awe during demonstration of martial arts, which unbeknownst to many is an ancient spiritual discipline created to prevent outbreaks of violence.

Awareness: STOP! In the Name of Peace

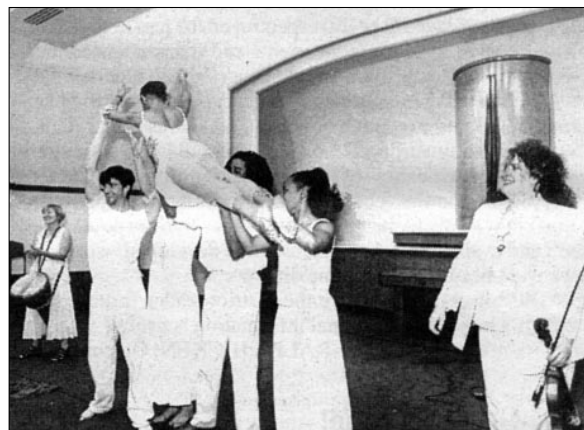
VIOLENCE, FROM PAGE 1

War veteran John Gentile, included a heart-wrenching account by Yiorgos Mannouris of the napalm bombing of his native village in Cyprus when he was 12 years old: The young boy's bleeding was so profuse after the attack that two bath towels were not enough to staunch it.

Mannouris added that this horror shaped his ideals of humanitarianism. "We moved out of our village after the bombing for a day or two," he said. "That 'day or two' has become 23 years. We became refugees, along with 200,000 other people. Everything we had built was gone. From my experience, I determined to work for the happiness and peace of others."

The "Roots of Violence Seminar" focused on child abuse as the basis of antisocial behavior. Workshop leader Sharon O'Connor, a former psychiatric social worker in New York City jails, reminded participants that under certain circumstances, many law-abiding people could slip over the edge. Interviews with members of the prison population had shown her that in certain ways they were "just like me." It's important, she said, to acknowledge their humanity. Combating crimes against children is a key to reducing violence over time, Ms. O'Connor believes.

New York University professor Aye Kyaw related a horror story of leaving his native Burma after a repressive regime



(Above) A mini-culture festival helps end the day on a joyous note. (Below) Participants learn that rhythm, teamwork, empowerment and pleasure are all ingredients of drumming at a 'Drumming for Peace Workshop.'



PLEASE SEE VIOLENCE, NEXT PAGE

**Awareness:
STOP! In the
Name of Peace**

VIOLENCE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE
killed more than 200 students and shut down all higher institutions of learning.

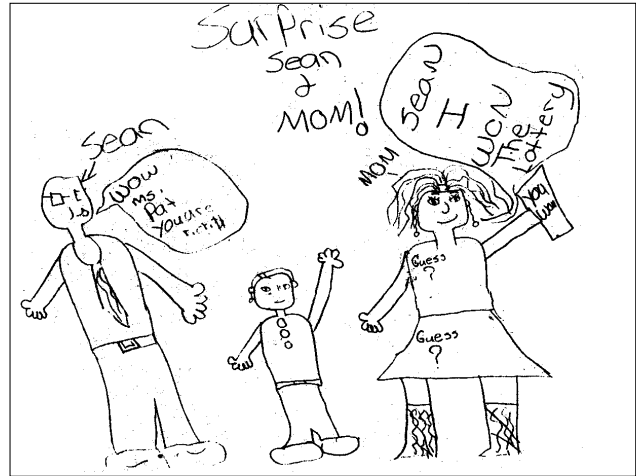
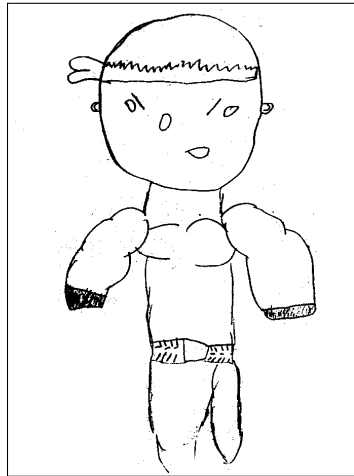
He praised his fellow countrywoman Aun San Kyo, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, who is a follower of the philosophy of nonviolence and a strong believer in the power of self-respect. "If you have no blessing for yourself, you have no blessing for others," he said.

The YPC members returned often to the link between self-respect and nonviolence.

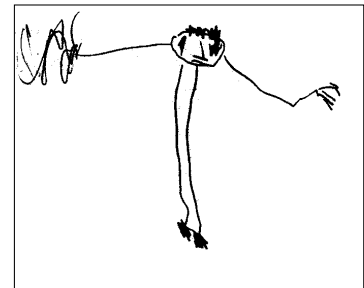
"What I learned from this event is that violence has everything to do with a denial of respect and self-respect," said Tod Randolph. "The basic tenet of our practice is the dignity of human life and all other living beings. This basic right, the confidence in one's Buddha nature, has to be extended to everyone if society is to change."

With additional reporting by
Brigid Witkowski

Expressions: Child Abuse Victims



During the anti-violence seminar in New York, one workshop focussed on the effects of child abuse. Several drawings by victims were displayed. The first self-portrait (top left) was drawn by a child, born a crack baby, who had severe disciplinary problems in school. Highly aggressive, he would bully other children and ignore all directives. Note how he portrays himself as exaggeratedly large and menacing, an omnipotent warrior. He postures himself against a very frightening world. Top right is a drawing by the same child after prolonged treatment with a compassionate social worker. His new-found security enables him to reclaim his childhood and allow adults to be bigger. The picture has a joyful tone where hope for a comfortable future prevails. The last portrait is by a different child who witnessed his father murder his mother while he was a toddler.



ANTI-VIOLENCE AWARENESS

Creating Peace Through Hip-Hop Music

Photo by MICHAEL ANTON

By GABRIELLE WISE
NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

Is the attempt to foster peace through hip-hop a flip-flop in better judgment?

The notion of hip-hop music as a catalyst for higher consciousness was the focal point of a panel discussion during Anti-Violence Awareness Day. Many participants arrived with the common perception of hip-hop as the delinquent son of rap music — an angst-ridden, violent mutation of the funk-infused, more jovial mother-genre.

Guest speaker and hip-hop artist Manny Martinez (a.k.a. T.G.I.), whose music contains self-empowering, positive messages, invited attendees to develop an expansive view of hip-hop. He advised them to go beyond the surface image of wilding boys blasting radios in subway cars. What seems like adolescent shenanigans is really a desperate cry for help and one of the few means of self-expression these youngsters have.

"Like graffiti, hip-hop is the voice of the people in its rawest form, a true cry of the ghetto," he said.

Another attempt to demystify the form came from Reggie Osse, a performing arts lawyer who represents hip-hop artists. He said that the music is a byproduct of the harsh inner-city life, nurtured by continuing discrimination and political apathy.

"The problem is not the music, it's so-



Hip-Hop artists, community activists and Buddhists exchange views on ways to create peace through Hip-Hop music and its significance as a vehicle of expression for youth.

ciety," he said. "These kids are acting out because they're mirroring the violent world they face every day. If we help to change their experience, the music will follow. Hip-hop is an effect, not a cause."

Reactions from the audience were emotionally charged: "I'm listening to what you're saying, but there's no way around my feelings," said one young woman. "I hate hip-hop! I cannot endorse any music that labels women bitches and whores."

Mr. Osse acknowledged the misogyny

in the music and maintained that these lyrics would not exist if they were not lived. "Sexism is one societal evil prevalent in these kids' lives," he said. "They're just mirroring their environment."

A young man saw hip-hop as a means to validate his day-in-the-life: "It's reassuring to hear about others' experiences of poverty and the grind in New York. I listen to one of these tunes and think, 'Hey, it's OK that I have to pluck roaches out of my cereal box sometimes.'"

Many young men stood up with sober expressions to pay tribute to friends who had died in gang-related incidences. They said the music provided a solace that helped keep their memories of loved ones alive.

Deeply felt comments also came from people with tear-stained faces whose negative viewpoint of hip-hop had changed during the discussion. In between sobs, a woman waxed contrite about harshly judging her nephew's interest in the music: "Now I see it's so much more than violence for its own sake. I really get it now."

Several resolutions to mitigating violence were offered by the audience and speakers alike at the close of the discussion. Most important, it was agreed that hip-hop artists should persist in bringing awareness to the forefront of society, as too often people ignore this music so they can remain in denial about the ugly truths of urban life. "People need to hear the lyrics precisely because they're so discomforting," someone said.

Other suggestions were on the importance of owning one's power to create desired changes in the environment, sharing verbal messages of peace and honoring the integrity of the individual. Many participants left with a new-found empathy for this musical genre, and the resolve to keep — and maybe even spread — the faith.

CEC, FROM PAGE 1

and an approval level. The third level will handle appeals and give support in the case of disputes. In the new system as with the old, the recommending level is one level above the one being appointed (district recommends group leaders; chapter leaders recommend district leaders, etc.). This change means less administration for every level and allows decisions to be made by those who work more closely with the people involved.

Terms for Leaders

In another major change, the CEC decided to implement three-year terms for all leaders. Until now, leadership appointments were for an indeterminate time. Leaders stay in the positions they are in until they are given a new assignment or until they decide to resign.

Under the new system, all leaders will be given a three-year term. Six months before the end of the term, a review process will begin. At the end of the review process, the same leader can be reappointed or someone new can be found. There is no limit to the number of terms a leader can serve, and a leader can resign before the term is up.

The point of the new system is to give leaders an opportunity to refresh their determinations and help revitalize the organization as a whole. It will also make it easier to put people in the right place according to their ability and time availability and to respond to the person's changing life circumstances.

Moreover, it is hoped that the new system will help clarify that a leadership position is not a badge of honor but a position of responsibility and that positions in the organization are functional and limited. As SGI President Ikeda said in 1990: "Differences of position in an organization are temporary and provisional. They are no more than an expedient means for enabling all members to practice joyfully and become truly happy."

Monitoring the end and renewal of terms will be implemented by each joint territory.

New Names

Several changes in the names of organizational levels and leadership positions were also proposed and discussed. Currently, the organization has eight levels: unit, group, district, chapter, headquarters, territory, joint territory and SGI-USA [national]. According to the streamlining

plan adopted in 1995, by the end of this year the organization will have only six levels. The CEC tentatively adopted the names of these levels to be: group, district, chapter, area, region and SGI-USA. The new names, it was felt, are more in line with American society.

The terms *chief*, *division* and *vice* were also discussed at length. Over the years many people have suggested changing these terms, which were originally translated from Japanese. The CEC decided to replace *chief* with *leader* in all uses. Hence, a district chief will be known as a district leader once the new manual takes effect.

The committee also decided to retain the term *division*, as in young women's division, men's division, etc., and the term *vice*, as in vice chapter chief, etc.

Many people said these revisions, though important, are really just a start. Reform of the organization comes down to the human revolution of individuals more than the changes in the system. But the changes adopted this weekend are significant because they indicate that the organization can reform itself from within and improve the way it promotes Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in America, people said.

The discussions themselves also showed how the democratic spirit to respond to the members and listen to all opinions is alive and well in the SGI-USA, said many youth division leaders attending for the first time.

Some of the proposed changes need to be considered by the SGI-USA Council in light of the Rules of the Religious Organization. The Council is expected to meet in the next few months. After approval, a final draft of the manual will be circulated for editorial suggestions with final approval scheduled to come in September. The new manual will then be printed and distributed free of charge to every leader.

The manual, which outlines the function and qualities of leaders, as well as how they are appointed, was first published in 1992. It was the SGI-USA's first attempt to act on President Ikeda's guidance in February 1990 that the organization's procedures be set down in writing. "It seems to me that [the SGI-USA] also has now entered a phase in which the rules and procedures of the organization must be further defined so as to enable members to take confident action," he said at the time.

Since that first printing, members across the country have offered suggestions on how to improve it. It was these suggestions



Vince Whipple, a Sioux/Navajo dancer, brings the crowd to its feet during L.A. #5 Joint Territory's Friendship Faire at the University of California at Irvine in Orange County, Calif.

Coming Together

A multicultural fair sponsored by the SGI-USA brought together more than 1,000 people on June 22.

"The wonderful part is that more than 60 percent of the performers are non-SGI members," said Theresa Hauber, the women's division chief of Los Angeles #5 Joint Territory, which sponsored the event.

Besides the performances, there were many multicultural dishes for the crowd to sample and several activities for children.

A retired university professor, who attended the festival with her neighbor, said she "couldn't think of a better way to spend a Sunday afternoon.... The implications are fantastic! We shouldn't all be alike. This educates people and changes attitudes. Each



Face and arm painting is just one activity designed for kids.

culture and language have different qualities, many of which can't be translated. But the performances are affecting people beyond their conscious level. This is education in the guise of entertainment."

Jan Schrieber said: "I love

cultural diversity. It gives me such a feeling of being part of the whole world. If we can do it on a smaller scale, then we can begin taking it to a larger scale."

—By DIANE STILES & KATE LLEWELLYN

that have been discussed for the past year and a half, with the final major questions addressed this weekend.

In other business:

- The CEC decided to confer the Nichikan-transcribed large Gohonzon as it becomes available to all members who wish to receive it, with some criteria. The criteria, which are still to be decided, include a minimum of 15 years of practice.

- The CEC decided to consider plans for forming official language groups within the organization. Many areas offer special meetings for members who speak

languages other than English. Meeting types include introductory meetings, study meetings and annual festivals. To better support each area's activities, including providing translated materials, the CEC will consider a plan for a national committee to be formed.

This weekend's conference was the first in a new system of CEC meetings decided upon last year. The CEC is scheduled to meet only twice a year, with all national-level leaders and all four-divisional chiefs from each joint territory attending. Previous conferences included only representatives from each joint territory. The new system allows for a greater sharing of opinions

and a greater mixture of men, women and youth involved in the decision-making.

The new system also calls for a smaller Standing Central Executive Committee, with representative national and joint territory leaders, to meet twice a year. The SCEC generally gathers for discussion purposes only, not to make decisions unless specifically asked to do so by the CEC. In regards to the leadership manual, the CEC has authorized the SCEC to approve the final draft at its meeting in September.

The next CEC is scheduled for December, at which time the committee will propose guidelines and schedules for 1998 and discuss other items to be announced. ❏

SAM HARRIS, ATLANTA

My Obstacles Are My Treasures

On Sept. 1 of this year, I will commemorate my 25th year of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I've been reflecting on and assessing my quarter-century.

At the age of 19, while serving in the U.S. Army, I spent 12 months in Vietnam. Several close friends were killed in that war. After experiencing the ultimate human tragedy of war, it was very easy for me to connect with the Buddhist concept of *kosen-rufu*. I became a member and started practicing when I was 22.

Reading Nichiren Daishonin's *Gosho*, I was fascinated by various Buddhist concepts, especially *karma* and the ten worlds. Studying the *Gosho* helped me to understand that with persistence I could overcome anything. I noticed that all of Nichiren Daishonin's disciples, who followed his guidance when difficulties arose, were victors in the end. I also read SGI President Ikeda's guidance consistently with a seeking mind.

During my first year of practice, two events had a tremendous impact on my faith as a new member. First, I chanted for a particular job that I really wanted, and I did not get it. The job offered an excellent salary, great fringe benefits, a good location and the opportunity for advancement. I was given an exam, which I passed, and had a very successful interview. But after all was said and done, I did not get the job. I was devastated. I thought that Buddhism had no power.

The person who introduced me to Buddhism, Dori Scales, encouraged me: "Sam, if you sincerely chanted for the job and did not get it, there must be a reason. Please have confidence and continue chanting."

Although I was angry, somehow I trusted Dori and continued to chant. Two weeks later, I received a job offer that brought with it all the things that the other job offered, plus 30 percent more pay. Naturally, I took the job and was very happy. Six months later, I found out that the company I was interested in initially had gone bankrupt and was out of business. At that moment, I realized the power and protection of the Buddhist gods. The *Gohonzon* had protected me from myself! I was overjoyed and, of

course, continued to practice.

The second event happened near the end of my first year of practice, my wife, Cynthia, decided to start practicing. When I asked her what moved her to practice, her response shocked me: "I see you becoming a better husband, a better father and a better person. If chanting can do that for you, then maybe I need to chant, too."

I had not chanted to become a better husband, father or person. I realized that practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism was benefiting my life in ways of which I was not even aware.

In March of 1974, I met President Ikeda for the first time in New Orleans. He gave a very interesting speech comparing the human body to the universe. I was fascinated by his words, but what impressed me most was that although there had been a table prepared on stage for him, he moved to the floor of the auditorium so that he could be closer to the members. I felt that this is a man I could follow and support. I knew I wanted to make him my mentor, and I determined that I would practice Buddhism for the rest of my life. President Ikeda named that gathering of members the Happiness Group.

At that time I was working at the Xerox Central Refurbishing Center. There were approximately 200 employees there. I began telling everyone about this great organization of which I was a part. I even told our plant manager. I was teased and criticized by many of my co-workers, but some of them gradually began practicing themselves and telling others. As a result, some of them are still practicing and taking leadership responsibilities in our organization today, more than 20 years later.

Although I did not actively seek leadership responsibility in our organization, I began to assume more responsibility for more members. This gave me a strong sense of fulfillment. It also enabled me to grow and develop, and challenge my weaknesses. I enjoyed chanting, studying, propagating and showing victory on my job.

However, there was one problem that kept following me — financial difficulties. I had good health and a happy marriage, but I just couldn't seem to overcome my

financial situation.

When I sought guidance from my seniors in faith about my financial situation, they explained to me about *karma*, saying: "Because of the negative causes you created in past lives, you suffer financial difficulties in this life. You must continue to practice so that you can overcome them." I continued to chant and challenge my financial *karma*.

In an effort to change my financial situation, I left my job at Xerox in 1981 to start my own business. The business failed in less than a year. My family and I experienced extreme financial difficulties. I decided to get back into the job market. But the country was in recession, and I couldn't seem to find a job anywhere. Our future looked hopeless. Things got so bad, I had to accept food stamps to feed my family.

I was a chapter leader at the time. Having no transportation, I had to ask various members for a ride to and from the community center. I could not afford to buy candles or incense for my altar. When the candles at the community center altar were used up and thrown out, I would get them and use them on my altar. Once, when a senior leader was visiting Atlanta, I remember dramatizing my financial situation by showing him the holes and cardboard in both of my shoes.

The frustration, humiliation and demoralization I felt at the time was tremendous. I hated to wake up each day and regain consciousness of my situation. I began to think, "Even if I find a job, I am so far under, I will never be able to overcome my situation."

My wife never complained during this time; she knew how badly I felt already. Instead, she continued to give me the warm encouragement and support I so desperately needed. The most painful part of this suffering was the fact that my family had to suffer with me.

I began to doubt my capability as a leader. I felt that if I could not manage my own affairs, how could I possibly lead the members? I met with my territory



Sam Harris with daughter, Mayumi, and wife, Cynthia. 'I realized that practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism was benefiting my life in ways of which I was not even aware.'

leader and told him I wanted to resign as a chapter leader because I was not worthy. He would not let me resign. Rather, he reminded me of why I began practicing Buddhism in the first place — to challenge my obstacles and change my life. I started chanting with a new sense of determination to win.

I still could not understand what causes I could have made in past lives that would cause me to suffer so severely in this life. What did I do to deserve this? Why me? Was I a mugger in my previous life? A burglar, a bank robber? What?

Then I came across a passage from President Ikeda on suffering and hardship. "Only if you have personally struggled and experienced hardships can you understand other people's hearts," he said. "Unless you go through difficulties, you cannot empathize with others' hardships. And if you are unable to understand others' struggles, you cannot be called a Buddhist leader."

This was the most important turning point in my practice. Because I could not see any connection between causes from past lives and hardships I was experiencing in this life, I always felt that I was just suffering to be suffering. This guidance gave my hardships a sense of purpose — this awareness gave me the strength I needed to persevere and win.

In February of 1983, I was hired by Konica Business Machines as a copier service technician. I began the slow process of trying to build a financial foundation. I was so happy to finally have a job. I appreciated my job so much, I worked much harder than everyone else. In 1985, I was selected as the top technician nationwide, over 800 other technicians. I was gradually regaining my confidence and starting to feel good about myself again.

Another guidance from Pres-

ident Ikeda that I found to be very encouraging was: "There is no nobler way of life than dedicating yourselves to the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law. Irrespective of your nationality, circumstances or *karma*, if you believe in and practice in accord with the Mystic Law you will definitely become happy. There are no exceptions."

In March of 1995, I left my job to once again start my own business. Two years have passed, and the business is healthy and growing. In July of 1996, my wife quit her job to help me run the business. Before my wife left her job, we paid off all of her bills, and our business matched her previous salary.

In 1996, we received merger offers from two different companies. We turned them both down because we wanted to maintain our ability to call our own shots. Last year we had our house painted and electrically rewired, a new roof put on and the front and back yards landscaped. We bought our daughter a car for graduation, a van for our business, a full system computer and a fax machine. And we paid cash.

I have set up an investment program that is doing fine. Last year I increased my contribution to the SGI-USA six times what it was three years ago.

Today I can take my family to any restaurant in Atlanta. I can buy any pair of shoes I like. I can buy candles and incense for my altar by the case.

These are all wonderful things, but they can't compare with the treasures of the heart I gained through this experience. Most of the people I introduced to Buddhism over the years chose not to practice. Many of them are still suffering today. Now I can understand their suffering and hardships. I am determined to reintroduce them all to true Buddhism, one by one. ■■■

By TERRY ELLIS
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
South Miami, Fla.

Running Her Own Race

She used to run away from her problems — now she's picking herself back up after her first election loss and diving right back into her community.

Summer smells of tropical vegetation, lazy sunshine and steamy rain in this city of 10,000, just a short drive from the heart of downtown Miami. Until recently, building codes prevented developers from raising anything higher than four stories and successful elections were run door-to-door. It's a small town going through big-time changes.

A divisiveness that begins with elections and continues long after the polls are closed now pits ethnic groups against one another. Big money from special interests and developers is rolling into city elections, driving up campaign costs, while at the same time the number of voters is declining.

Whether residents are suffering from apathy, extremely busy lives or disillusionment is up for debate. But the facts are that only about half of them were registered to vote this year, and of those only about 800 bothered to cast their ballots May 27 when special elections were called to fill a city commission seat.

For SGI-USA member Karen Zeller, it's more than a soap opera played out on the evening news. She ran in the three-way race for city commission and lost by 24 votes. The news is that she's not following her instinct — the instinct to disappear into the Florida sunset and let someone else clean up the mess.

"In the past I would have just been gone, I would have run away," said Ms. Zeller, who has been practicing Buddhism for 10 years. "But I'll never be a quitter again. I never felt part of a community. I always was searching for a home. Now I feel like I can't let them down — those who supported me — and just fade away."

Her involvement began as a simple desire to support the SGI's peace movement. Inspired by SGI President Ikeda's guidance and a desire to support his 1993 visit to Miami, she settled in South Miami and took over management of a small apartment complex. She set about the job of improving the atmosphere in the complex, which had attracted drug dealers and people whose lifestyles included little consideration for others.

Within one difficult year, during which she faced threats from evicted tenants, the situation gradually improved as quieter families moved in. But one problem continued to disturb people's sleep: garbage trucks running in the early morning hours, in obvious violation of city ordinances. On behalf of her tenants, Ms. Zeller made her first ap-



Photo by LINDA ST. HILAIRE

Karen Zeller (right) became determined to make a difference in her community while running for public office.

pearance at a city commission meeting.

One thing led to another: Ms. Zeller ended up first as an officer in the local homeowners association, then as a member of the City Planning Board. The mayor also appointed her to direct a program for disadvantaged youth, which Ms. Zeller saw as the perfect opportunity to help bridge cultural and economic gaps in the community.

"Every time I heard President Ikeda when he was here in Miami or when I read his guidance, he was saying to focus on your environment — to focus on yourself and do what you can do," Ms. Zeller said. "When I started practicing Buddhism, I was running from failure. All I had ever wanted to do was manage my own business."

She was introduced to the practice just as her dream was falling apart. In May 1985, she and a friend bought a black-and-white photo processing business in Louisville, Ky., not realizing that the business was in decline. By August 1986, when she received the Gohonzon, she and her partner were on their way to bankruptcy court. When it was over, both her finances and her friendship were broken. In February 1987, she headed out of Louisville, intent on leaving behind the pain, to build a new life in Boston. But her determination was so weak that she took a snowstorm along the way as a sign to head south to Florida instead.

For seven years, she wandered, uprooted, in three different Florida towns until she took a stand in South Miami. "I had been divorced in 1980," Ms. Zeller said. "I'd always had trouble with relationships both inside

and outside the organization, but I was determined to stop running. It's amazing that for the first time in my life I stuck with something — I stuck with my practice to the Gohonzon."

She still confronts the tendency to give up. Right after the election, the narrow loss and the public humiliation she faced made her question why she cared to keep going. But as the days passed and she began to receive calls from people in the community urging her to stay involved, she realized that giving up would be cowardly.

"I kept thinking of the Goshu passages 'winter never fails to turn to spring' and that 'the Lotus Sutra is a sword that's useless in the hands of a coward,'" said Ms. Zeller.

Running for political office has given her a deeper understanding of what it means to practice Buddhism for the sake of a peaceful world, and, because of that, to face persecution. At the only scheduled debate before the election, a rival and former judge threw all the issues out the door by first accusing her of being a drug abuser.

"It was an absolute absurdity — it was a set-up," said her campaign manager, Dick Ward, a former teacher and principal for 30 years at South Miami Middle School. "I told Karen before the debate to have an answer for that question, because that's the type of dirty campaign tactics that have become popular in the last few years."

The accusation became news in the local newspaper and rumor in the community. On election day, people campaigning for her opponent actually

heckled members of the Police Benevolent Association who were supporting Ms. Zeller, Mr. Ward said. They demanded to know why a police association would support a drug abuser.

Mr. Ward has managed eight door-to-door, small-town campaigns for city commission and won seven since he first got involved in 1962. He managed the campaign for the first African American elected to the city commission in 1968 and the first Hispanic in 1996. While he believes one-on-one dialogue is still the ideal, he sees that style threatened by public relations campaigns run by high-paid professionals. He always has run campaigns as a volunteer.

"I supported Karen because she asked me to run her campaign and because, while working with her in the homeowners association, I found that we supported some of the same things — a stable tax base and trying to maintain a harmonious political atmosphere," he said.

Joyce Schecter, owner of Sunset Preparatory School in South Miami for 30 years, has known Mr. Ward all those years. And for the last 20 years they've supported different candidates in city elections. This time they were in the same camp.

"She is like a breath of fresh air," said Ms. Schecter. "It's the city's loss that she didn't win."

Ms. Zeller has worked part-time at Ms. Schecter's school, helping students with reading for the past several years. "Her heart and her thinking are in the right place," Ms. Schecter said. "She is one of the most patient people I know. Karen is an exceptional human being — that is what is so important about her."

During the debate in which Zeller was accused of being a drug abuser, Ms. Schecter stood up to defend her.

Vice Mayor Julio Robaino, the first Hispanic elected to the city commission, also campaigned for Ms. Zeller. "I supported Karen because I believe she was the kind of person people can trust to be their eyes and ears," Mr. Robaino said. "She's very up and up, very honest. She had no political agenda. I believe people are looking to elect someone like Karen, somebody who comes from the heart, over someone who's doing it for the clout or the prestige."

When the campaign turned nasty, Ms. Zeller also found support among her friends in the SGI. For example, while some of Zeller's opponents were heckling her supporters, Thomas Krutchfield was making friends. "We were standing side by side [with opponents] in the hot sun passing out pamphlets and we started talking to one another," he said. "I told them about the practice [of Buddhism]. Whether Karen won or lost, I believe we raised the consciousness of people."

Stephen Bonnell, another member, also came out to support Ms. Zeller. "I was amazed at how much strength and courage it takes to put yourself on the line as Karen did. She had a real desire to help the community and do her part. That totally came out of her practice. It showed me how much there is a need for people of integrity and purpose and a sense of mission in the political world, and how we have to look for those things when we vote."

Ms. Zeller hasn't decided if she'll run for office again, but she is more resolved than ever to make a difference in her community. When she told the owner of the apartment complex she manages that she was going to join the local Toastmasters Club to improve her public speaking skills, he offered to pay for her to take a college course. After the elections, she was also appointed president of the South Miami Homeowners Association, which has begun a non-partisan, community-wide campaign to inspire voter participation.

"My determination is to get the community involvement up," she said. "We're going to make an all-out effort through the homeowners association to get absentee ballots to people and more information to city residents. People are supporting me — they want me to stay involved. We have to find a way out of this apathy and the feeling that all politics is corrupt and dirty. The only way is for more people to be involved." ■

Estudio de los Escritos de Nichiren Daishonin (Julio – Agosto)

‘Respuesta a Kyo’o’

Crea en este mandala con todo su corazón, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo
Ces como el rugido de un león.

Por lo tanto, ¿qué enfermedad puede ser un obstáculo?

Está escrito que aquellos que abrazan el daimoku del Sutra del Loto serán protegidos por Kishimojin y sus diez hijas. Disfrutarán la felicidad de Aizen y la buena fortuna de Bishamon. Dondequiera que su hija se divierta o juegue no le sucederá ningún mal y estará libre de todo temor, como el rey león. Entre las diez hijas de Koshimojin, Kodainyo es la que brinda la protección más profunda. Pero lo único que determinará todas estas cosas es su fe. Una espada será inútil en manos de un cobarde. La poderosa espada del Sutra del Loto debe ser esgrimida por alguien que tenga coraje en la fe. Quien así lo haga será tan fuerte como un demonio armado con un bastón de hierro.

(The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, pp. 119–20; Gosho Zenshu, Los Escritos Compilados de Nichiren Daishonin en Japonés, pág. 1124)

Antecedentes

En el mes de agosto del 1273, Shijo Kingo envió un mensajero a Nichiren Daishonin, quien estaba en exilio en la isla Sado. Él llevó una ofrenda de dinero y el reporte que la hija menor de Shijo Kingo estaba grave. “Respuesta a Kyo’o” era la respuesta del Daishonin a Shijo Kingo y a su esposa Nichigenno.

La pareja tenía dos hijas, Tsukimaro y Kyo’o. Nichenno había dado a luz a Tsukimaro en el 1271, el turbulento año, en el cual habían intentado ejecutar al Daishonin, y a quien más tarde habían exilado a Sado. Fue en este tiempo que el gobierno comenzó a poner presión a los seguidores del Daishonin en Kamakura, donde Kingo y su esposa residían.

Kyo’o había nacido el año siguiente en el 1272. Cuando la primera hija de Kingo nació, él ya tenía 40 años, así que estas niñas eran queridas de una forma especial por la pareja. La atmósfera opresiva en Kamakura, para los seguidores del Daishonin mientras estaba en exilio en Sado continuaba, cuando Kyo’o cayó enferma.

“Respuesta a Kyo’o” es una carta relativamente corta, pero significativa porque en ella el Daishonin explica la importancia de la fe en el Gohonzon. Antes de su exilio a la Isla Sado, el Daishonin alienta a sus seguidores a abandonar sus

apegos a las enseñanzas pre-Sutra del Loto de Shakyamuni, a invocar el título del Sutra del Loto Nam-myoho-renge-kyo y a tomar fe en sus enseñanzas. Sin embargo, porque lo básico de la fe y la práctica, todavía no se había definido claramente, muchos de sus seguidores continuaron idolatrando estatuas e imágenes de Shakyamuni.

Después del atentado de ejecución en Tatsunokuchi, fue cuando el Daishonin comenzó a inscribir el Gohonzon como la base de la fe y la práctica. Debido a esto, son escasas las cartas en las cuales él claramente lo define.

“Respuesta a Kyo’o” es uno de esos escritos importantes en el cual explica la importancia de la fe en el Gohonzon.

En esta carta, el Daishonin declara que el Gohonzon es la personificación de su iluminación a la Ley Fundamental de la vida. Él dice: “Yo Nichiren, he inscrito mi vida en sumi, así que crea en el Gohonzon con todo su corazón... el espíritu de Nichiren no es otro más que Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (MW-1, 120). Él explica que a través de su fe en el Gohonzon la pareja podrá sobrepasar cualquier obstáculo y será protegida de cualquier mal.

*Traducción del Living Buddhism, July 1997, pp. 6–7.
Por Cesarina Caro, Nueva York*



Foto por KIRK CONDYLES

Por favor vea ‘Extractos de Discursos Pronunciados,’ pág. 12, y el ‘Glosario,’ pág. 10.

El Júbilo y el Poder de la Oración

Este es un fragmento tomado del Libro *Aprendiendo del Goshō: Las enseñanzas eternas de Nichiren Daishonin*, pgs. 85-93, escrito por el Presidente de la SGI, Daisaku Ikeda.

En los días de Nichiren Daishonin, la práctica de algunos consistía en leer el Sutra del Loto en su totalidad. El Daishonin indica, sin embargo, que ésto no es necesario. El dice que entonar daimoku, o sea, el título del sutra, una sola vez, es lo mismo que leer todo el sutra una vez, y que entonar mil daimokus es lo mismo que leer el sutra entero mil veces.

Lo importante es continuar la práctica entonando daimoku, a lo largo de toda nuestra vida. La cantidad de daimoku que entonamos cada día puede naturalmente variar, y eso está perfectamente bien.

Entonar daimoku es una enseñanza "fácil de abrazar y fácil de practicar." Cualquiera lo puede hacer. Se puede hacer a cualquier hora y en cualquier lugar. Es el método de practicar más refinado y más elevado. Como tal, es la enseñanza Budista perfecta, no sólo para el siglo veintiuno sino también para el siglo veintidos, el siglo treinta, el siglo cincuenta y para los diez mil y más de años del Último Día de La Ley — para toda la eternidad.

La práctica de entonar incorpora el deseo ardiente y sincero del Buda, de guiar a toda la gente hacia la felicidad. Una práctica que sólo puede ser mantenida por ciertas personas, va en contra del espíritu Budista.

El daimoku es como la luz. Como dice el Daishonin: "Una vela puede iluminar un lugar que haya estado oscuro por billones de años." Similarmente, al momento que ofrecemos nuestras oraciones basadas en el



Foto por KIRK CONDYLES

daimoku, la obscuridad de nuestras vidas se desvanece. En ese mismo instante en lo profundo de nuestras vidas, nuestras oraciones han sido contestadas. Este es el principio de la simultaneidad de causa y efecto.

Por lo tanto, es importante que ofrezcamos nuestras oraciones con gran confianza. El

poder del Buda y de la Ley son activados en proporción directa a la fuerza de nuestra fe y práctica. Una fe fuerte es como un alto voltaje—enciende una luz brillante en nuestras vidas.

Las oraciones son invisibles, pero si oramos firmemente, definitivamente producirán, a su tiempo, resultados claros en

nuestras vidas y en nuestro ambiente. Este es el principio de la verdadera entidad de todos los fenómenos. Fe significa tener confianza en esto. Los que persiguen impacientemente el logro solamente de resultados visibles, tienen una actitud presunciosa, o que están atrapados por la vanidad y el formalismo, defini-

tivamente se verán estancados.

El daimoku también es como fuego. Cuando uno quema la leña de los deseos mundanos, el fuego de la felicidad — o sea la iluminación — se enciende brillantemente. Los sufrimientos, entonces, vienen a ser la materia prima para crear felicidad. Par una persona de fe firme, los sufrimientos funcionan, más bien, para hacerlos aun más felices.

Las oraciones basadas en la Ley Mística, no son abstractas, son una realidad concreta en nuestras vidas. Orar es tener diálogo, un intercambio con el universo. Cuando oramos, fusionamos nuestras vidas con el universo, con nuestra determinación. La oración es una lucha para expandir nuestras vidas.

Entonces la oración no es un consuelo endeble, es una convicción poderosa, inflexible y se manifiesta en acción. Para ponerlo de otro modo, si nuestras oraciones son serias, definitivamente darán paso a la acción.

La oración se manifiesta en acción y la acción tiene que ser respaldada por la oración. Solo entonces podemos reclamar una respuesta de los dioses budistas y de todos los Budas. Los que oran y realizan acción por kosen-rufu, son los emisarios del Buda. Ellos, nunca dejarán de tener en sus vidas, todos sus deseos cumplidos.

Aún, si tenemos tanta felicidad que lleguemos a desear un poco de sufrimiento, nuestra felicidad continúa creciendo en saltos y brinco — como un cometa que se remonta cada vez más alto. Esa es la prueba del logro de la Budeidad. Más aún, si logramos establecer firmemente el Estado de Buda en esta vida, será eternamente nuestro. ❧

Traducción del Living Buddhism, Mayo 1997, pág 11 Por Ester Zapata, San

Mandala: Un objeto de veneración en el cuál Budas y bodhisatvas están representados, o en el cuál la doctrina mística está expresada. Mandala es traducido en la China en caracteres que significan "perfectamente dotado" o "racimo de bendiciones." En el Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin indica el Gohonzon porque incorpora todas las practicas y virtudes resultantes de todos los Budas del universo.

El Daimoku del Sutra del Loto: El título del Sutra del Loto o la invocación de Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Koshimoin (Sanc. Hariti) y sus

diez hijas demonios: Un demonio femenino. Tuvo 500 (algunas fuentes de informaciones dicen, 1,000 ó 10,000) niños, de los cuales diez hijas aparecen en el Dharani (26avo) capítulo del Sutra del Loto. Según el Sutra Kishimo, ella daba muerte a los niños de otras personas para alimentar a los de ella, pero después de ser admonestada por Shakyamuni, prometió jamás dar muerte a otros niños, y junto con sus diez hijas prometieron al Buda proteger a los devotos del Sutra del Loto. El Daishonin se refiere a Koshimoin y sus diez hijas en "Respuesta

Glosario

a Kyo'o" porque ellas eran bien conocidas como las deidades protectoras de los

niños y del alumbramiento.

Aizen: (Sanc. Ragaraja) Deidad Budista que se dice purifica los deseos mundanos de las personas y las libera de las ilusiones y sufrimientos resultantes de dichos deseos. Aizen significa el principio budista que "los desos mundanos nos conducen a la iluminación." En "Respuesta a Kyo'o" el Daishonin utiliza a Aizen para indicar un estado de felicidad a través de la realización de todos los deseos.

Bishamon: (Sanc. Vaishravana) Uno de los Cuatro Reyes Celestiales. En el 26avo Capítulo del Sutra del Loto, el promete proteger a los devotos del Sutra del Loto. En "Respuesta a Kyo'o," el Daishonin cita a Bishamon para señalar las funciones que otorgan buena fortuna a quienes practican la Ley Mística.

Kodainyo: Una de las diez hijas de Koshimoin, que es considerada como un buen demonio desde el principio. En el Dharani (26avo) Capítulo del Sutra del Loto, ella es nombrada como la representante de sus hermanas cuando le confían la protección de los devotos del Sutra del Loto. ❧

PREGUNTAS Y RESPUESTAS SOBRE LA FE

¿Cuál Es la Forma Correcta de Orar?

Por TED MORINO
DIRIGENTE DEL DEPT. DE ESTUDIO
DE SGI-USA

P. ¿Cuál es la forma correcta de orar al Gohonzon?

A. En "Amonestando calumniando pecados," Nichiren Daishonin declara: "Estoy orando para que, sin importar que dificultades puedan aparecer con el tiempo, El Sutra del Loto y las diez hijas demonios los protegerán a todos ustedes, oro tan seriamente como si fuera a producir fuego de na madera mojada o a sacar agua de una tierra reseca" (MW-6, p. 74). Basándonos en este pasaje, podemos decir que una determinación de nuestra parte es vital cuando ofrecemos oraciones. La clase de daimoku que sale de una profunda resolución "yo haré que esto suceda" o "yo ganaré" constituye la esencia

de una oración correcta al Gohonzon.

Nam-myoho-rence-kyo es la Ley de la vida — la pura e ilimitada energía de la vida — la cuál impregna nuestra vida y el universo. Cuando un río corre al océano, sus aguas fluyen con la marea, uniéndose con tan vasta profundidad. En la misma forma, cuando expresamos nuestra resolución de entonar daimoku de todo corazón, podemos armonizar nuestra innata Budeidad con la vida infinita del universo. Y en ese momento, la causa para que nuestras oraciones sean realizadas se ha hecho.

El Budismo explica esto como la simultaneidad entre la causa y el efecto. A la vez que, comprendemos esto plenamente, podemos fortalecer nuestra resolución para sobrepasar cualquier problema y realizar cualquier meta.

Entonces, el factor crítico, para que nuestras oraciones sean realizadas llega a ser, nuestra habilidad de continuar orando hasta que nuestras oraciones sean realizadas. Para que estas sean realizadas requiere más que solo pensar positivamente — una oración continua es necesaria — el Budismo enseña que a través de una oración continua, podemos palpar el poder que existe dentro de nosotros para atraer todas las fuerzas positivas en el universo, que protegen y nutren la vida.

Nada es más importante en este sentido que fortalecer nuestra inherente naturaleza de Buda. La fortalecemos

no sólo orando por nosotros mismos pero también por los demás. Orando por otros "tan seriamente como si fuera a producir fuego de una madera mojada o a sacar agua de una tierra reseca" eleva nues-

Nam-myoho-rence-kyo es la Ley de la vida — la pura e ilimitada energía de la vida — la cuál impregna nuestra vida y el universo.

tras vidas. Al así solidificar nuestra compasión y sabiduría, enriquecemos nuestras vidas de tal forma que podemos influenciar positivamente nuestro medio ambiente. De esta forma, nos convertimos en personas que naturalmente tienen sus deseos realizados. El Presidente de la SGI, Daisaku

Ikedada enfatiza que "la oración en el Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin significa entonar daimoku

basándonos en un compromiso o voto. En el núcleo de este compromiso yace la determinación de lograr el kosen-rufu..." (The New Human Revolution, vol.1, p. 250).

La realización de nuestras oraciones siempre depende de la fortaleza de nuestra determinación, la condición de nuestras vidas. En la famosa frase del Daishonin "La fe es lo único que importa" (MW-1, 246) la fe denota la condición de vida de nuestras mentes, vidas y corazonces. ¿Tenemos una fuerte determinación o no? Cuando vemos la vida desde esta perspectiva budista, un inmenso júbilo y apreciación no puede parar de emanar de lo más profundo de nuestro ser, aún cuando nos encontremos en las circunstancias más difíciles.

Traducción del World Tribune, 9 de mayo 1997, p. 9.

Por Cesarina Caro, Nueva York

La Soka Gakkai Revela un Monumento

La Soka Gakkai le quitó el velo a un monumento dedicado a las víctimas de bombas atómicas y accidentes nucleares. El primero de junio, en el Parque de Paz Chugoko, Hiroshima. Este monumento consiste de seis estatuas de bronzes talladas por el escultor francés Louis Derbré. Las estatuas, están situadas en un pedestal de 50 pies de altura y 23 pies de ancho, y simbolizan el regocijo, la sucesión, la esperanza, el coraje, la tolerancia y la creación. La caligrafía en el muro de piedra fue escrita por el famoso autor chino Jin Yong.

Un mensaje de paz del Presidente Ikeda traducido a cinco idiomas — Japonés, Inglés, Francés, Chino y Español — está incluido en la base del pedestal. En parte del mensaje se lee: "El precioso receptáculo de la vida, indestructible como el diamante, es más poderoso que el mal abominable de las armas nucleares."

En una reunión con el líder de la SGI, el Sr. Derbré declaró que por primera vez en los cincuenta años de su carrera profe-

sional, este último proyecto le había permitido descubrir nuevas posibilidades dentro de él que representaba para él un refrescante punto de partida hacia el futuro. También le transmitió su decisión de entregarse a la labor de realizar la paz con la misma devoción con que se dedica el presidente Ikeda. Afirmó que hasta la fecha había esculpido motivado solo por el afán de la creatividad artística, pero que desde ese día, había despertado en él el deseo de trabajar en pos de la paz.

A continuación se transcribe la dedicatoria del presidente de la SGI Ikeda inscrita en el Monumento a la Oración por la Paz Mundial.

Oración por la paz mundial

"Nosotros, los pueblos del mundo, tenemos derecho a vivir. Todo el que ponga en riesgo ese derecho estará actuando como un demonio, como un monstruo, como un ser de la más extrema



perversidad."

Han pasado cuarenta años desde que mi maestro, Josei Toda, dió a conocer su pronunciamiento final, la "Declaración contra la bomba atómica y de hidrógeno.

¡Amigos de Hiroshima y Nagasaki, que conocieron en carne propia este sufrimiento atroz! ¡Pueblos de Asia y del Pacífico, que padecieron calamidades tan horribles!

La abolición de las armas nucleares es el deseo más ferviente y sincero de toda la humanidad. Para terminar con el influjo de las armas nucleares y extirpar de cuajo esta tiniebla espiritual,

para inaugurar el siglo de la victoria del hombre, erigimos en el Cementerio Parque de Chugoko este Monumento a la Oración por la Paz Mundial.

La inscripción reproduce la caligrafía de Jin Yong, pluma magistral de la moderna Literatura china. El grupo de esculturas refleja la sinceridad del célebre artista francés Louis Derbré.

El precioso receptáculo de la vida, indestructible como el diamante, es más poderoso que el mal abominable de las armas nucleares.

El espíritu de grandeza que brota de una filosofía majes-

tuosa logra imponerse a cualquier atrocidad.

Nos ponemos en marcha y avanzamos por todo aquello que el hombre ansía con rotundo clamor, con la esperanza puesta en un siglo de convivencia armoniosa y diversa como el arco iris.

En el cuadragésimo aniversario de la última voluntad de mi maestro, al erigir este monumento a nuestra plegaria más profunda, juramos seguir avanzando sin cesar, hasta lograr la paz duradera. ❧

Daisaku Ikeda

PARA EL ESTUDIO DEL GOSHO
'RESPUESTA A KYO'O'

Extractos de Discursos Pronunciados

Por el Presidente de la SGI, Daisaku Ikeda

Todos enfrentamos diversos problemas y obstáculos. Pero Nichiren Daishonin escribe, "Los infortunios de Kyo'o Gozen se convertirán en buena fortuna. Armese de fe y ore a este Go-honzon. Entonces, ¿habrá algo que no pueda lograrse?" (MW-1, 120).

Lo más importante es orar. En el momento que comencemos a orar, todo se pone en movimiento. Mientras más oscura esté la noche, más cercano está el amanecer. En el momento que entonamos daimoku con una profunda y fuerte determinación, el sol comienza a brillar en nuestro corazón.

Esperanza — la oración es el sol de la esperanza. Entonar daimoku cada vez que enfrentamos un problema, sobrepasarlo y elevar nuestra condición de vida como resultado—este es el camino de "cambiar deseos mundanos en iluminación" que enseña el Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin.

Sufrir y pasar dificultades por el bien de las amistades y por propagar la Ley es una manifestación del gran sentido de responsabilidad de un líder genuino y el comportamiento de un bodhisattva. No hay sufrimiento o penuria que un Bodhisattva de la Tierra no pueda sobrepasar. Así que, pase lo que pase, quisiera que ustedes avancen paso a paso, siempre entonando Nam-myoho-renge-kyo con una voz vibrante (*World Tribune*, 5 de Julio de 1996).

* * *

La felicidad verdadera y duradera siempre proviene de nuestros propios esfuerzos, nuestra propia sabiduría, nuestra propia buena fortuna. Esta es una verdad fundamental. La fe es la clave para fortalecer nuestros esfuerzos, sabiduría y buena fortuna; las actividades de la SGI son la clave para fortalecerlos...

El Daishonin indica que dondequiera que las personas quienes defienden la Ley Mística retozan o juegan, no sostendrán ningún mal; estarán libres de todo temor, como el rey león. Cada uno de nosotros podrá disfrutar de un estado de vida de perfecta libertad durante la eternidad. Esa es la razón por la cual practicamos la fe (*World Tribune*, 29 de Marzo de 1996).

* * *

El Demonio del Sexto Cielo es la manifestación de la oscuridad fundamental inherente en la vida humana. El Daishonin enseña que solamente con "la espada de la fe" podemos penetrar esta oscuridad fundamental. Debemos de esgrimir esta espada audazmente como enseñó el Daishonin: "Una espada será inútil en las manos de un cobarde. La poderosa espada del Sutra del Loto debe ser esgrimida por alguien que tenga coraje en la fe" (MW-1, 120).

El coraje es lo que cuenta. El espíritu de la fe es no temer. La grandeza y el poder de los dioses Budistas aumentarán para una persona de un coraje abundante. (*World Tribune*, 9 de Diciembre de 1991).

Traducción del Living Buddhism, Julio 1997, pág. 10.
Por Osvaldo Lecuona, Nueva York.

POEMAS DEL PRESIDENTE IKEDA

A Todos Los Miembros de la SGI

El Presidente de la SGI, Daisaku Ikeda, compuso los siguientes poemas waka para celebrar el 3 de mayo, Día de la Soka Gakkai y Día de las Madres de la organización:

Dedicado a todos los miembros de la SGI:

Indestructible y eterno
es el castillo de la Soka.
El fortín del kosen-rufu
brilla en el mundo con fulgor
y cada miembro que hay en él
es un miembro que resplandece.

—Con la gratitud más profunda, a los miembros de la SGI a quienes tanto amo y valoro. Con las palmas de las manos unidas en reverencia.

Dedicado a la División de Jóvenes:

Paladines de la juventud,
en legiones incontables:
¡De pie, lancen reto al desafío,
pues ha llegado, por fin,
el momento del kosen-rufu!

• • •

No teman a la irrupción
de los tres formidables enemigos:
que el avance sea intrépido,
en la mano la "espada enjovada de la fe":
Y, entonces, a vencer.

• • •

La nueva época finalmente esta aquí.
Jóvenes héroes gallardos,
diestros caballeros en blanca montura,
muestren el camino hacia el manana
y abran la marcha con dignidad y convicción.

—Dedicado a mis amados miembros de la División de Jóvenes, los nuevos adalides del silo XXI.

Dedicado a la División Juvenil Feminina:

Que la deslumbrante luz de la esperanza
las corone como un nimbo,
para que abran el camino a puro valor,
en el viaje que al castillo
de su felicidad las conduzca.

• • •

Construyan su vida en este mundo
ricas en sabiduría,
ricas en victorias y en triunfo,
hasta adornar el íntimo palacio de su ser
con seas joyas sublimes que no tienen precio.

• • •

¡Refulgen, cegadores,
el sol y la miríada de estrellas!
Todas las deidades celestiales
están junto a ustedes, jóvenes amigos,
para brindarles su protección infalible.

Dedicado a la División de Señores:

Ni por un instante olviden
el amor y el afecto estricto
con que nuestro difunto maestro clamó:
"¡No salga de ustedes lamento ni queja
ni ante la más horrenda aflicción!"

• • •

Alli donde avanza la gran procesión
de la SGI
un Pico del Aguila se despliega a su paso,
de vida henchido,
colmado de flores de fragancias exquisitas.

• • •

Ya que nuestra práctica es fiel
y no se aparta de la suprema enseñanza,
el Daishonin nos abraza sin falta,
cual abrazo de un padre a sus hijos,
en expresión de júbilo y deleite.

Dedicado a la División de Damas:

Luminosa como sol de mayo,
la presencia sonriente de las madres
siempre convertirá cielo y tierra
en un armonioso reino
de paz y de felicidad.

• • •

¡A muchos y a más aún abriguen, madres,
con su tibio amor de solidaridad
al igual que esplende el Sol,
desde tiempos inmemorables
siempre digno en su noble majestad!

• • •

Madres de la humanidad:
¡No hagan lugar al lamento!
¡Vivan con júbilo y con brillo!:
cuando uno esgrime una noble filosofía,
el largo viaje de la vida
se convierte en deleite festivo.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto said to Shingo Shiroyama: "It's a mistake to assume that your children are always going to listen to you just because you're their parent. Religious belief is a matter of choice."

"Oh...." said Shiroyama, looking slightly nonplused to find his expectations of his children misplaced.

"It's unreasonable to think that your children will understand and accept your faith just because they're your children. Particularly since they are adults, they will naturally have their own beliefs and values. So you should strive to respect their views and the way they choose to live.

"If, based on such respect, you truly wish to bring them to your faith, the best and only way is through your personal example. You must demonstrate how wonderful this practice is through your life and character. In other words, you must be a father your children can respect and really be proud of.

"You can't fool your family members. They know you too well. They are your most observant, severe critics. We sometimes see, especially in the women's division, members who participate energetically and enthusiastically in activities but then complain and criticize their fellow members at home. Of course their children won't be inspired to join.

"If you truly, sincerely chant for the happiness of your children, your prayer will communicate itself to them — they will eventually awaken to faith. In addition, if you practice hard, your family will be protected by the benefit and good fortune that you accumulate through faith.

"Therefore, there's no need to worry or rush things. Most important, there's absolutely no reason to force your faith on your children."

Shiroyama nodded.

Shin'ichi smiled and continued: "By the way, I'd like you to be one of our contacts here in Pakistan. You'd be responsible for keeping in touch with any members who come to Pakistan from Japan. Will you do it?"

"Yes, gladly," Shiroyama replied without hesitation.

"We have another men's division member living in Pakistan, Asanobu Kobayashi, who is in Japan right now but will be returning soon. We are planning to ask him to be a contact along with you."

Sitting next to Shiroyama was Takako Kawakita, the wife of Masao Kawakita. (He had met them at the airport and shown them around Karachi.) Shin'ichi next turned to her and said: "I saw your mother in Japan just before I began this trip. She's doing very well. And she's wondering how you're doing in Pakistan. She told me that you're a Soka Gakkai member, too."

The New Human Revolution

BY HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 2

Long Journey

Translation of parts 31–36 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.

Takako replied to Shin'ichi somewhat tersely: "No, I'm not. I'm not a member. Mother wanted me to join and I went with her to a temple, but I never joined. And I really have no intention of doing so, either." She seemed fearful that Shin'ichi was going to press her to join. No doubt her mother, worried about her, had spoken to her about Buddhism a number of times.

Shin'ichi smiled gently to put her at ease. "That's perfectly all right," he said. "Religion is something everyone has to decide for themselves. Your mother is striving earnestly in her practice and chanting for your happiness. I'm sure her efforts will protect you. She said she is always praying that you will be healthy and free from harm. Please write her often, keep in touch and cherish her. That, in fact, is the spirit of Buddhism.

"Here you are in Pakistan with your husband, which no doubt means that you have an important mission to accomplish. Though you may encounter various hardships living in an unfamiliar place, don't get discouraged. And please support your husband."

She seemed relieved by Shin'ichi's words and, nodding quietly, took out a small package.

"Mr. Yamamoto, I have a favor to ask," she said.

"What is it?" asked Shin'ichi.

"I'd like you to give this to my mother."

It was, she explained, a ring that she had bought for her mother.

"Of course," replied Shin'ichi. "I'm sure she'll be very happy."

The dinner was not unlike a discussion meeting — with many first-time guests in attendance. The Japanese businessmen based in Pakistan, who were not members, asked Shin'ichi question after question about religion and politics. One asked him for advice about his personal life as well. Shin'ichi responded to each

question with utmost courtesy and sincerity, encouraging everyone whether members or not. He simply did not divide people into members and non-members. He believed in the humanity common to all, that every person was a potential friend. And so he encouraged whomever he met, with all his heart, to become happy and creative.

Since Buddhism ensures the happiness of the entire human race, Shin'ichi knew that a Buddhist practitioner must pray and act for the happiness of all people.

Shin'ichi spent the morning of Feb. 11, Josei Toda's birthday, in Pakistan. He and his companions were to fly to Bangkok at noon. Since there was still some time before

on his way home after his journey of conquest, he must have seen this same Arabian Sea."

"Really?" Eiseiku Akizuki responded. "Then every place we've visited on this trip is linked to Alexander, isn't it? He traveled to Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Greece and Egypt, just as we have. For him to have journeyed this great distance more than 2,000 years ago, winning one victory after another as he made his way from his homeland in Macedonia on the Balkan Peninsula, must have been a truly amazing feat."

Alexander the Great was born in 356 B.C.E., son of the king of Macedonia. Aristotle, the great thinker and disciple of Plato, tutored Alexander as a boy. He acceded to the throne in 336 B.C.E. at the age of 20, two years later going to war with the great Persian Empire in the east. Alexander's parting words when he left on the expedition are well known. He gave all his possessions to his retainers and declared, "All I have left now is hope!"

After defeating the Persians in a preliminary engagement, Alexander liberated Egypt, which had been under Persian rule. Then he once again launched an attack on Persia, bringing the ancient empire to its knees after a great battle. But that wasn't the end of his campaign. He traveled through Central Asia, pressing eastward, finally crossing the Indus River and entering the unknown land of India.

Eight years had passed since leaving his homeland. Alexander seemed determined to travel to the very ends of the earth. Then suddenly he stopped in his tracks. He turned and made his way down the Indus and, on reaching the Arabian Sea, hastened back to the familiar lands of the west.

Shin'ichi asked his companions: "In the final phase of his long expedition, Alexander crossed the Indus River. Before him lay the green plains of northern India, nourished by the Ganges. Then he suddenly stopped and turned back. Why?"

Everyone was silent, apparently lost in thought. No one could answer.

After some time, Shin'ichi said: "Alexander was always pressing forward, always in the vanguard, overcoming every obstacle, blazing a trail of victories. I am sure that when he crossed the Indus, his heart beat with excitement and anticipation at discovering yet another unknown land.

"He wasn't forced to turn back because of enemies or obstacles. His soldiers simply refused to go any farther.



their departure, Masao Kawakita took them to Clifton Beach, a public recreation area. Shin'ichi and the others stood on the long promenade at the water's edge, the deep blue Arabian Sea spreading out before them.

From ancient times, the Arabian Sea had been a major travel route and the setting for much exchange and communication among cultures. It occurred to Shin'ichi that Alexander the Great's eastward expedition had ended in what was now Pakistan. Shin'ichi turned to the young people with him and said: "Alexander the Great made it as far as Pakistan, if my memory serves me. And

JOURNEY, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Alexander knew that his troops had been gradually losing their enthusiasm, so he tried to rouse their fighting spirit, urging them to continue an invincible march forward. But they resisted their leader's call and would not move. Alexander no doubt thought his men cowards and gritted his teeth in anger and frustration. His earnest appeals to them to go on fell on deaf ears. Finally he had to give up his ambition to advance farther eastward."

"They were Alexander's companions in battle, though, who had fought side by side with him, stuck by him through thick and thin," Akira Kuroki pointed out. "Why did they refuse to continue following him?"

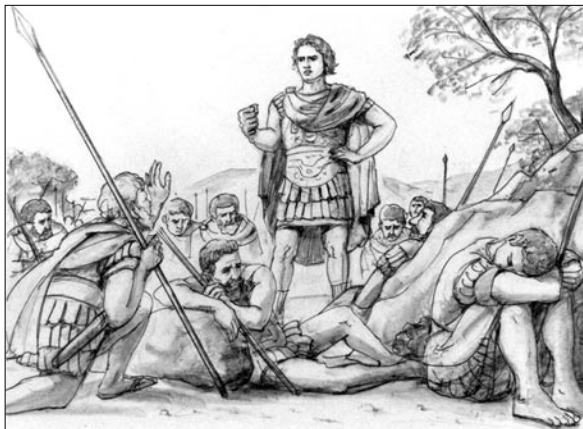
"This," Shin'ichi said, "is an important question. After eight long years of traveling, far away from home, they were no doubt beginning to feel homesick. Perhaps they were also simply exhausted, mentally and physically, from so much fighting. But I think their main reason for refusing to follow Alexander farther was that they didn't know what his goal was, what he was fighting for.

"Certainly, Alexander's expedition was originally motivated by a wish to defend, enlarge and enrich his homeland. But soon he came to cherish a greater purpose. If all he sought was treasure, he would have ended his journey with the conquest of Persia and carried its enormous wealth back home. Alexander's defeat of the Persian Empire also assured Macedonia's security — so that could no longer have been his goal, either.

"Yet he continued to press ahead. He never gave in to petty ambitions or lust for

power, but rode on at the head of his great expedition. Why? Because he wanted to realize a dream — that of linking East and West and uniting all humanity."

It is said that while in Egypt, Alexander had a revelation that all humankind was one. From that time on, he took as his life's goal making that



ideal a reality. Though he used military force to make his conquests, he never looked down on the people of the East or discriminated against them. If his opponents accepted his rule after their defeat in battle, Alexander treated them well, often appointing local aristocrats or leaders as his deputies.

He also made positive efforts to adopt elements of the cultures and customs of the people he conquered. This became the foundation for the emergence of a new culture, contributing to the cross-pollination of Greek civilization and the Buddhist tradition that flourished in India. This culminated in the flowering of Buddhist

art in later centuries in northern India (present-day Pakistan) in Gandhara.¹

At the time, even the great philosopher Aristotle believed that non-Greeks were barbarians. Thus none of Alexander's soldiers could understand his grand ideal of uniting the world or his conviction that all people share a common humanity. The soldiers viewed their expedition solely as a means to expand Macedonia's territory and increase their personal wealth. Naturally, after the defeat of Persia, Alexander's followers grew skeptical about the need to suffer further hardship or expose themselves to additional risks and dangers.

"There was a great gap," continued Shin'ichi, "between the goals of Alexander and his followers toward the expedition. Alexander wanted to travel to the most distant lands to realize a lofty dream, while his troops were concerned only with their continued survival and safety.

"Self-interest makes people cowardly. And once cowardice has taken root, the battle is lost.

"The same can be said in the realm of faith. Even when Mr. Toda was alive, there were leaders who, having once conquered such sufferings as illness and poverty, no longer devoted themselves earnestly to Gakkai activities. Feeling they had already received the benefits they had sought and solved their pressing problems, they decided they no longer needed to apply themselves diligently to faith and practice.

"Some even dared to criticize Mr. Toda, who devoted every moment of his life to spreading the Daisnonin's teachings. 'Why must we spend so much time propagating Buddhism?' they would ask. 'Why can't we be more relaxed and easygoing about our Gakkai activities?' I heard complaints of this sort again and again. But Mr. Toda's aim was to erase misery from the world, to enable all people to lead happy lives — his aim was to realize lasting peace on this planet. The sad thing was that those members never really understood his intent."

the only one who knew Mr. Toda's deepest intentions and made serious efforts to realize his cherished dreams," he continued. "My determination to continue doing so remains unchanged. Mr. Toda entrusted me with full responsibility for kosen-rufu, the realization of humanity's happiness and peace. It is a long, long journey — an endless one, in fact. It is an unremitting struggle that I will set myself to day after day, for as long as I live and breathe.

"Those who think only of their personal security and gain can never travel the long journey of kosen-rufu. That all our members overcome their sufferings, become healthy and enjoy comfortable lives, that they might even live in big, beautiful homes and have a fine place in society, with recognition and respect — these things I wish. And while these are certainly benefits that faith can help us attain, they are small, mediocre, compared to the ultimate benefit of faith. They are but one aspect of why we practice Buddhism.

"All we can gain from such things is relative happiness — that which never reaches beyond oneself. If you settle for this, you will be like Alexander's soldiers who lost the spirit and passion to continue their advance. Our ultimate goal, on the individual level, is to achieve absolute happiness, to establish an indestructible palace of life in our hearts, one that will never crumble, no matter what adversity we face.

"Our true goal is kosen-rufu, the happiness of both ourselves and others. We have been born in this world to carry out this mission. It is in dedicating our lives to this task that we find unsurpassed joy, immeasurable fulfillment and absolute happiness.

"But the older people get and the more material security they acquire, the more self-protective and timid they become. Though many make valiant efforts when they are young, few can sustain such commitment throughout their lives. If our efforts wane, we cannot hope to perfect ourselves or realize peace and happiness for all humanity. In addition, all our hard work in the past will be rendered meaningless if we give up halfway. That is why I insist so strongly on persevering in our struggle for kosen-rufu to the very end.

"Getting back to Alexander's story, by now his soldiers' wishes and goals were very different than his. That was the one wall that Alexander could not surmount.

"A leader, no matter how great, can achieve nothing lasting unless others understand and share his or her goals, working with him or her to realize them. True comrades, true disciples, are linked throughout life by a shared aspiration."

(To be continued)

The Student Files

Name: Cydney E. Tweed
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My studies are geared toward mass media and print journalism. My goal is to become a staff writer, and ultimately an associate editor, of a publication such as *Essence*, *Emerge*, *The Source* or *Vibe*. Eventually, I want to become a renowned interviewer (Oprah!) and write novels. Writing is my true niche, and I hope to go on to grad school to study journalism.

Being a student is an important responsibility. It's like a job — my family,

future, and the life I will live down the line all count on what I do today as a student. Being a student should be taken seriously and done courageously.

I chant to do "natural propagation." Most of my friends learned of my practice while I lived in my dorm the first year. I explained it to some of them by comparing my practice to Tina Turner's in the movie *What's Love Got To Do With It?* Overall, they are supportive and interested.



Waves shimmered in the bright sunlight. The young men listened intently as Shin'ichi spoke.

"I am certain that I am

1. Gandhara: a district in northern India that was a crossroads in ancient times for the cultures of India, Central Asia and the Middle East. A center of a unique style of art inspired by Greco-Roman influences and Indian tradition based on Buddhism. Gandhara art reached its zenith between the 1st century B.C.E. and the 3rd century C.E.

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Clear Goals, Clear Growth


By JEFF FARR

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

Only I, Nichiren, at first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but then two, three and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Likewise, propagation will unfold this way in the future. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 93)

I've heard of many districts this year making concrete goals to double the number of new members they had join last year. People have been inspired by the point SGI President Ikeda has been making that we grow when we have clear goals. Seeing that many districts that have not had goals for years now have them — for new members joining (and sticking with the practice), for discussion meeting attendance, etc. — makes me excited about how our organization will grow.

But to many districts it might seem impossible to double last year's new memberships, even with a clear goal. Maybe last year there were no new members in some districts. I have confidence, though, based oddly enough on a renewed study of biology (my second worst subject in high school) that expansion is just waiting to happen. Reading Boyce Rensberger's *Life Itself*, which explains about cell division, I was fascinated by his description of how human life starts out as a single cell that splits and splits and splits until in a few months there are several trillion. (I must have been snoozing during this part of biology class.)

This splitting of cells reminded me of "The True Entity of Life," where Nichiren Daishonin says that at first he was the only person to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. But then "two, three and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others." According to biology and Buddhism, there's nothing more natural than expansion. Here science and religion agree — at the very core of life is an incredible energy to grow. It's as if life itself has a clear goal. And it follows that an organization based on the law of life, an organization with a clear goal, has to grow. With clear goals, the sky's the limit. 

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TEMPLE ISSUE

What Is the Temple Issue?

The SGI-USA has just published a new pamphlet, Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue, which seeks to provide succinct information on this important issue. It will soon be available free of charge through the organization. Over the next several weeks, the study page will reprint each of the questions from the pamphlet as a service to our readers.

Q What is the temple issue?

A While the problem actually has roots that extend far back before the inception of the Soka Gakkai, tracing them meaningfully would require studying the history of Nichiren Shoshu, the "Fuji School" of Nichiren Buddhism. This would also involve an examination of the conditions of feudal Japanese society over the centuries that led to attitudes and orientations among Buddhist priests toward the laity that could best be described as a "lord-vassal" mentality.

More immediately, however, in late 1990, it became clear that the priesthood of Nichiren Shoshu — which the Soka Gakkai always had supported — had been conspiring to either take control over or disband the SGI organization. This course of action, dubbed by its authors Operation C ("C" meaning to "cut"), was inspired and led by the current high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, Nikken Abe.

It began with a presentation of nine written questions to Soka Gakkai leaders, accusing SGI President Ikeda of, among other things, criticizing the high priest. The temple based its questions on an inaccurate transcription of a surreptitiously obtained tape recording of a speech by the SGI president. Admitting later to the inaccuracy of their transcription, and the dubious origin of the tape, the temple later withdrew four of its questions.

Others were taken completely out of context and grossly misinterpreted. Among them, for example, was a criticism of President Ikeda's suggestion that the choral part of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" be sung at a leaders meeting. The temple claimed that because the lyrics by Friedrich Schiller referred to Christianity, the Gakkai would therefore be promoting non-Buddhist teachings. This

Key Points:

- The issue has roots in the temple's history, in a "feudalistic attitude" toward lay believers that is particular to Japanese culture and history.
- It revealed itself in actions by Nichiren Shoshu and Nikken Abe, its high priest, to cut off and disband the Soka Gakkai in a plan called Operation C.
- To further their aim, the temple conspired with negative media contacts to defame the Gakkai and its president.
- After denying repeated requests for dialogue, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood ultimately excommunicated the entire Soka Gakkai organization and its leadership.
- The SGI has called for Nikken's resignation and has been educating people on the reality of Nichiren Shoshu and its intentions.

criticism was put forward despite it being widely acknowledged that Schiller's poem is in honor of the highest potential of the human spirit; a celebration of reason, inner joy and human freedom.

This prompted the Soka Gakkai to call for a face-to-face dialogue to resolve any misunderstandings or misconceptions. The priesthood, however, adamantly refused any discussion and demanded a written response to its accusations within one week.

The priesthood's stance, the triviality of the accusations, along with other information that came to light, made it very clear that the tape was no more than a pretext to justify actions that the priesthood had already planned. The Gakkai, since its request for dialogue had been denied, submitted its own questions to the priesthood, inquiring into its motives and actions.

The priesthood followed with a series of one-sided measures, including revising Nichiren Shoshu's bylaws to effectively dismiss President Ikeda from the position of chief lay representative to the head temple. It also added provisions in those bylaws for punitive action to be taken against any practitioner who criticized the high priest, verbally or in writing, although it didn't specify what was

meant by "criticism."

Just prior to this announcement, Nikken Abe had met in secret with the reporter Isao Dan, a Japanese tabloid-style journalist known to have written groundless and inflammatory articles about the Soka Gakkai. It was clear from this that Nikken was orchestrating an attack on the Gakkai that included attacks by outside media.

The priesthood's course of action against the Soka Gakkai and SGI culminated in an "order to disband" and, finally, notification of excommunication in November 1991.

The Soka Gakkai, having revealed the true nature and character of Nikken Abe, has since demanded that he resign. In response to the lies propagated by the priesthood, the Gakkai has been trying continually to shed light on the truth of the matter. Since the outbreak of this issue, many events have transpired and much information has come to light, all of which have underscored the SGI's fundamental conviction that these attacks occurred because it is practicing Buddhism in accord with Nichiren Daishonin's spirit, dedicated to accomplishing kosen-rufu.

One in a series

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SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the joint graduation ceremony of the 23rd class of Soka University and 11th class of Soka Women's College, at the Soka University Auditorium in Hachioji, Tokyo, March 18.

With deep honor and humility I accept an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters (International Education) bestowed by De La Salle University. De La Salle is one of the Republic of the Philippines' most distinguished seats of learning — an academic institute earnestly committed to producing people of character and excellence in their fields to light the way for all Asia in the coming century.

As the recipient of this honor, by rights I should have traveled to the Philippines for its conferral. Instead, President Andrew Gonzalez and a number of senior faculty of De La Salle graciously traveled to Japan to present it to me, coinciding with today's joint graduation ceremony of Soka University and Soka Women's College.

President Gonzalez, distinguished faculty members: Allow me to express once again my deepest, most sincere appreciation for this generous gesture.

President Gonzalez is well known in the Philippines for his active leadership in society. He is also an internationally regarded scholar. I cannot tell you how happy I am to share with my dear Soka students this great honor, presented to me by such an esteemed individual as President Gonzalez.

I sincerely congratulate all who graduate today: Soka University's 23rd class, Soka Women's College's 11th class, correspondence students, masters and doctoral students, and foreign students. Allow me to extend my heartfelt felicitations to your families as well.

I am especially grateful to the faculty, to all those involved in the teaching and instruction of our students. In addition, I thank Dr. Alfred Balitzer, professor of political science at California's Claremont McKenna College and honorary president of Soka University of America, and all our honored guests who have taken time from their busy schedules to be with us today.

The Sacred Endeavor of Education

I feel that this award carries



De La Salle University is one of the Republic of the Philippines' most distinguished seats of learning.

The Towering Tree of Education

with it a great responsibility. The Philippine university is named after the great pioneer of modern education Saint John Baptiste Abbé de La Salle (1651–1719), the French Catholic priest who devoted his life to the education of the poor. In my youth, I resolved to make education my last, most important work. La Salle has been a long-standing inspiration in my endeavors.

He lived at the height of the Bourbon dynasty in France. The reigning monarch Louis XIV had built a sumptuous palace at Versailles to symbolize the power and glory of the French monarchy, while the people of France suffered terribly from the scourges of war and famine. In that turbulent age, La Salle stood up courageously to enable the people to establish a palace of education in their hearts.

In his late 20s, La Salle began to assist in establishing a number of charity schools to provide free instruction to poor children. A noble by birth, he gave up his title and wealth, as well as the chance for advancement within the clergy. He channeled all his youthful energy and passion into the sacred endeavor of education.

His approach to education was always based on what was best for his students. He produced textbooks, not in Latin, as most works of classical scholarship were written, but in the col-

loquial French that his students spoke and understood. He also abolished corporal punishment.

With these and other innovations, he revolutionized elementary education. He founded colleges to train lay teachers to provide instruction to the rural poor — the first full-fledged teacher-training institutions in the world. In addition, he made indelible contributions to vocational education and specialized technical training with the establishment of technical and agricultural colleges.

The Pattern of Obstruction and Oppression

Students flocked to La Salle's "people's schools." As their reputations spread, requests poured in from towns all over France for La Salle to establish charity schools.

La Salle's goal was to cultivate and nourish the people's minds and liberate them from within. He wanted to awaken the people, to make them wise and strong. It was a challenge to the most fundamental principle of the status quo, which was to keep the people ignorant and thus subservient. This challenge resulted, of course, in furious attacks by those in power on La Salle and his commendable efforts.

The schools he opened in

Paris suffered repeated attacks and were finally closed by the authorities. Moreover, high-ranking clergy who should have protected him were instead wracked by envy and hate and did their best to obstruct his efforts. Even people in educational circles attacked him, threatened by his policies. And some of his followers deserted him. He was under siege from all sides, inundated by a constant stream of slander. False charges were even brought against him in the courts. Base, malicious onslaughts relentlessly assailed him.

The pattern of obstruction and oppression by the powers that be, ever eager to quash any seeds of change that threaten the status quo, is remarkably similar, in East, West, past or present. The same forces are at work even today — the same pattern — in response to my efforts.

Finally, La Salle and his community of teachers were driven from Paris. But there was an outcry. By whom? By the parents of La Salle's students and many other ordinary people who loved and respected this great educator. "We need La Salle's schools!" they cried. "No other schools will do!" Their protest was successful — the Paris schools were reopened amid much rejoicing. It was a beautiful drama that we can still ap-

preciate many centuries later.

At a crucial moment, the strength and courage of ordinary people save the day. The famous, the well-connected, almost always have too much to lose. They abandon the cause to protect themselves.

True Glory?

What is true glory? True glory is found by plunging into the midst of the people, sharing their joys and sufferings, winning their trust. A Buddhist scripture says, "To be praised by fools — that is the greatest shame" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 188). My beloved mentor, Josei Toda, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, used to say that being praised by a great sage is the highest honor to which one could ever aspire. In a broader sense, there is no life more noble than one praised by the people, the great repository of human wisdom and intelligence.

During one of my many discussions with Dr. Balitzer, who received an honorary doctorate from Soka University today, the subject of French historian Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–59) and his famous work *Democracy in America* came up. We concurred, as Tocqueville asserted, that truly talented people never ally themselves with the powers that be but work for the people in a private capacity.

Soka University is not a national university. It is private, founded by the people. I hope you will be proud of this. I also hope that you will take great pride in your mission as Soka University and Soka Women's College graduates — in being, as the founder of *soka* (value-creating) education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, declared, a "select group of men and women of supreme good."

'Hasten Slowly!'

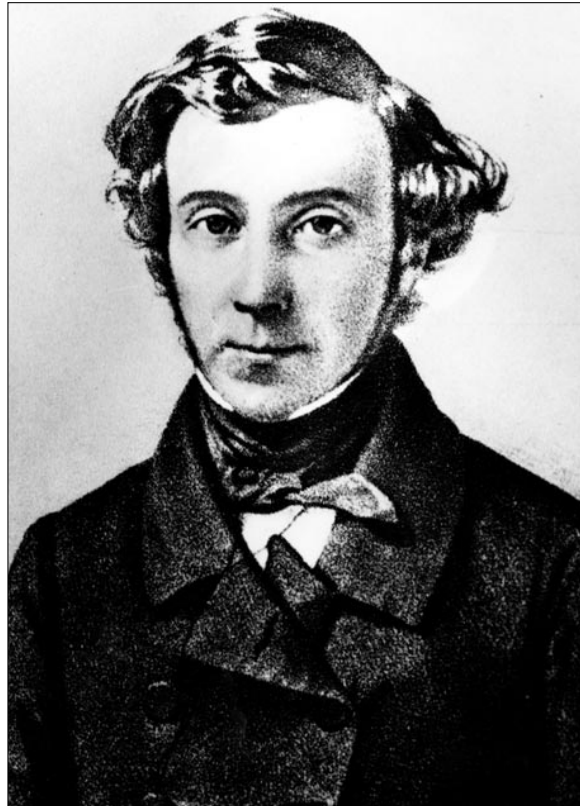
La Salle endured every imaginable obstruction and attack, but did not allow these petty problems to disturb or sway him from his purpose. He continued to move forward, one step at a time, steadily but surely realizing his ideals. Patience and endurance are the signs of true strength. One of the epithets of the Buddha is One Who Can Forbear.

La Salle was blessed with a following of young people ded-

PLEASE SEE EDUCATION, NEXT PAGE

Courtesy of SEIKYO SHIMBUN

CORBIS-BETTMANN



Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59) asserted that talented people, rather than associating with authorities, work for the people in a private capacity.

EDUCATION FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

icated to good and undaunted by the slanders and abuse heaped on them, their leader and their movement. La Salle wrote to them constantly, encouraging, supporting and advising them. He is said to have written more than 18,000 such letters.

La Salle's motto was "Hasten slowly!" (*Festina lente!*). With patient, dignified conviction, he planted the seeds of a humanistic education in young people's hearts one at a time. Madame Deng Yingchao, wife of Chinese premier Zhou Enlai, said in one of our meetings that she wished to plant, one at a time, the seeds of true ability in the rich soil of the people. This is the spirit of *soka* education.

The towering tree of education grows taller and taller over time. The seeds that La Salle planted more than three centuries ago are now blossoming the world over. De La Salle University is a magnificent symbol of this blossoming. And, as President Gonzalez said earlier, De La Salle University and Soka University are in full accord in their commitment to peace and complete opposition to violence in any form.

The Path of International Education

When Japanese military forces, cruel and arrogant, invaded the beautiful Philippines during World War II, they wreaked destruction on De La Salle University, taking the

precious lives of several staff and students. A memorial to those victims now stands on the university's campus. We must never forget this tragic history.

The firm, invincible spirit of Mr. Makiguchi, who died in prison fiercely condemning Japanese militarism to the very end, is Soka University's founding spirit. Let Soka University build a human alliance that lasts for all eternity and transcends petty nationalist interests! I firmly believe that only determined progress along a path of genuine, practical international education can destroy the evils of power and stop the tide of violence that threatens us at every moment.

I will continue to do what I can to further consolidate such a humanistic network of peace and culture throughout Asia and the world. I hope you, the Soka schools graduates, will carry on my work and make important contributions to this undertaking as well.

Adversity Gives Birth to Greatness

Fifty years ago, when as a young man I first met Mr. Toda, I was extremely fond of the German author and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). One remark of Goethe's in particular struck me: "One can bear most things in life, / Except for a monotonous run of prosperity."¹ These are golden words. If our days are always tranquil and uneventful from the time we are

young, we will soon tire of life—the boredom of such an existence becoming unbearable.

In other words, adversity gives birth to greatness. The greater challenges and difficulties we face, the greater opportunity we have to grow. A life without adversity, a life of ease and comfort, produces

nothing and leaves us with nothing. This is one of the indisputable facts of life.

During your years at school here, we have together welcomed many, many friends from around the world. Among them, I will never forget former Soviet First Lady Raisa Gorbachev, a thinker and philoso-

pher. She said that her entire life was crystallized in her university experience.

Soka University and Soka Women's College are the light sources that will illuminate the rest of your lives. I hope that you will always, through good times and bad, keep the Soka schools "never give up" spirit burning in your hearts. Please live out your precious lives with courage, dignity and, most of all, no regrets, shining brightly to the very end—like one of the glorious sunsets over Manila Bay in the Philippines.

The great hero of Philippine independence, Jose Rizal (1861-96), wrote:

Let us work then together and instead of useless lamentations, of disconsolate complaints, of accusations and excuses, let us apply the remedy, let us build, no matter if we begin with the simplest, for later we shall have time to erect new edifices on that foundation.²

With these brave, wise words, I close my remarks, my dear, dear young friends who celebrate your graduation today.

Maraming salamat po (Thank you very much). ❧

1. Translated from Japanese: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Kakugen fu ni" (Maxims) from *Gete Zenshu* (The Collected Works of Goethe) (Tokyo: Ushio Shuppan-sha, 1979), vol. 1, p. 277.
2. Quotations from *Rizal's Writings* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1992), p. 96.

GLOSSARY

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

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

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

gongyo: Literally, "assiduous practice." In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, gongyo means to recite the "Expedient Means" (2nd) chapter and the "Life

Span of the *Tathagata*" (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo in front of the Gohonzon.

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

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

karma: Sanskrit word meaning "action." The life tendency or destiny that each individual creates through thoughts, words and deeds. One's actions in the past have shaped one's reality at present, and actions in the present determine in turn one's future. This is the law of cause and effect at work.

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

Latter Day of the Law: The period be-

ginning 2,000 years after Shakyamuni's death, when his teachings lose their power and the true Buddha appears to lead all people to enlightenment.

Nam-myoho-enge-kyo: The fundamental component of Buddhist practice, which expresses the ultimate truth of life and allows each individual to tap his or her innate enlightened nature directly. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is revealed only through the practice of chanting it, there is a literal definition for each of the component words: *nam* (devotion) means to fuse one's life with the universal law; *myoho* (Mystic Law) is the fundamental principle of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; *enge* (lotus flower) refers to the lotus, which blooms and seeds at the same time, symbolizing the simultaneity of cause and effect; and *kyo* (sutra, or teaching of a Buddha) broadly indicates all phenomena or the activities of all living beings.

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

Shakyamuni: Also known as Siddhartha Gautama. The first historically recorded Buddha, he is the founder of Buddhism.

Soka Gakkai: Literally, "Society for the Creation of Value." The name of the lay organization of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Soka Gakkai International (SGI): The umbrella organization led by President Daisaku Ikeda, which includes organizations in 128 nations. It was established in 1975.

ten worlds: Potential conditions of life inherent in each individual. They are: Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood.

The Basics of Faith

by SGI President Ikeda

In this issue we introduce an occasional series of excerpts from President Ikeda's guidance over the past few years grouped together in various categories.

Obstacles

Even though we have faith, we cannot avoid painful, sad or unpleasant things in the course of life. Yet, through the principle "earthly desires are enlightenment," we can definitely manifest a state of "delight" in our lives; this is the greatness of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. By advancing based on faith, we can definitely change a life of suffering into a life of great joy.

Regarding "delight the hearts of the assembly," Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, said:

When we practice faith in earnest for ten years, our lives become truly pure. Our skin, the look of our eyes, our actions all become soft and pure, and yet come to possess a certain dignity. This is the benefit of the Gohonzon. When this happens we feel delight in our hearts; this is the meaning of "delight the hearts of the assembly." (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 126)

Nichiren Daishonin says, "Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 161). The central meaning is that we should regard suffering and joy as inescapable facts of our existence.

Without hardships, life would be bland and colorless. People learn from hard work; hard work provides nutrients needed to cause the flower of joy to blossom. Suffering and joy are like two sides of a coin. When we recognize this truth, we manifest

the true strength of the human being and the true profundity of life. (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 127)

The Daishonin says, "The greater the hardships befalling him [the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law], the greater the delight he feels, because of his strong faith" (MW-1, 9); and "The three obstacles and four devils will invariably appear, and the wise will rejoice while the foolish will retreat" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 244)....

There is a saying that "while a block of marble is an obstacle to the weak, it becomes a steppingstone to the strong."

Strong people make the most of obstacles. The stronger we are, the more joyful our lives. It all comes down to life force, spiritual energy. And these fundamentally derive from the powers of faith and practice. (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, pp. 128-29)

Worth is not found in joy alone. Nor is success the only valuable outcome. Suffering is the mother of realization; worries and failures, so long as we are not defeated by them, enable us to deepen our faith. Our sufferings become the raw material with which to construct our happiness. This is the principle of "earthly desires are enlightenment." Earthly desires, like other phenomena, are themselves the true entity.

Fundamentally, for people with faith in the Gohonzon, everything that happens is a benefit. This is the difference



Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

between those who believe in the Mystic Law and those who do not. (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 152)

The Lotus Sutra declares, "This sutra is hard to uphold" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 180). In other words, those who embrace the Lotus Sutra are certain to encounter difficulties.

The "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" states, "Those who embrace the Lotus Sutra should do so with the awareness that they will meet persecution without fail" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 742).

Unless we strive to surmount obstacles, we cannot become Buddhas. Nor can we accomplish kosen-rufu. For that reason, tenaciously enduring all, I continue to fight with the stand-alone spirit against the hardships and persecutions that assail us. (Feb. 21, 1997, *World Tribune*, pp. 11-12)

You cannot truly grow if you are always flattered and spoiled by those around you. You must resolve never to avoid hardship. If anything, you should have the spirit to go out of your way to find and challenge difficulties. The ultimate victors in life are those who have undergone and triumphed over hardships. Life is long. There is no need to be impatient. The important thing is to steadily and surely build a solid self. Since you uphold faith in the Mystic Law, whatever may happen, you can propel yourself in the best possible direction. I hope you will advance with that conviction. (April 11, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 13)

In activities for kosen-rufu,

absolutely no effort is wasted. Everything is engraved in our lives and enables us to establish a diamond-like and totally free state of life. In overcoming our weaknesses and exerting ourselves daily for our friends, we have already achieved victory as human beings. Ultimately, our victory or defeat in life is not decided by someone else — we decide it. A person who steadfastly adheres to the path he or she has chosen is a winner. (*Learning From the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 135)

When people encounter great obstacles, it's a sure sign they are creating tremendous positive change. This is true today as it certainly was in Nichiren Daishonin's time. (*Learning From the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 205)

"Suffer what there is to suffer," the Daishonin says. Suffering is inevitable in life. Therefore, we need to be prepared for hardship and to have the inner fortitude to rise above our worries and anxieties. We have to cause the "serene light of the moon of enlightenment" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1262) — the world of Buddhahood — to shine in our lives. Then earthly desires are transformed into enlightenment and we can use everything that happens in life to fuel our happiness. (*Learning From the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 244-45)

Just as a river courses over rocks and stones, life is full of problems and sufferings. If the

river flows strongly, the rocks and stones will not only be submerged but eventually be eroded and washed away. The profound inner joy and dynamic vitality of a life dedicated to achieving the mission of peace known as kosen-rufu resembles the powerful flow of a river. With the joy of faith, one can calmly sweep away and triumph over all sufferings, no matter how numerous they may be. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 160)

President Toda said: "Faith is a never-ending battle against impasse. It is a struggle between the Buddha and devilish functions — between negative and positive forces. This is the meaning of 'Buddhism is concerned with winning.' Everyone encounters an impasse at some point in life. However, the power of the Gohonzon is immeasurable, as vast as the universe itself. Our lives, too, have infinite potential. Everything hinges, therefore, on whether we allow our inner determination to become deadlocked. When we truly grasp this point, the path to victory is already open." (Sept. 19, 1994, *World Tribune*, p. 13)

Standing Up Against Authoritarianism

President Tsunesaburo Maki-guchi said: "Generally speaking, people who pride themselves on being good or extraordinarily good are most concerned with whether someone superior to them in character may appear. Or whether a method other than theirs will be proven superior. In that case, the higher a person's position, the more directly he or she is destined to make the

PLEASE SEE BASICS, NEXT PAGE

BASICS, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

causes for great or extraordinarily great evil." (*Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 208–09)

Nichiren Daishonin asserts, "It is important to speak with even greater conviction to those who slander the Mystic Law" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 1123). The Daishonin was as dauntless as a lion king when it came to speaking out for truth and justice. He urges his followers, "Be as fearless as Nichiren when he faced Hei no Saemon [the most powerful official of the day]" (MW-1, 140). (March 21, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 10)

All too often, as history testifies, people of the greatest justice and integrity are persecuted most harshly by those with evil aims. This, too, is a common theme in Buddhism. In the *Goshō*, Nichiren Daishonin writes, "This world is the province of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven" (MW-1, 135). Human society, in other words, is dominated by the corrupting nature of power. Throughout his life, the Daishonin waged an unremitting struggle against authoritarianism. He says, "Minor persecutions and annoyances are too numerous even to be counted, but the major persecutions number four" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 96). (May 23, 1997, *World Tribune*, pp. 13–14)

The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood today, similar to the Tendai school in the Daishonin's time but incomparably more reprehensible, has trampled upon the founder's spirit. Neglecting practice and whiling away their lives in dissipation, they have thoroughly defiled the spirit of Buddhism. Therefore, we have struggled dauntlessly against them. Fighting evil is proof of a true disciple of the Daishonin. (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 149)

From the time he majestically proclaimed Nam-myōhō-rengyō to the entire world in 1253, the Daishonin struggled without rest for the happiness and peace of all the people. His persecution at the hands of the authorities grew particularly severe after he produced his letter of remonstrance, the "Risshō



Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

Ankoku Ron" (On Securing the Peace of the Land Through the Propagation of True Buddhism) in 1260.... Yet, no matter how great the difficulties he encountered, the Daishonin says that he "never once felt inclined to retreat" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 1224). "The battle goes on even today" (MW-1, 101), he calmly states. (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 2, pp. 125–26)

Nichiren Daishonin observes that even though people of power can destroy Buddha images or temples, they are powerless to destroy Buddhism itself (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 182). And it is impossible for someone's spirit to be destroyed from without. As long as we have beautiful unity, the world of the Mystic Law is absolutely indestructible. (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 3, p. 62)

What matters most is that we fight thoroughly against injustice with a lofty, dauntless spirit. While waging a determined struggle against evil that nearly cost him his life, Nichiren Daishonin cried out [to Shijo Kingo, as they were being led to the execution grounds at Tatsunokuchi], "You should be delighted at this great fortune" (MW-1, 181). (*Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 243)

Not only do people fail to do what is correct, they tend to react emotionally and negatively toward a person of justice. This is human nature. In particular, arrogant authorities cannot bear to have anyone stand up to them

and speak out for justice. This is because they regard themselves as superior to everyone. This is an unchanging principle. (June 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 20)

Hope

Among the many treatises written by Mr. Toda, there are some which deal with "hope." In these treatises Mr. Toda emphatically declares that hope or aspiration is indispensable in life.

As evidence of this, he referred to the lives of great people in ages past who, neither succumbing to hardships nor allowing the fire of aspiration to be smothered, managed to maintain their dreams. Thus, Mr. Toda taught us the importance of persistently harboring hope.

In comparison with these great men, ordinary people are able to lose hope in the face of minor failures or obstacles and then to stagnate. They are prone to either losing the vitality needed to endure the rigors of life or to retreating backwards, harboring resentment toward others and sinking into self-pity and complaining.

We must not lose hope in life no matter what the difficulties. Though you may temporarily suffer from illness or experience a financial crisis, an inextinguishable fire of hope should always remain resplendent in your heart. (*Buddhism in Action*, vol. 3, pp. 287–88)

A life with hope is strong. A life without hope leads to defeat. Aspiration is the power of one's life and those who always cherish splendid dreams are happy. For example, there are not a few people who, though living in opulent surroundings, are burdened by incessant fam-

ily struggles because family members and relatives are on bad terms. However fortunate and blessed a person may appear outwardly, inwardly he may well be experiencing distress on account of, say, a lack of warmth in his human relations. Certainly a person's life cannot be judged solely on the basis of appearances. (*Buddhism in Action*, vol. 3, p. 288)

It may be said, after all, that it is an exclusive privilege of human beings to be able to live life with aspiration. The human race alone can live in happiness in a garden-like world filled with hope.

There is nothing so splendid as a life which is endowed with hope and conviction extending from the present into the eternal future. Thus, to "live up to the noble cause of kosen-rufu" is the essence of the vast teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and constitutes the ultimate summation of Mr. Toda's guidance. (*Buddhism in Action*, vol. 3, p. 289)

In contrast, a practice of dedicating oneself to giving guidance and encouragement, in which, illuminated by the True Law we embrace, one earnestly takes care of and gives instruction to many people on the correct practice of Buddhism, is by far the more noble. Nichiren Daishonin teaches us in his various writings that we should march on with confidence because all the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions, together with the heavenly deities, will without fail protect the Law. Therefore, I ask that you persist in walking along the grand path of kosen-rufu, filled with hopes and dreams. (*Buddhism in Ac-*

tion, vol. 3, p. 290)

The Mentor/ Disciple Relationship

Ancient China produced many gifted philosophers who traveled far and wide preaching the Way. Even when they lost all hope for integrity in government, they continued to devote themselves to educating the young. For these thinkers, the point of education was not so much teaching or instructing, but cultivating and fostering.

The teachers of antiquity demanded from their students both self-discipline and an unquenchable motivation to learn. A passage in Confucius's *Analects* reads:

I do not open up the truth to one who is not eager to get knowledge, nor help anyone who is not anxious to explain himself. When I have presented one corner of a subject to anyone, and he cannot learn the other three from it, I do not repeat my lesson. (*A New Humanism*, pp. 23–24)

My final point is the central importance of character, another name for human wholeness or completeness....

[M]y mentor in life and second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, emerged from a two-year imprisonment by the forces of Japanese militarism to initiate a new humanistic movement in Japan. In his efforts he always focused on raising people of character, one person at a time, from among the populace. I have many fond memories of this compassionate man, whose love for youth knew no bounds and who encouraged us to be great actors on the stage of life. Indeed, the power of character is like the concentrated energy of an actor who has given himself or herself entirely over to the performance of the part. A person of outstanding character will always, even under the most difficult of circumstances, retain an air of composure, ease, even humor, like an accomplished actor playing a part. This is nothing other than the achievement of self-mastery or self-control. (*A New Humanism*, p. 174) ❧

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'One Country...



The British royal yacht 'Britannia' sits docked at the Prince of Wales Barracks in Hong Kong, June 23. The Hong Kong Convention Centre, the site of the July 1 handover ceremony, is in the background on the left. The 'Britannia' served as the floating base for Prince Charles during the handover events.

...Two Points of View'

By LINDA WRIGHT
WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENT

One country, two systems. That is the unique structure Hong Kong now operates under following its return to Chinese sovereignty at midnight on June 30, under brilliant bursts of fireworks lighting the sky during the celebrations at the handover ceremony.

And when it comes to how the changeover is being perceived, "one country, two points of view" seems like an apt description. Much of the Western press has focused on the potential threat China's rule poses for the citizens of Hong Kong, expressing fears about the loss of civil rights and the possible danger posed by incoming Chinese troops, often recalling the massacre in Tianamen Square.

Yet most polls in Hong Kong indicate a majority of residents are optimistic about the future. And in China, news reports have described the reunion as historic, symbolically marking the end of an era of oppression by colonialists and imperialists, referred to

'We ought not to be focusing so much on the Chinese control of Hong Kong as the Hong Kongization of China — that's the big picture.'
— David Shambaugh

by the Chinese as "the century of shame." The capture of Hong Kong by the British during the Opium Wars in the 1800s, when British troops fought to force the Chinese to buy opium, was a case in point.

David Shambaugh, the director of Asian studies at George Washington University, who has visited China

more than 20 times in the past 20 years, thinks dire predictions by the media have been exaggerated.

"I think American media coverage of China is highly distorted, frankly, and exceedingly negative," he says. "That's not to say that there are not negative things to report in China: the abuse of human rights, slave labor, female infanticide and other issues. But China has undergone a remarkable transformation in the last 15 or 20 years. Anyone like myself who has been going there with regularity over the years can hardly fail to note it."

He goes on to say that the American media is missing the mark by failing to report that China is undergoing the most significant economic revolution and modernization the world has ever seen.

"We ought not to be focusing so much on the Chinese control of Hong Kong as the Hong Kongization of China — that's the big picture," he says.

If journalists, who provide most people a window to the outside world, cannot find ways to instill a deeper understanding of different cultures, it will be difficult for people to develop the type of empathy that is necessary to foster peace. W