

World Tribune

No. 3169

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

DECEMBER 12, 1997

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

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FNCC 1998: Pencil It In

Leadership conferences and new 'theme' conferences highlight the FNCC's just-announced 1998 schedule, which comprises a total of 34 weekend gatherings.

The Florida Nature and Culture Center's first year was so successful that 1998's roster includes new and expanded offerings. Beginning next month, three consecutive conferences on leadership will kick off the new year. These are open to all members.

Three new theme conferences will be offered in April. Each will focus on a specific topic.

- Focus on Work: How to get the most out of work based on Buddhist practice.

- Focus on Relationships:



The success of FNCC conferences in 1997 is leading the way to an innovative 1998 roster.

How to have good relationships — with family, friends, lovers and other Buddhists — based on Buddhist practice.

- Focus on the Lotus Sutra: An in-depth study of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

A total of 34 conferences are scheduled throughout the year, including special language conferences for members who speak Korean, Chinese, Spanish or Japanese. Various youth division and pioneer conferences are also slated.

The land package price of \$375 — airfare not included — will be the same for all 1998 FNCC conferences. This includes: sleeping accommodations for three nights (a roommate will be assigned); all meals from Thursday dinner through Sunday lunch; ground transportation to and from the Fort Lauderdale and Miami International airports (within a specified time frame); bus tour (admission fees not included); and conference instructional and study materials.

For more details or to register for a conference, please contact your regional office or community center at least a month or two in advance of the conference. Payment of land package fees must be made two weeks prior to the conference start date.

The FNCC is located at 20000 S.W. 36th Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33332-1929. ☐

See page 4 for a chart listing all 1998 conferences, their dates and descriptions.

Dr. Linus Pauling's Social Activism Remembered

In part 2 of SGI President Ikeda's dialogue with Dr. Linus Pauling Jr., they discuss the late Dr. Pauling's social activism.

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
Tokyo, Oct. 12

(Continued from the Nov. 28 World Tribune)

When SGI President Ikeda asked Dr. Linus Pauling Jr. if he felt Hitler had been mentally ill, the psychiatrist said he thought so. Dr. Pauling suspects the German dictator had a character disorder, such that he was unable to judge right from wrong. Such people, he explained, are incapable of recog-

nizing that they are ill. People who are simply neurotic, he added, realize that something is wrong with them and feel anxiety because of that.

Mr. Ikeda then said that talking with Dr. Pauling reminded him of his dialogues with his father, the late Linus Pauling, who always gave clear, insightful answers to his questions. The SGI leader recalled that he had once asked Linus Pauling, half in jest, if there was some kind of pill or tonic that could boost one's intelligence. The

Nobel laureate's reply was that "effort is the only way.... You have to work hard toward your chosen goal. If you just live from day to day without any goals, your intellect will wither." It is no surprise, President Ikeda mused, that a person who works hard for the sake of improving society and the happiness of humanity, will tend to possess exceptional mental acuity. Conversely, he said, there are extremely bright, capable people who show no interest in making the world a better place. Such

people, he said, are invariably dominated by the life-state of Animality. Mr. Ikeda cited a related passage from the late scientist's book *No More War*: "I believe that there is a greater power in the world than the evil power of military force, of nuclear bombs — there is the power of good, of morality, of humanitarianism. I believe in the power of the human spirit."

President Ikeda then shared that he often speaks about Linus Pauling's committed social activism to youth. He voiced admiration for the scientist's struggle to protect the rights of Japanese Americans during World War II and prevent their forced relocation to internment camps.

When Mr. Ikeda asked how to boost intelligence, the senior Dr. Pauling's response was that 'effort is the only way.'

PLEASE SEE PAULING, 4

VOICES

Next year is the Year of Victory of the People for the New Century. What are your plans for victory in your community next year?

Members from San Francisco #1 Joint Territory (Oakland area) respond:



I plan to stay focused, to be positive and to reach out to more people with a high life-condition. I'm chanting that more people will come back to the SGI who are now going to temple meetings.

— LESLIE TRIPLETTE, Oakland, Calif.

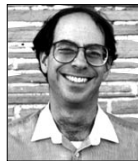
It's important for us to go into the neighborhood. Up to now we have always encouraged members to attend their district meetings, no matter how far away they were. We developed the feeling that the district was most important. I hope to see the feeling grow that the members themselves are most important. I want to support the neighborhood activities more and to see them grow. I also want to challenge the feeling of isolation from society and to reach out to other people. That will be my struggle for 1998.

— KINI PADDOCK, Concord, Calif.



My neighborhood meetings are small. I was looking around for a meeting with more members, but now I'm determined to do whatever it takes to practice in my neighborhood instead of floating around and taking the easy way out.

— LARCENA LOADHOLT, Berkeley, Calif.



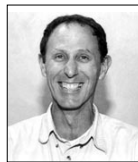
I've been chanting where I live now for six years. There's one other member in my apartment building, and our neighbors know we chant. Our chanting has impacted the neighborhood already, and with the neighborhood meetings, beginning with my apartment building, my street and then the neighborhood, we should expand into a beautiful and harmonious community.

— JOE SOCENSKY, Oakland, Calif.



Hayward members volunteered to plant a rose garden at Eden Park. We invited the mayor to celebrate the event with us. We hope to get everyone involved volunteering to develop our community and propagate this Buddhism.

— DAVID CHISOLM, Hayward, Calif.



I chant for each member I practice with to become able and strong. Our positive life force can push back the negativity that creeps in from outside. We can push positive energy outward that will transform our community to reflect the spirit we have in our meetings.

— JACK SHOULTS, Berkeley, Calif.

If you have suggested questions for our "Voices" column, please send them to the address in the box at right.

Better Living Through Chemistry?

EDITORIAL

This is germ warfare: Anthrax spores are dispersed into the air. A victim breathes, inhaling the deadly bacteria. Once inside the victim's lungs, the anthrax is carried to nearby lymph nodes where the bacteria multiplies and produces poison. The result is vomiting, fever, shock and death by gradual suffocation.

Two pounds of tiny anthrax spores could conceivably kill millions of people in this way.

The pain and suffering that can be inflicted by chemical and biological weapons are truly monstrous. Yet perhaps more horrifying is the fact that people — in Iraq and many other "civilized" countries — are working hard to perfect the means by which these weapons may be used. Scientists and researchers are applying all their ingenuity to the task of mass killing. One has to wonder what goes through the mind of a young technician, wearing a lab coat and sneakers, whose job it is to grow the bacterial cultures that will become those two pounds of anthrax capable of visiting so much misery on so many people.

Maybe it's just a job, like flipping burgers. Or maybe it's forced labor, performed under threat of violence. Or maybe the technician sees it as a noble vocation, a chance to arm the forces of "good" with a powerful tool.

It's not possible for us to know exactly what goes on in the hearts and minds of the people who produce biological weapons. But we do know that they're human beings, not cartoonish villains or stereotypical mad scientists. They may have created or involved themselves in a terrible situation, but they are people.

And that is cause for hope.

As Nichiren Daishonin writes, "Even a heartless villain loves his wife and children" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 53). Just as we all have the capacity to manifest the profound ugliness of the lower worlds, we all have the capacity to care about and love others.

But most of us can think of one or two cases in the news recently of heartless villains who certainly didn't act as if they loved their spouses, children or anyone. And terrorist attacks by suicidal fanatics appear to be happening more frequently. It seems almost naive to hope that "the better angels of our nature" as Abraham Lincoln called them — or our Buddha and Bodhisattva natures as Buddhism calls them — will ultimately prevail.

That, perhaps, is one reason why the United Nations finds it necessary to send special inspection teams to Iraq and other countries to monitor the production of weapons. Without the United Nations nosing around, who knows what stockpiles would be amassed?

But, as the current situation in Iraq illustrates, U.N. inspectors by themselves cannot prevent the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. If people really want to cultivate anthrax, whether in a government lab or a suburban basement, they'll probably do it.

Buddhism teaches that we can change our karma through chanting. Buddhism also teaches the profound interconnectedness of all life — the changes that we make in ourselves will inevitably be reflected in others. As we would chant for the victims of terrorism and biological weapons — and as we would chant for ourselves and our loved ones — so should we chant for the manufacturers and perpetrators of germ warfare: for their happiness and for their suffering to be eliminated.

This is not to say that we don't stand up against evil where we see it. We can chant for Saddam Hussein's happiness, but that won't necessarily put an end to chemical and biological weapons. Vigilance and speaking out on behalf of ordinary people are crucial when it comes to confronting evil. So in addition to our prayers for the individuals complicit in the evil of chemical and biological weapons, we can support the United Nations and its inspectors. Destructive schemes and rulers who thirst for power at all costs must not go unchecked.

It's not possible for us to know exactly what goes on in the hearts and minds of the people who produce biological weapons. But we do know that they're human beings, not cartoonish villains or stereotypical mad scientists.... And that is cause for hope.

World Tribune

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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

The Unwelcome Drama of Chronic Illness

Thank you, Tamara Jenkins, for your "Perspective" ("Turning Point," Oct. 31 *World Tribune*).

I know the unwelcome drama of chronic illness and its devastating toll: loss of self-esteem, loss of identity, loss of occupation, even loss of friends. Society views illness as a lessening of productivity. People take health for granted, yet fear illness because we are all vulnerable to it.

People tell us we are weak or that we have a weak practice. They don't know the battle waged to get up each morning, confronting despair; chanting when it's hard to breathe; summoning willpower to accomplish the smallest task. They don't know the feelings of powerlessness, inadequacy and isolation, physical pain and debilitation.

These last three-and-a-half weeks I've been stuck inside these four walls, chanting to somehow create value. What I'm learning is that illness is a disconnectedness from the earth, a break in the flow of life force. That is why our world is ill, alienated, suffering, and in need of sustenance.

Thank you, Tamara, for your courage and tenacity. I want to tell you what I must tell myself: You don't need "a new identity." This is the only one you have, the only one you need to be happy and healthy. Your life is indeed the Gohonzon, a cluster of blessings that will flow beyond itself to enrich other lives.

Think like a river. Trust life. Love yourself unconditionally. Let illness teach you to live fully, deeply, inexhaustibly. Draw from the earth and then give back to it the cool, clear waters of our daimoku, helping our ailing planet to heal.

— JODIE APPELL, Berkeley, Calif.

Our Friends in Canada

I just faxed a couple of articles from the *World Tribune* to a member in western Canada. We both work on the Canadian SGI magazine *New Century*. Your paper is an inspiration to me, and I marvel once again as I re-read Soudy Niethammer's experience (Aug. 15 *World Tribune*). The recovery article (Oct. 3 *World Tribune*) boldly addressed a couple of issues, that of interest groups and the role of therapy, that concern members here as well. Thanks for your efforts — I know the kind of work that goes into that newspaper.

— LYNNE HUSSEY, Toronto

More Shrubs

I am a landscape professional practicing with Virginia Headquarters. I am writing to give suggestions about shrubs that provide the greenery for the altar in Zone 6 (Richmond area). Upon research, I found the best shrubs are Aucuba (japonica "seratifolia" — glossy evergreen shrub with serrated margins on leaves; average 4 feet tall and 4 feet wide) and Euonymus (japonica "silver king" — evergreen variety with creamy green leaves growing upright, average 6 feet tall and 3 feet wide).

When you take care of your cuttings from the shrubbery, I suggest that you use sharp hand pruners. Cut at a 45-degree angle. By doing so, you will increase the surface area of the cutting to draw water, keeping it looking good on your altar for longer periods of time.

— DENNIS BROGDON, Chesapeake, Va.

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.

My First 'No Limit' Holiday Season

PERSPECTIVE

By **GLORIA JEAN ROYSTER**
ATLANTA

For many years, the holiday season was not my favorite time of the year. When the weather began to turn cold and the Thanksgiving holiday drew closer, I became overwhelmed by feelings of despair, hopelessness, loneliness and sadness, as well as a loss of interest in life and an inability to enjoy it. A cluster of dark clouds would seem to settle in over the duration of the holiday season. Inside, I felt captive to a dark mood. Like winter, I felt barren and cold.

This melancholy mood continued for many years, even as I practiced Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I often wondered if I would ever experience the "boundless joy from the Law" that chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo promised. Even at celebrations with family or SGI members, I often felt a deep loneliness. I spent a lot of holidays alone. My son would be off visiting his father. If I was in a relationship, my suitor was often nowhere to be found.

I must admit I never specifically chanted about this problem. I sort of went with the flow. I expected the clouds to settle in like clockwork every year.

At one point, though, I came across a quote by SGI President

Ikedo. He wrote that he had "no time to hide behind dark clouds." I never forgot this. Periodically, it would come to mind. Still, I never chanted to understand what it meant. I continued to suffer.

The greatness of this Buddhism is that in the process of chanting, we do change — in spite of ourselves. Through my efforts at chanting, struggling to become consistent with gongyo, teaching gongyo to others, chanting with and praying for others, and introducing others to the practice, the sun of Buddhahood or absolute happiness gradually rose in my heart, my life. It dispelled my dark clouds as surely as early dew drops disappear in the sunlight.

I don't remember at what point in my 14 years of practice it changed. I only know that eventually when the holiday season approached, I embraced it with boundless joy. I sought out family and friends more. I became the life of the party at family gatherings. It wasn't important if I didn't have a man in my life. I was OK with my son being away from me; I learned to follow the guidance given me long ago to stop using him as a security blanket.

I began to perceive the nature of my life, and it felt good! The dark clouds passed. I felt the warmth of the sun envelope my being even in the cloudy, cold, barren dead of winter. It felt like spring was upon me. I experienced what fellow SGI

member and psychotherapist Lee Wolfson described as the "underlying message of the Buddhist view of the self that the individual is born with the inherent capacity to overcome all difficulties and achieve a remarkable state of self-actualization."

So I am grateful that I met Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in the winter of 1983. I now see myself more clearly. I am learning that I can make a difference. "No time to hide behind dark clouds" continues to be my personal motto to meet all challenges daily. I also now have what Dr. Martin Seligman, a leader in cognitive theory on depression, described as "faith in the larger institutions of society — the family, the nation, and religion." I am in harmony with myself and society.

This year, I have determined to have my first "no limits" holiday season. To paraphrase from *No More Holiday Blues* by Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, I will have "no depression, and most important, no holiday blues." It is going to surpass my wildest expectations about what a holiday season can be. I will be positive, up, full of life and fun in a season that is supposed to bring out the best in me rather than do me in.

Now, thanks to my practice, this time of the year offers me a wonderful opportunity to rekindle the spirit of love and living life to the fullest. ❖

What Do You Think?

Please write to us and let us know your thoughts on the World Tribune. What articles do you like or dislike? Which types would you like to see more of, less of? Do you have ideas to make the paper better? Do you have questions you'd like answered? Would you like to get involved in your local area? We welcome all letters at:

Mailbox, World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401.

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Pauling: Undaunted by Authority

PAULING, FROM PAGE 1

Mr. Ikeda also talked about the period when Linus Pauling was many times summoned to appear before Congressional committees because of his peace activities. In the 1950s, at the height of the McCarthy era, the scientist faced a barrage of attacks for actively campaigning to collect signatures calling for a stop to nuclear testing. The

authorities even threatened him with imprisonment if he didn't reveal the names of his colleagues, but Pauling refused to comply. His unwavering stand moved many people. President Ikeda said, and played a significant role in changing the tide of fear and paranoia that then prevailed.

Touching on the close relationship between Linus Pauling and Albert Einstein, the SGI leader remembered that when Pauling was blacklisted for alleged "un-American" activities and was denied a passport, Einstein wrote a protest letter to the U.S. secretary of state. Einstein once wrote to Pauling, "The fact that independent minds like you are

being rebuked equally by official America and official Russia is insignificant and to a certain degree also amusing." Both scientists, Mr. Ikeda observed, acted on their convictions, undaunted by authority figures.

The SGI leader proposed that he and his guests pool their reminiscences of Dr. Pauling and publish them. Dr. and Mrs. Pauling heartily agreed, and it was decided to begin preparations.

Dr. Pauling explained that his father came from a poor family and experienced great hardship, having to work from a young age to help support his family and pay his way through school. The SGI leader explained that Shakyamuni Buddha was born the prince of a royal family but abandoned privilege to seek the truth. And Nichiren Daishonin, who enacted a great drama of the human spirit, was the son of a humble fisherman.

As their meeting drew to a close, Mr. Ikeda told Dr. Pauling that he is committed both to replying to Linus Pauling's call for peace and to fulfilling the scientist's hope that the SGI continue to advance intrepidly in this cause. ❧

In the 1950s, at the height of the McCarthy era, the scientist faced a barrage of attacks for actively campaigning to collect signatures calling for a stop to nuclear testing.

Have you got a story to tell?
Then tell us!

Did you learn something new about your practice or your life? Share it in a "Perspective." Have you accomplished a cherished goal? Send us your experience.

Or maybe you don't want to write, but you've got a great idea for a "Worldview." Or you've heard someone give an experience that you know will encourage others.

Or you just finished reading the latest issue of 'World Tribune' and you want to get something off your chest — send a letter to "Mailbox."

We're waiting for YOU!

Questions? Call your region (joint territory) bureau chief or contact the World Tribune directly:

Address: 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, Calif. 90401

Telephone: (310) 451-8811

E-mail: SokaNews@aol.com

1998 Conference Schedule at the Florida Nature & Culture Center

Thirty-four conferences have been scheduled at the Florida Nature and Culture Center this year. Details for all conferences will be made available via organizational memos at least two months before the date of the conference. Please contact your region (joint territory) office for more information.

Dates	Description	Regions (Joint Territories)
Jan. 15–18	Conference on Leadership	Atlanta, New England, Chicago LA #1, LA#5, New York Island, Seattle SF #1
Jan. 22–25	Conference on Leadership	Hawaii #1, LA #2, LA #3, Midwest New Jersey, San Diego, Texas Washington, D.C.
Jan. 29–Feb. 1	Conference on Leadership	Florida, Hawaii #2, LA #4, New York East New York West, Philadelphia, SF #2 Rocky Mountain
Feb. 12–15	Pioneers	Nationwide
Feb. 19–22	Men's Division	Nationwide
Feb. 26–Mar. 1	Korean Language	Nationwide
Mar. 12–15	Study, Publications, PR	Nationwide
Mar. 19–22	Japanese Language	Nationwide
Mar. 26–29	Chinese Language	Nationwide
April 9–12	Focus on Work	Nationwide
April 16–19	Focus on Relationships	Nationwide
April 23–26	Focus on the Lotus Sutra	Nationwide
May 7–10	Chorus	Nationwide
May 14–17	Spanish Language	Nationwide
May 28–31	Boys & Girls Group Coordinators	Nationwide
June 4–7	Atlanta Region Conference	Atlanta Region only
June 18–21	Pioneers	Nationwide
July 9–12	Young Men's Division	Nationwide
July 16–19	Young Women's Division	Nationwide
July 23–26	Jr. High/High School Div.	Nationwide
Aug. 6–9	Student Division	Nationwide
Aug. 13–16	Youth Music Groups	Nationwide
Aug. 20–23	Men's Division	Nationwide
Aug. 27–30	Conference on Leadership	Atlanta, New England, Chicago LA #1, LA#5, New York Island, Seattle SF #1
Sept. 10–13	Conf. theme to be announced	Nationwide
Sept. 17–20	Conference on Leadership	Hawaii #1, LA #2, LA #3, Midwest New Jersey, San Diego, Texas Washington, D.C.
Sept. 24–27	Women's Division	Nationwide
Oct. 1–4	Conf. theme to be announced	Nationwide
Oct. 15–18	Conference on Leadership	Florida, Hawaii #2, LA #4, New York East New York West, Philadelphia, SF #2 Rocky Mountain
Oct. 22–25	Women's Division	Nationwide
Oct. 29–Nov. 1	Conf. theme to be announced	Nationwide
Nov. 12–15	Culture Department	Nationwide
Nov. 19–22	Youth Support Groups	Nationwide
Dec. 10–13	Pioneers	Nationwide

Global Citizen Awards Bestowed

Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

Oct. 29, Cambridge, Mass. — Dr. Oscar Arias Sanchez and Dr. Randall Caroline Forsberg — two leaders devoted to a global culture of peace — today received the Global Citizen Award by the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century.

“This award is imbued with a profound prayer for the realization of a world of peaceful co-existence,” SGI President Ikeda wrote in a message. “It is therefore most fitting that the two recipients today are renowned for their pioneering and outstanding initiatives in forging a broad based citizens’ movement for peace and disarmament.”

Dr. Arias, former president of Costa Rica, which was demilitarized during his tenure, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987. He is now, with other Nobel laureates, working on an international code of conduct to restrict the sale of arms.

“There is a need for a new ethic of responsibility and morality,” Dr. Arias said in his acceptance speech. “We must accept that today’s problems were created by our thoughts

and actions. The world cannot change without a transformation in human consciousness, and that transformation can only happen if we each assume certain obligations.”

Dr. Forsberg co-founded the Institute for Defense and Disarmament studies in 1979. She has written widely on the subject of disarmament and other war and peace issues. In her speech, she outlined her approach to “an international environment in which there is a steadily declining incidence of war, expectation of war and acceptance of war... Where war would become unthinkable.”

According to Virginia Straus, executive director of the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, the Global Citizen Award was created to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations’ founding.

Explaining that its purpose is to honor individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the growth of civil society, both nationally and internationally, Straus remarked, “We believe that treasuring



Dr. Caroline Forsberg (left) and Dr. Oscar Arias after the awards ceremony. SGI President Ikeda's congratulatory message described them as 'renowned for their pioneering and outstanding initiatives in forging a broad based citizens' movement for peace and disarmament.'

such courageous people in countries everywhere will help foster the emergence of a global culture of peace.”

The Global Citizen Award, established in 1995, recognizes the contributions of exemplary leaders in such fields

as peace, human rights and the environment.
Compiled by Lisa Kirk, Assistant Managing Editor.

Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Meeting Stresses Responsibility



Photos by SHARI COHEN

The theme of personal responsibility influenced discussions on topics ranging from supporting the SGI organization to designing a website.

By DIANA ELROD
CORRESPONDENT

San Francisco, Nov. 16

“This meeting is a great vehicle for expression and support. I am not gay but am here for my cousin and his lover. I feel a tremendous respect for those who love others unconditionally, and I see that quality exemplified in the SGI.”

“This meeting is nothing short of a miracle! I feel renewed and inspired, and some of my friends (non-Buddhist) want to

come to one of these meetings!”

“To me, the SGI is synonymous with diversity, and I love it!”

“I am very thankful for this meeting, because it fosters a new sense of community and creates a powerful forum for the shared expression of our specific and also profound natures.”

These are a few of the comments written in a book during San Francisco’s first gay/lesbian/bisexual SGI-USA meeting today. More than 150 attendees — of whom more than 30 were guests — met for an afternoon of experiences, determinations and a question-and-answer period to celebrate being gay, lesbian and bisexual Buddhists practicing together for kosen-rufu.

Much discussion centered on how to help the SGI grow and strengthen as an organization committed to diversity. Stressing the theme of personal responsibility, attendees pledged their support for and participation in a broad range of activities, from helping design a proposed website devoted to diversity issues to the possibility of compiling a book of gay/lesbian/bisexual ex-

periences for publication.

Participants also engaged in an animated dialogue on ways to ensure we celebrate our uniqueness without separating ourselves from the organization. To that end, attendees embraced a six-point mission statement clarifying meetings like this as “an adjunct to our regular Buddhist practice”:

1) Support the district and the overall goals of the SGI.

2) Encourage and support gay, lesbian and bisexual members to practice and share their unique experiences as Buddhists.

3) Provide a meeting at which gay, lesbian and bisexual members can bring potential members for the purpose of introducing them to Buddhism.

4) Provide a foundation for broader diversity activities.

5) Provide a positive role model for gay, lesbian and bisexual youth within the organization.

6) Provide a mechanism for reaching out into the community, both within the SGI and outside, to bring more people into awareness about Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.



The New Human Revolution

By HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 5

Young Eagles

Translation of parts 15–16 of the ‘Young Eagles’ 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.

Outside, cicadas trilled a lingering farewell to summer. The afternoon of Aug. 31, in a Japanese-style room in the Seikyo Shimbun Building, Shin’ichi Yamamoto began his first lecture to student division representatives on the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings.” The 40-or-so participants sat around the lecture table, happy and excited that their much-anticipated lecture series with President Yamamoto was about to get under way.

Shin’ichi took his seat behind the table and said, “Let’s begin!” His voice was firm and confident.

At this first session, Student Division Chief Goro Watari read out the names of all the participants and briefly introduced them one by one, each student rising in response. Shin’ichi’s intent gaze seemed to penetrate their beings, yet at the same time it warmed them with its compassion.

To Shin’ichi, these leaders of the student division — the last division Josei Toda formed before his death — were diamonds in the rough left to him by his mentor. He vowed to take these rough gems that possessed a potential for limitless brilliance and polish each of them with care and effort until they shone and sparkled as beautiful jewels of talent and ability.

After the students had all been introduced, Shin’ichi shared his thoughts:

“In the past, President Toda gave a series of lectures on the Lotus Sutra based on the ‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings’ to a group of members who were students at Tokyo University. Of those members, Mr. Watari and Mr. Fujiwara have gone on to become the student division chief and vice chief and as such are now taking central responsibility for the student division. They are also playing a very important role in the Soka Gakkai as a whole.

“As for each of you who have come here today to study the ‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings’ with me, from here on, I ask that you, too, without a single exception, develop yourselves to become exemplary leaders of the Gakkai and society as a whole. That is my earnest wish. For that reason, I am determined to put everything I have into these lectures, no matter how busy I may be with other matters.

“I also want you to know that I will be looking out for you as long as I live. I will be there to see how many of you go on to become outstanding leaders — great eagles and lions of faith — and who falls to the wayside or ends up turning against the Soka Gakkai.

“Buddhism is strict. Half measures won’t work. Either you persevere in up-

holding faith throughout your life and attain Buddhahood, or you abandon your faith and suffer as a result. You may be active as top leaders of the Soka Gakkai for as long as 20 or 30 years, but unless you steadfastly maintain your faith to the very end, your life will be a failure, a defeat. And I don’t want to see this happen to any of you.”

Shin’ichi’s voice rang with resolute conviction. Everyone listened intently,



their expressions serious. No one so much as stirred or made a sound.

Shin’ichi then opened the Goshō and began to talk about the overall significance and background of the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings”:

“The ‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings’ is a record of Nichiren Daishonin’s lectures on the most important passages of the Lotus Sutra. The lectures, given at the request of his disciples and conducted at Mount Minobu, were written down by Nikko Shonin. And that record was approved by the Daishonin himself. Together with ‘On the True Cause’ and ‘The 106 Comparisons’ — two significant documents written by Nichiren Daishonin and entrusted directly to his legitimate heir and successor, Nikko Shonin — it is a work of momentous consequence, presenting as it does the quintessence of the Daishonin’s teaching.

“The writing comprises two volumes. The first begins with a detailed explanation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and then moves on to a discussion of the first 15 chapters of the Lotus Sutra — from the ‘Introduction’ through the ‘Emerging From the Earth’ chapters. The second volume examines pivotal passages from the remaining 13 chapters — from ‘The Life Span of the Thus Come One’ through the ‘Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy’ chapters.

“It also delves into the meaning of key passages from the Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings and the Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy, which are regarded respectively as the opening and closing sutras to the Lotus Sutra. [Together, the Lotus Sutra and these two bracketing sutras are commonly referred to as the Threefold Lotus Sutra.] There is also an appendix at the end of the second

volume containing sections entitled ‘One Important Passage From Each of the 28 Chapters’ and ‘All 28 Chapters Are Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.’

“Each section of the ‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings’ is basically structured as follows: After excerpting a key passage from the Lotus Sutra or the opening and closing sutras, commentaries on that passage by such great Buddhists teachers as T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo are cited, and then — preceded by the phrase ‘The orally transmitted teachings state’ — the teachings of the Daishonin’s Buddhism of Sowing implicit beneath the textual surface of the Lotus Sutra are clarified.

“These teachings represent the pinnacle of human philosophy and thought, covering a broad spectrum of principles concerning religion, life, human happiness, the universe and society, in terms of both faith and daily living.”

When Shin’ichi had given the students a basic overview of the writing’s struc-

ture, he said: “Now let’s begin our study of the ‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,’ exploring it together both in principle and in practice!”

He then asked for a volunteer to read its opening lines aloud.

For a moment, no one raised a hand. Then, slowly, a few hands went up. Shin’ichi picked one student, who stood and began to read, his voice weak and hesitant:

Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

The Orally Transmitted Teachings state, “*Namu* derives from Sanskrit and here [in Japan] it means devotion....” (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 708)

When the reader finished, Shin’ichi said with some severity: “What lackluster reading! When we read the Goshō, we should do so with the profound conviction that we are reading the truth, the absolute truth — that this is exactly how it is. In other words, we should read with faith, seek with faith and understand with faith.

“Western philosophy may begin from doubt, but when we are studying Buddhism, we must begin with faith. Even Shariputra, who was said to be foremost in wisdom among Shakyamuni’s disciples, attained enlightenment not through his knowledge or intellectual powers but through faith.”

(To be continued)

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APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Hope Is a Skill

By MALINA MOORE

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

So your lord has granted you new fiefs! It seems as though it could scarcely be true; it is so amazing that I wonder if I may not be dreaming. I hardly know what to say in reply. (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 6, p. 261)

Hope. The most wonderful benefit of our Buddhist practice. After reading this passage, I thought of how Buddhism teaches us to have hope — even in the most dire circumstances. In this Goshō, Nichiren Daishonin is praising Shijō Kingo's tenacious faith and reconfirming that it is the trials of our lives that pave the way to Buddhahood.

Of course hope is not something that just appears when we start to practice. It is something we develop — almost like a skill — through our faith experiences.

Although there are some people who are naturally hopeful and optimistic, I have to admit that when I first started to practice, I was somewhat cynical. That's why I am shocked sometimes when I catch myself expressing seemingly inherent (maybe even foolish!) optimism on occasion. This is due to nothing other than my Buddhist practice. I remember being encouraged by my seniors in faith (over and over again!) — in one situation after another — to chant and take action. Through this repeated "exercise," without even realizing it, I developed a sense that I can change my circumstances. This in itself is hope.

Recently, SGI President Ikeda met with Dr. Martin Seligman, professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, who is known for his work in the study of optimism. In the course of their dialogue, President Ikeda pointed out the similarities between Seligman's ideas and the basic principles taught in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, such as changing poison into medicine.

Despair and hopelessness become particularly apparent in the holiday season. And as is traditional this time of year, I ponder what I have to be thankful for and what I can give. I realize that I am thankful to be practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, and that I most want to develop into a person who can give people a sense of hope. ☸

BUDDHIST CONCEPT

By JOHN KASAHARA

NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

In and of itself, the concept *many in body, one in mind* sounds easy to apply. Although we are all different, we just have to unite in our hearts for the great goal of kosen-rufu.

But it's not that easy.

When individuals interact with one another, there can be many boundaries and barriers that interfere with effective communication, not to mention progress. Many times I face tasks that require me to work with several types of people — people who have differing views based on their background, culture and upbringing. Cultural and ethnic diversity definitely play a role.

As Nichiren Daishonin writes, "If *itai doshin* prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas in *dotai ishin* (one in body, different in

MANY IN BODY, ONE IN MIND

Individuality + a Great Goal

mind), they can achieve nothing remarkable" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 153). If I allow barriers to come between myself and others, nothing remarkable will happen, according to Nichiren Daishonin. My question then becomes how to eliminate barriers.

I firmly believe that eliminating them starts with us. We each have unique ideas about how things should be done or how different situations should be dealt with, but through sincere daimoku to the Gohonzon, we can combine forces for the greater good of everyone. "All disciples and believers of Nichiren should chant Nam-myōhōrenge-kyō with one mind," Nichiren Daishonin says, "transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim" (MW-1, 23).

Ultimately, we are all working toward our individual happiness and the happiness of others. Only because kosen-rufu is a great goal, only because it requires our purehearted desire to

change ourselves for the better and relieve others' suffering, can we unite the way the Daishonin describes. When we combine our hearts and determinations into one, we rapidly grow in our lives, and our districts develop, too. We have people from all walks of life in our districts; they work in different fields in society but come together with one common goal in mind. As powerful as one individual is with the heart of a lion, imagine how powerful are many people with the same heart!

Uniting for kosen-rufu, of course, does not mean suppressing our individuality or our feelings. If we do that, we might create something that looks like strong unity but is actually weak. Even when we have the same goal, we'll never all agree on everything, nor should we. By *one in mind* the Daishonin did not mean that we should all think alike but that we should put our hearts together.

The extent to which I can commit myself to applying this concept to my practice will determine how much I can grow. ☸

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

Getting It Right

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Whatever wisdom we have is expressed in how we make decisions. Simply put, wisdom is our best judgment.

And we make decisions and judgments every day. From the moment we wake up until we fall asleep. From little choices like what to wear to big decisions like where to work. Thus the more wisdom we have, the better off we are.

There's no easy way to become wise, unfortunately. Wisdom is always based on experience and understanding. It is often hard-won. Sometimes it takes many a failure to gain the wisdom to know what we're doing wrong and finally get it right.

Since we talk a lot about wisdom in the SGI-USA, many members wonder if there is something that makes Buddhist wisdom, as opposed to "regular wisdom," special. "Buddhist wisdom is not intellectual," explains Greg Martin, SGI-USA vice general director. "It's not wisdom in the sense of having deep thoughts all the time or intuitively knowing the answers to everything. In Buddhism, wisdom is practical. It has to do with living correctly." But to live correctly, doesn't it take some brains? "You may not even know why you're doing something," Mr. Martin says. "You may not deeply understand every nuance of a situation. But still you find yourself living correctly based on the wisdom you tap through chanting."

Three sources of this intuitive Buddhist wisdom are helpful to keep in mind: our determination, our sense of responsibility and ourselves. First, Buddhist wisdom arises from our determination to make improving ourselves and helping others integral parts of the way we live. In acting and praying to fulfill this, Buddhist wisdom naturally emerges. So with clear daily goals to improve ourselves and help others, we're sure to gradually experience more wisdom on a daily basis.

This wisdom also comes from fulfilling our responsibilities and accepting new ones, whether in the organization or in our personal lives. In being responsible, we're forced to stop and think. Often, just stopping to think about what we're doing, how we're living, is what we neglect to do. In a recent discussion on the benefits of reading, SGI President Ikeda pointed out that even when second Soka Gakkai president Toda was ill, he would make time for reading and contemplation — essentially for stopping and thinking. A strong sense of responsibility forces us to reflect carefully on all the possible consequences of our actions. And this, again, naturally leads to our Buddhist wisdom.

Most important to keep in mind, though — and this is sometimes the hardest aspect to remember — is that Buddhist wisdom comes from ourselves, from within us. There's a story where Shakyamuni goes to the mountains for six years to meditate. And upon attaining enlightenment, the first thing he says

is "How wondrous that all people are endowed with the wisdom and virtues of the Buddha." All people, he said. According to Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin, there's Buddhist wisdom in everyone.

When we find our Buddhist wisdom within, what we should do, the best way to go in life, becomes clear. Nichiren says this in a poetic way in "The True Object of Worship": "When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 82). It's just like the sun breaking through the clouds and the road we need to take being illuminated — we know the right way.

The above was one of first Soka Gakkai president Makiguchi's favorite Goshō quotes, which described for him just how he felt when starting to practice at age 57 — the wisest way to live suddenly revealed itself to him, he felt.

"If you're not living wisely, you're living foolishly, and you'll be unhappy" says Mr. Martin. "And if wisdom is not translated into action, if you're not actually taking wise, value-creating action in your daily life, it isn't wisdom. It's intellectualizing. To chant daimoku to the Gohonzon thinking: 'I'm a great Buddhist. I've really got it together,' while not behaving as a Buddhist, is not wisdom. It's just intellect. And there's a big difference." Perhaps the greatest wisdom we get from Buddhist practice is learning this big difference and acting on it. ☸

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

Art Vs. Arrogance — Part 1

This is the 15th installment of a series of discussions on youth among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division chiefs Hidenobu Kimura (young men's chief) and Kazue Igeta (young women's chief), representing the high school division members.

KIMURA: Today we're going to talk about art. I think for many people the word *art* immediately conjures images of something formal and even intimidating.

IKEDA: That may be true. But surely no one regards a bird's song as formal or frightening. Nor I'm sure does anyone gaze at a meadow of flowers and feel intimidated. Who can fail to be captivated by the beauty of cherry blossoms in full bloom in the moonlight? And on a glorious day, I'm sure we all look up at the blue sky and think, "How wonderful!" The bubbling of a stream certainly delights the ear, cleansing and refreshing our senses. These are all examples of our intuitive love of beauty and the spirit of art and culture.

Art is by no means something unusual or extraordinary. Great works of art, just like the beauty inherent in nature, are a relaxing, refreshing balm for the spirit — a source of vitality and energy.

Many of our daily activities resonate with the spirit of art and culture. For instance, when we make efforts to look our best, we are seeking to create beauty. When we tidy and clean a room so that it is spic and span, we are striving to create beauty. Just a single flower in a vase can sometimes completely transform a room, giving it a warm, gentle touch. Such is the power of beauty.

Art should calm and soothe us, not put us on the defensive or make us feel uncomfortable. It should encourage us when we are run-down, relax and uplift us when we are tense.

IGETA: Some young people may feel put off by art, since it is a required academic subject.

IKEDA: To begin by simply enjoying art is most important. If



Photo by MIKE MULLEN

'Great works of art, just like the beauty inherent in nature, are a relaxing, refreshing balm for the spirit.'

you start out with a scholarly or analytical approach, you're likely to end up confused and in the dark about what art really is. I doubt very much that people listening to a bird's song or gazing at a meadow of flowers try to analyze such beauty intellectually.

Of course, to fully appreciate some great works of art, one needs to concentrate and make a degree of mental effort. But appreciation starts with simply experiencing the work. With music, for instance, we start by just listening. With a painting, we start by looking. Too many people, I'm afraid, are so intent on analyzing art that they don't really see it.

For example, in Japan, even visiting an art museum is for most a rare, special event. But in Europe, people visit art museums frequently from the time they are young. They are used to museums, so they don't find them intimidating.

One reason may be that museums in the West are products of a democratic society. In earlier centuries, only the aristocracy or the very wealthy could collect and enjoy objects of art. Public art museums were born when the people insisted that they, too, had a right to have access to the great works of art. That simply is how museums came about — out of the public's growing demand for the

opportunity to enjoy art.

In Japan, on the other hand, museums were first established in the Meiji Period (1868–1912), when Japan opened itself to the world after centuries of seclusion. The Japanese government then established museums imitating Western ones, believing Japan would be thought backward by Western powers if it didn't have them. As government-sponsored institutions, Japanese museums inevitably carried the condescending message "Here — we deign to let you see these works of art."

KIMURA: "And you should be grateful that we do so" is what was communicated.

IGETA: That really contributes to making a museum visit an unpleasant, even daunting experience.

IKEDA: Although things have changed considerably in Japan, that attitude still persists in the realm of art and culture, coloring the way we react to them. Culture actually exists to make people feel happy and at ease. Art is not meant to intimidate us, but many people don't seem to recognize that truth.

True art, true culture, strives to enrich the individual and encourage self-expression, while

seeking to reach out, touch, communicate and bring together people. It promotes bringing joy and happiness to others over fame or wealth. Genuine art and culture mean to foster that spirit, but intellectuals and political leaders in Japan today seem to have missed that point. They tend to view art as something to serve their interests. Consequently, they may never come to know the essence of art and culture.

I hope, therefore, that all of you, the high school division members, will become individuals who appreciate the true spirit of culture. Visiting museums and attending concerts are important ways to cultivate that spirit. At the same time, you might try your hand at an artistic pursuit, perhaps singing or painting or doing some craft. In that way, you will gradually become a cultured person who can appreciate and enjoy art and culture.

If you spend all your time only studying for university entrance exams, your life will be limited. Of course, it is necessary to study for exams, but you mustn't forget what is important in terms of the larger, life-long goal of cultivating your individuality and self-expression.

Taking time out to acquaint and familiarize yourself with art is important. Studying for

exams is little more than information-processing. Art and culture enrich our lives and make them truly worth living.

Art classes at school are also important, because they can expand, deepen and enhance us as individuals.

IGETA: Many members complain that their art classes are boring and dull.

IKEDA: That may be true. One scholar said that in Japan, many art teachers are unreasonable and conceited. He asked why it isn't possible for them to conduct classes in a more straightforward, accessible way for students. One problem is that Japan lacks the spiritual soil in which minds that understand the true essence of art can be cultivated.

Under such circumstances, sometimes teachers become arrogant, forgetting that their professional skill is nothing more than that — a skill. For example, there are haughty, condescending English teachers who imagine themselves somehow superior because they can speak English and their students can't. In the same way, there are art teachers who, because they can paint or sculpt well, look down on their students who can't.

Surely an art teacher's merit can only be judged by whether he or she sincerely strives to nurture and encourage an understanding and appreciation in the student toward art and culture. Unfortunately, the culturally poor soil of Japan produces far too few of these individuals.

Since culture is ultimately the cultivation of the spirit, one's love of art is much more important than one's artistic skill. Culture is the expression of the inner impulse to cultivate the earth of the human spirit, bound and suppressed as it is by human tendency, so that more beautiful flowers can be brought to bloom and abundant fruit brought to bear.

Arrogance is the opposite of this spirit. Someone has said that an artist who is arrogant is not a true artist — such a person

ART, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

is only a purveyor of art, someone who makes his or her living off of art. Likewise, a seemingly cultured person obsessed with publicity and fame is only a purveyor of culture.

All of you, the leaders of the future, should know that genuine artists, people who appreciate culture, are those who can foster a shared understanding among the people, who always humbly maintain a sense of gratitude and respect for others.

KIMURA: I have an example of how the arts — in this case, music — can uplift people's hearts and bring them release. A high school division member played the violin at a meeting I attended. As the music filled the room, those present, some of whom had been looking down at the floor in a withdrawn fashion, all raised their heads and listened, their eyes shining. The change of mood was astonishing.

The Tohoku young men's high school division chief, Jun'ichi Saito, a music teacher, has had the same experience. He often plays the piano at meetings. By playing what he describes as "music from the world of the bodhisattva," it is his wish to encourage and inspire the members in some small way.

IKEDA: That's wonderful. A world without art is gray and lifeless. Only when the flowers of culture flourish does our world become bright and colorful. The SGI's movement to promote culture, reaching from the grass roots to the global level, is also a bright, colorful garden of flowers spreading across the globe.

KIMURA: That's true. Actually, Mr. Saito's first encounter with music was when he joined a Soka Gakkai future division chorus. From his second year in high school, he began to study music in earnest. He once said to me: "I believe that art is the joy of self-discovery. My happiest moments are when I am teaching children, and some new aspect or side of them comes to light through music. In this sense, art is the pursuit of our humanity."

IKEDA: I agree. It is the pursuit of our humanity, not the pursuit of fame, riches or honors. The great works of art from around the world, from throughout history, have sur-

vived and continue to inspire us and communicate to us precisely because their creators sought to leave behind a legacy of their spirit, without any thoughts of fame or wealth. Art created from ignoble motives is like brass compared to the gold of great art.

Great art is infused with powerful life force. It is alive, endowed with the creator's life and spirit. The renowned French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) said that the important thing for artists is to feel, to love, to hope, to tremble, to live. It is to be, before an artist, he said, a human being. These human feelings — hope, love, anger, fear — are communicated to us through the artist's work. The vibrations of the artist's spirit set off similar vibrations within our hearts. This is the essential experience

of art. It is a shared feeling that links the creator and the viewer, transcending boundaries of time and space.

of art. It is a shared feeling that links the creator and the viewer, transcending boundaries of time and space.

IGETA: It is the spirit that counts.

IKEDA: Dunhuang in western China has been called a great art museum in the desert. It is a marvelous storehouse of Buddhist paintings spanning a period of a thousand years, dating back to the 4th century. The late Chinese painter Chang Shuhong (1904–94) made it his mission to protect that valuable treasure and introduce it to the world. He was a remarkable person whom I met on several occasions. In fact, we published a book of our dialogues (*Tonko no Kosai* [The Radiance of Dunhuang], not available in English).

In his youth, Mr. Chang studied Western art in Paris and was on his way to becoming a leading artist. He had won many prizes, and his future was quite promising. Then, one day, he happened upon a book in a used bookshop along the banks of the Seine — a collection of illus-

trative plates of the grottoes of Dunhuang. His homeland of China possessed such magnificent art! And it had been plundered by foreigners! He decided then and there to return to China and guard these great treasures with his own hands.

The young Mr. Chang abandoned his budding career and Paris life, and traveled to Dunhuang in the desert. In what others might regard as a life sentence of hardship and suffering, he gave his all, right up to the end of his life, to protect and restore the Dunhuang paintings.

His struggle was grand, heroic. Life was so hard in the desert that his first wife left him. Mr. Chang's dedication to preserving Dunhuang's beauty and making it available to the people was such that he needed nothing for himself. His was the

“

Culture is the expression of the inner impulse to cultivate the earth of the human spirit, bound and suppressed as it is by human tendency, so that more beautiful flowers can be brought to bloom and abundant fruit brought to bear.

”

true spirit of art.

Chang once said: "The paintings of Dunhuang are so fresh and vibrant even today because their creators painted from their souls. The creative energy that comes from the depths of the soul is always genuine. True works of art never lose their power to move us, even after thousands of years. Works of art that may be beautiful at first glance are sometimes revealed as fakes upon closer examination."

No doubt that is correct. In today's art world, there is the tendency to judge works highly if the creator is famous or if the work has a high price. This is a warped, unfortunate attitude. But whatever our present situation may be, the pursuit of culture is an eternal concern. Culture is indispensable to making our lives richer, more enjoyable and more worthwhile.

There is no denying that human beings have a cruel aspect of rivalry, war and jealousy. But we also have another side — our wish to live richer, more beautiful and brighter lives. The interaction of these two tendencies is the story, the

history, of our species.

That's why culture and art are so crucial. They encourage our better aspect, helping us enjoy the most fulfilling lives we can. And they nurture the virtue of goodness, the desire to make this earth a paradise. This is the ideal way to live as human beings. It's what distinguishes us from other animals.

KIMURA: Art that comes from the soul is also often art expressing religious faith. Great religions give birth to great culture.

IKEDA: That is true as long as the religion does not ally itself with authoritarian forces.

Without the backing of a sound philosophy rooted among the people, a culture will not flourish long. Religions — Buddhism in particular — are indivisible from culture. Religion

and culture are two aspects of the same thing. Both culture and Buddhism aim to inspire people from within. As Chang said: "The source of the creative inspiration for the art of Dunhuang may very well have been religious. If the painters had not believed in Buddhism, they could not have created the wall paintings that they did."

IGETA: Oppressive authority and arrogance are fatal to culture, aren't they?

IKEDA: Yes. When I was a boy, all Japan rushed headlong down the road of war. In that atmosphere, anything artistic was widely regarded as unpatriotic. The only music we had were military songs. At school, we were taught only to draw soldiers and tanks or nurses tending the wounded on the battlefield. Strong oppressive forces were brought to bear on our culture. Such is the demonic nature of tyranny.

While art and culture liberate people from within, authoritarianism oppresses people from without. These are opposing forces.

KIMURA: There are not many leaders in our society who have a real understanding of beauty. Rather, they try to exploit culture to realize their ambitions.

IKEDA: That is why it is important for the people to support and encourage culture. In a certain sense, the art of the European Renaissance articulated the people's liberation from the oppressive authorities of church and state. "This is the way people are meant to live!" it expressed. It was an assertion of the tremendous power of the people. And the eternal worth and beauty of Renaissance art are still recognized today.

That those in power do not try to understand art and culture is frightening, actually. Their lack of appreciation for the finer aspects of human life makes it easy for them to go to war, to lean toward fascism.

Of course, there are also examples of leaders who understood and appreciated art. Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) was a great German Renaissance painter and printmaker. One day, he climbed a ladder to work on a large painting in the palace of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. The ladder began to wobble, and the emperor, looking on, called for one of the aristocrats in the room to steady it. No one made a move. The social status of a painter at the time was low — they would not stoop to help Dürer. The emperor himself rose from his throne and steadied the ladder.

One of the courtiers began to grumble, commenting how inappropriate it was for the emperor to assist a lowly painter. When the emperor heard the complaint, he said: "I can make any number of aristocrats at my choosing. I cannot, however, make another great artist like Dürer."

IGETA: I guess he knew what kind of person is important.

IKEDA: People who appreciate art and culture are important. Cultured people value peace and lead others to a world of beauty, hope and bright tomorrows. Tyrannical authority, on the other hand, only leads people to darkness — the opposite of art.

For that reason, nurturing and spreading an appreciation for art and culture are crucial in creating peace.

(To be continued)

In this issue, we're happy to announce more winners of our first annual essay contest. The theme 'Diversity' brought dozens of responses in five categories. The college and junior high school winners are printed here (the winners of the elementary school, high school and open categories appeared in the Dec. 5 issue). We thank you for your support and hope you will enjoy reading the insights of this talented group of writers.

By CORA CHRISTENSEN
LA VISTA, NEB.

My Mission — Opening Communication

The topic "diversity" encompasses many different meanings and causes a broad spectrum of reactions from people. The tremendous reactions to diversity within my life sparked a wonderful quest — the quest for human dignity within varying and conflicting peoples and their respective ideas.



My children are multiracial — their heritage includes African American, Danish American and Oglala Sioux. Living in the Midwest presented a challenge in their upbringing. My way of teaching my children to cope in a positive way with the inevitable racism they would encounter was to teach them of heroic and positive examples of each of their respective nationalities. My purpose was to inspire in my children not only a sense of pride and self-esteem for who they are but also to instill in them an equal sense of respect for members of other cultures. This method has proven successful in that my children and I have overcome much negativity and created an environment of trust and openness within our family and neighborhood.

I pray to utilize the wisdom gained from my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and SGI President Ikeda's guidance to put out the fires, both large and small, that burn needlessly between people.

As I continued raising my children and becoming more aware of the ethnocentrism present in our society, I resolved to return to college and learn all I could to help teach cultural awareness and respect in today's society. I am currently in my third year of college pursuing a bachelor's in sociology. Upon graduation, I intend to fulfill a lifelong dream of achieving a master's in cultural diversity.

My university life is rich with a multitude of international students, ideas and personalities. Hand in hand with

this richness travel cultural clashes, feelings of alienation and distrust, and further gaps between people. As a member of the SGI-USA for over 20 years, I have developed a deep love and respect for the many cultures I have been exposed to through my SGI life. I now strive to engage in dialogue with people of differing cultures. I initiate conversation among persons who have hurt each other based not on intent but on misunderstanding. I constantly seek to learn more about the vast range of peoples in my environment. I pray to utilize

the wisdom gained from my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and SGI President Ikeda's guidance to put out the fires, both large and small, that burn needlessly between people.

I have learned through painful experience that, despite my idealistic goals, I contain prejudiced attitudes that are part of my socialization. Through initiating dialogues with people from other parts of the world, I have also learned some find my beliefs and habits as shocking and distasteful as I do theirs. I continuously challenge myself to

be open-minded and develop the ability to listen and learn without making judgments. Within our society, I find the general practice to be one of "different is less." This attitude presents a serious problem when people come together, as feelings of alienation and distrust result. I am learning of different lifestyles and ways of handling problems that were beyond my realm of knowledge. Some of these customs I have adopted because of their positiveness; some I disagree with totally. I also am practicing the right to disagree with others without any negativity attached.

As we approach the 21st century, I feel it is crucial to implement cultural diversity awareness as well as how to create harmony among varying cultures. Areas wherein diversity awareness, education and respect are crucial to the well-being of humanity are medical, legal and educational. I have talked to people in the medical field whose ignorance of other cultures leads to frustration on their part and less-than-effective medical treatment. In discussing diversity with attorneys, they, too, experience frustration in trying to effectively counsel their culturally diverse clients.

One heartbreaking example I

PLEASE SEE MISSION, 13

1997 Essay Contest Winners:

College —

1. Cora Christensen, La Vista, Neb.
2. E-Chern Mark, Monterey Park, Calif.
3. Michael Day, Los Cruces, N.M.

High School —

1. Jacqueline Barrios, West Covina, Calif.
 2. Nancy Lin, Tampa, Fla.
- (Note: Only two awards were made in this category.)

Junior High School —

1. Brittane D. Lewis, Houston
2. Nicole Chu, Culver City, Calif.
3. ChanDary Hy, Aurora, Colo.

Elementary —

1. Jennifer Kubota, Ft. Lauderdale
2. Erica Badial, Vacaville, Calif.
3. Jennifer Numagami, Pottstown, Pa.

Open —

1. Jodie Appell, Berkeley, Calif.
2. Lori McDaniel, Chicago
3. Glyde Hart, Seattle

Building Unity in Rhythm Nation

By E-CHERN MARK
MONTEREY PARK, CALIF.

Thunderous applause spread like wild flames across the field. The crowd, tired but jubilant under the sweltering summer heat, beamed with pride. Squinting through the multitude of the gathering huddled under canopies of umbrellas, I smiled away the months of our group's intense preparation for the success of this festival. Amidst cries of laughter and group hugs, a surge of emotion shot through me as I finally felt a sense of acceptance to a group I once avoided due to ignorance.

"5, 6, 7, 8..." the countdown began as a vibrant beat pulsed through the speakers. As I looked at the mirrored wall, I cringed at my awkward movements in comparison to others. Shy but with a love for the stage, I was at the brink of submitting to my negativity when girls from the back of the room hollered encouragement. Being the only one to represent my nationality in a group comprised of Caucasians



and African Americans, I knew that all eyes at that moment were on my moves. Determined to complete this task, I vowed to get through this rehearsal with extraordinary perfection.

Many retreated to corners of the room during the first meeting. I, too, sat by myself with no one to talk to. It was fascinating to note that within several hours, distinct groups comprised of similar races were formed. Ironic as it was, the relaxed atmosphere still held a slight tension in the air. It was a surprise to everyone in the room when an African American girl unexpectedly proceeded toward me at the end of the day to introduce herself and her friends. I was shocked and just nodded and smiled. Even though

I returned home with such happiness and optimism after my encounter with this friendly approach, I could not convince myself to stay.

Several weeks passed, and I felt like an outcast. Alone and unsure of where I belonged, I excluded myself and judged most as being unfriendly, obnoxious, haughty and those who crave nothing but attention with their silly conduct. I befriended a girl who also spent her time in extreme bitterness. In the several hours that we practiced together, her constant criticism of others brought me to such shame. This shame was further elevated when warm hugs welcomed me to practice in the weeks that ensued as though we had parted for years. Being one of the eldest, I knew that my conduct particularly affected the girl who frequently complied with me. At that point, even if I emerged as the worst dancer, I made a goal to exert myself positively in every way, especially when it boiled down to communication.

Due to incidents in previous years, the many prejudices I held made it especially trying to open up to those of a different

race. In lieu of that, I continued to remind myself to be more compassionate and open-minded. With compassion and understanding, I eventually found myself surrounded by those who I previously felt "unworthy" of my attention. They were of different races, ages, backgrounds and sexual orientations, and all became dear to me. By the time the performance rolled around, I could not help but be so moved by our solidarity and harmony that spread like sunshine across the field. We practically tore the stage up! The embodiment of oneness of life and environment was clearly exemplified in this group perfectly named Rhythm Nation.

I feel so fortunate for having encountered such people for the great cause of promoting peace and culture. With them I have shared much laughter, ideas, and lessons, which soon served to not only open up my mind to the human race but also for the human race. Previously deemed as overly extroverted, I realized that they in effect possessed characteristics which I have long tried to secure for myself. My initial inability to do so created my insecurity and grudge,

which ultimately led to adverse thoughts. Easily judgmental with an unwavering mind, my extreme intolerance was unlocked by their easygoing nature. Being my first performance, I was undoubtedly hesitant, but by the end, I gained invaluable lessons on patience, resilience, poise and optimism through hard work and a strong commitment to learn.

My fortune for not encountering prejudice does not dismiss the fact that discrimination is very much a part of our society. To overcome it we need to call upon ourselves to have an open mind to accept new ideas and culture from people of all races. Family and friends shape the lessons we learn on tolerance and love. Surrounding ourselves with people who care for us and/or actively engaging in activities which promote unity are extremely vital in developing our humanness. Regardless of our skin color, religion, sexual orientation, age, etc., there is no dispute in the world that humanity — the answer for lasting peace — is what every living being needs to advance positively. Until we can search within ourselves and bring out our compassion, there will be no certainty as to what our future holds. W

COLLEGE
SECOND
PLACE

A Cure for All Ills

By MICHAEL DAY
EL PASO, TEXAS

I am a 22-year-old college student and have been a member of the SGI all my life. My father, an American, and my mother, a native of Japan, have raised me to respect and appreciate all people, for they taught me that every human being carries within them the Buddha nature. I often wonder that if my parents were not

members of the SGI and did not chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, would they have raised me with these same principles? I would like to think so, but I will never know for sure. This gives me an even greater appreciation for the Gohonzon, for we are fortunate to have this great treasure in our lives.

Since I was "born into" this Buddhism, so to speak, I remember as a small child believing that all families were Buddhist like mine. That all little

Nichiren Daishonin taught that the fundamental cause of human suffering is ignorance...

boys and girls did gongyo with their parents each morning and evening. It wasn't until I was about 7 or 8 that I realized, or rather, other children pointed out to me, that I was the different one. They said that everyone else believed in a person named God, and that Buddhist people like me were going to burn in Hell. As you can imagine, this was very traumatic for a young boy like myself.

Throughout my grade school years other children picked on

me not only because I was a Buddhist but because of my Japanese background as well. Still, I never became ashamed of being Buddhist or Japanese. On the contrary, I was very proud of it. By the time I was in high school I think everyone who knew me knew that I was a Buddhist. I was always determined never to hide my true self.

I remember once in high school a girl I was dating introduced me to a friend of hers who, immediately after our introduction, matter-of-factly announced that she could never date a Buddhist and that she was surprised my girlfriend didn't have a problem with it. I didn't know how to respond to such an unexpected statement; I simply smiled and remained very polite and friendly toward her.

Now that I am in college, I have yet to experience any form of discrimination. In fact, I believe that in today's society people are much more accepting of and show an increasing interest in Buddhism, particularly among college students. I think

that college students are at the age where they no longer blindly follow what society approves and disapproves of. They are at a point where they have to find their own place in this world and redefine themselves. This includes religion and the search for spiritual satisfaction.

I have experienced great joy in celebrating human diversity. In my college, there are literally hundreds of students from all over the world with one goal in mind, to receive an education. It is exciting to meet so many different types of people from all walks of life and to develop meaningful relationships with them.

It saddens me to know that racism and discrimination is such a great obstacle in America and in our kosen-rufu movement, when it is so satisfying to break the barrier of prejudice. I think it is clear that the disease of racism that plagues our country is a fatal one. And I sincerely believe that a cure, a solution to the end of racism, can be found, and that the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin are crucial in that endeavor. I also believe that the root of all evil stems not from greed but rather from hate.

Hate is directly linked to the lowly state of Hell, and one who hates must truly suffer within themselves.

Nichiren Daishonin taught that the fundamental cause of human suffering is ignorance — ignorance of the Buddha nature, the great and glorious treasure that exists in the lives of each one of us. Each and every human being carries the seed of Buddhahood within them and by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo possesses the power to conquer that ignorance and bring forth the Mystic Law, eventually attaining Buddhahood. The Daishonin's Buddhism is uniquely based on this ideal, that all human beings, regardless of race, gender, background or sexual orientation, have the ability to grasp their innate Buddha nature and the potential to reach enlightenment.

We must educate ourselves, our children and our country. We must show actual proof in our lives. We need to accomplish our own human revolution and share our joy with others.

Most of all, we need to faithfully continue our practice, for this true Buddhism is the cure for all the ills of humankind. W

COLLEGE
THIRD
PLACE

Life Would Be Boring Without Diversity



By BRITTANE D. LEWIS
HOUSTON

I feel that human diversity makes the individual unique and the human race one of a kind. Indeed, our many differences are the very things which truly enhance our lives.

In our diverse country, lots of people of different views influence our culture. America is represented by people of different races who came here as immigrants to develop our great nation. We also have bold, new women in the workplace

who make important decisions that affect the country. Also, we recognize the right of people to determine their sexual orientation without the fear of

discrimination. Unlike other countries which possess mono-ethnic cultural traditions, American diversity is a unique characteristic. As a teenager growing up in America's "melting pot," I realize that human diversity is a big factor in my life. Not only does it make each individual unique, it also makes the human race very special.

In my school, for example, there are five basic groups within the student body. There are the "headbangers," the "preps," the "nerds," the "Beverly Hills 90210s," and my group, the "cool clique." Each of these groups has distinctive

characteristics by which it identifies and/or distinguishes itself. While the preps listen to soft rock and pop music, the headbangers prefer alternative and heavy metal. The headbangers are also notably rebellious. This is not to say that rebellion is bad. My point is that they choose to challenge tradition. I find this to be adventurous and daring. This message is clearly illustrated in their clothing and style of dress. The preps keep everyone "into" school by emphasizing the importance of education both academically and culturally.

The nerds distinguish themselves from the preps with their

scientific viewpoint. They are the human databases at our school. For example, they remind us when the next science club meeting is or help decipher the complexities of computer literacy. Members of the Beverly Hills group set the trends at school for our peers. They have assigned themselves as the taskmasters who inform us of our social status and link us to the "real" world. Finally, there is the clique to which I belong, the cools. We administer the stamp of approval and acceptance to decisions and actions. Justice, diplomacy, equality and social balance are tools we endeavor to master as our contribution to the whole. Within each clique there is also racial and economic diversity. In my opinion, our school would not be complete without all of these groups. In fact, I think it would be boring.

When I am home, the diversity continues. My mother is African American, and my dad is Caucasian. So, of course, my younger sister and I are bi-racial. Our ancestry ranges from African to Irish to Polish to Cherokee Indian. Following family tradition, I was taught just as my mother and grandmother were, that is, to not judge the measure of another by his or her appearance or educational or economical status. Respect and self-respect are greatly emphasized in our family. To top all

of this off, we live in a predominantly Hispanic community. In fact, Houston's racial, economic, educational and cultural diversity is widely celebrated as a major city in the United States and a major port in the world. Consequently, my entire environment is rich in diversity.

My final arena of diversity is the most dynamic of all, and that is the SGI-USA organization. The SGI-USA is a model of unified human diversity. People from every country in the world, all walks of life and every level of diversity in the civilized world are represented here. As Buddhists, we aspire to create unity through diversity, and we recognize the equality and dignity of all human life. SGI President Ikeda says that "no matter what" each individual can make a contribution to world peace "as they are." Personally, I can say as a teenager practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism that the theory of *esho funi* [oneness of self and environment] illustrates that one should be at peace with oneself and one's environment — first you must change your life, then your environment will change.

In conclusion, I feel that human diversity makes the individual unique and the human race one of a kind. Indeed, our many differences are the very things which truly enhance our lives. ❏

JR. HIGH SCHOOL FIRST PLACE

By NICOLE CHU
CULVER CITY, CALIF.

A Positive Way to Positive Thinking

My best friend Jojo and I are riding on the up escalator to the second floor of the mall. We are in search for a pair of cool sunglasses, not aware of anything else. I should have known better

when I was putting on my sandals that afternoon. As we were getting off the escalator, this old, gray-haired lady stepped on my bare toes.

"Oww, Owww!" I cried in sheer pain. "That lady stepped on my foot," I told Jojo, hopping on one foot, clutching the other one. Normally, a person would expect some sort of apology. Maybe my views were distorted, when the lady turned her head over her shoulder and started calling out racial slurs at me.

"You Chinese jerk," she told me. "Grow up and act like a lady." What? Did my ears de-



ceive me? Here I am with my friend trying to fulfill our innocent teenage years at the mall, when I encounter something... wrong. Racial remarks in the 1990s? Oh, right, I forgot. The civil rights movement helped people to be equal, but it didn't change the minds of racists. The old lady — or better yet, I was probably lucky that I was in one

of my "better moods."

I figured I had three options in response to this lady's remark. I could either a) ignore the comment of this confused citizen and walk on with Jojo as if nothing was wrong when actually something was wrong, b) totally take it personally, provoke animosity and make the public think we both needed help, not just her, or c) go home and type a fabulous essay and win a chance to be in the *World Tribune*. So here I am typing. Truthfully, that's what I did. I just hooked arms with Jojo, turned around and started walking the other way. A coward you call me? I don't think so. I was taught to walk away from fights. Why would I make this incident the exception?

Being a victim of racism, I didn't take it personally. I

think that is the worst thing one can do. I'm not wise with age or a philosopher. Instead of using your energy to fight back, you can use it in a positive manner. Walking away is the first step. I could have wasted my time and mind to scream at the lady, but I used my energy in a more constructive way. As much as it hurts for strangers to make racial remarks, turn your back! They are creating their own bad causes for themselves and will even regret stepping on your precious toes (or whatever the case may be).

Since I practice Buddhism, I feel I am always protected. The old lady is someone I can learn from of what to do and what not to do. She was a coward, not even bothering to say what she felt to my face but instead over

her shoulder. Maybe I am taking this too seriously. The lady could have had a bad day and needed to let her frustrations out on me. Whatever her problem was, I felt I did the right thing. The human race is great for one thing: We are all different and will always be different. The SGI is diverse and has taught me to accept people for who they are. I have learned to interact with all different people without feeling that it's wrong.

Both the lady and I are humans. Yet, I am more humanistic than her. I can look at people from the outside and not judge them without knowing how they are inside. The key on learning how to be more humanistic is to use energy in a positive way against racism, sexism and other things. If everyone did that, as a whole the human population would be better.

And the second step. Writing essays about human diversity to get published in a country-wide newspaper (or whatever the case may be). ❏

JR. HIGH SCHOOL SECOND PLACE

We've Got To Free Innocent Souls

By CHANDARY HY
AURORA, COLO.



This is what human diversity means to me: It means that we are very much different from each other, and we learn differences from each other every single day. To live is to dream, to dream is to live.

The joys that I have experienced in diversity are very overwhelming. I met many new people while I started the seventh grade. Some were shy, some were easy-going, some were outspoken, and some were even independent, like myself. When I started the seventh grade, I was shy, and I didn't want to talk to anybody except my best friend, because my other friends were in another classroom. Then, later in the

Americans have called me 'chink' and 'rice grainer.' They say that to me because they don't know who I am.... They don't know how many Asian traditions include politeness and loyalty.

year, I met new people and made new friends. I felt more open to talk to people, and I started to be very talkative.

The prejudice that I have faced involved name-calling. Americans have called me "chink" and "rice grainer." They say that to me because they don't know who I am, and they don't know that if it wasn't for us Asians, they wouldn't have fireworks, paper, and they wouldn't have strong

companies like Sony to manufacture electronics. They can call me names, but it doesn't bother me. They don't know how many Asian traditions include politeness and loyalty.

Just the day before school was over for the summer, black, white and Mexican kids were up against each other. It was black and white vs. Mexicans. I thought everything was very pathetic. The Mexican boys didn't like my friend

Alma because she has black, white, and Asian friends. They said that she "isn't a true Mexican." Those hateful words really hurt her because she is very fond of her heritage, and she is very dedicated to Mexico.

That's what's wrong with this country. There is too much discrimination, and there are too many harsh words said to innocent people. From my point of view, and from what

I've seen in the world today, it seems that everyone needs a helping hand, and everyone needs love. We can't turn our backs and carry on and not care about other people who are in need and desperate to lead a normal life.

If all those things changed, I would be blissfully happy that there is no more discrimination but a lot of getting along.

So in the future, I hope that we can find changes in our lives, and that there is more happiness in the new generation. It would be nice to see people conversing and agreeing to reason with each other.

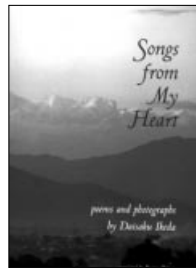
So in addition to the subject of human diversity, there is much more to life than popularity, purposed rivalry and hatred through the heart. There has got to be something better in the world for people to focus on than discrimination. We've got to free innocent souls. W

MISSION, FROM PAGE 10

can relate dates back to a year ago when a 5-year-old child burned to death. The firemen had no knowledge of the language, hence couldn't successfully call the child out from hiding. This particular tragedy led to my Spanish professor voluntarily instructing our fire department in rudimentary Spanish. Although tragic, this points out the types of problems cultural ignorance can produce.

Hopefully, the attitude of my professor will someday typify the reactions of our society and its collective determination to stop similar incidents from occurring.

I am tremendously proud to be a member of the SGI-USA. As a result of my Buddhist practice, I have chosen as my personal mission to work for the remainder of my life to open communication lines between the peoples of the world. W



First printed in 1978, Songs from My Heart by Daisaku Ikeda is a collection of poems celebrating youth, change and progress. Contains recent photos taken by the SGI president that express his deepest feelings and hopes for the future of humankind. Translated by Burton Watson with power and emotion true to the author, these genuinely are songs from the heart of Daisaku Ikeda.

Price: \$14.95 M/O#: 0346

GLOSSARY

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

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

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

gongyo: Literally, "assiduous practice." In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, gongyo means to recite the "Expedient

Means" (2nd) chapter and the "Life Span of the Thus Come One" (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in front of the Gohonzon.

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

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

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

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

Latter Day of the Law: The period beginning 2,000 years after Shakyamuni's death, when his teachings lose their power and the essence of the Lotus Sutra will be propagated.

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

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

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.

Por TED MORINO

ENCARGADO DEL DEPTO. DE ESTUDIO
DE LA SGI-USA

El significado del Gohonzon, el objeto de veneración en la práctica del Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin, no yace en el significado literario de sus caracteres sino más bien en el hecho de que incorpora la vida del Buda original, o la ley de Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. El poder leer los caracteres escritos en el Gohonzon no trae más beneficios, ni saber lo que está escrito en el Gohonzon significa que uno entienda al Gohonzon.

Algunos de los caracteres del Gohonzon representan personajes históricos, figuras mitológicas o dioses budistas. El Daishonin utilizó estos caracteres como representaciones de las funciones del universo y de nuestras propias vidas. Todas estas funciones están reunidas alrededor de Nam-myoho-enge-kyo; así que, el Gohonzon es la personificación de la Budeidad de la vida dentro de nosotros.

Una vez, el segundo presidente de la Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, explicó el propósito por el cual abrazamos el Gohonzon en la forma siguiente:

La tendencia natural de los seres humanos es muy débil. Por más que uno trata de vivir la vida de uno como uno quiere, finalmente uno se deja influenciar fácilmente por los demás y por factores externos... Yo creo que para desarrollar la vida de uno de una fortaleza máxima, brillante y feliz, no hay otra forma mejor que vivir el Budismo de *ichinen sanzen* [un sólo momento de la vida posee tres mil planos y la posesión mutua de los diez mundos.] Esta es la última filosofía que Nichiren Daishonin dio al vasto universo más de setecientos años atrás. El percibió la ignorancia de las personas sobre este profundo principio y les otorgó la joya de *ichinen sanzen* para que ellos puedan lograr el estado de felicidad. Esta joya de *ichinen sanzen* no es otra cosa que el Dai-Gohonzon que él inscribió... (*Buddhism in Action*, vol. 7, pp. 107-08)

El Gohonzon, en un sentido, puede ser comparado a un mapa que esta indicando donde está el tesoro supremo de la vida y el universo — la Ley Mística de Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Este mapa del tesoro nos dice que el tesoro se encuentra dentro de nuestras vidas.

Para quienes pueden entender el mapa, éste no es un pedazo de papel, sino más bien un objeto invaluable “un tesoro,” es la condición suprema de la vida misma.

Sin embargo, para quienes fallan en captar este mensaje, el valor del mapa se reduce meramente a un pergamino.

Como dice Nichiren Daishonin:

Una persona ciega no puede ver los caracteres del Sutra del Loto [EL Gohonzon.] Los ojos de un mortal común los ve de un color negro. Las personas en el Estado de los Dos Vehículos los ven incoloro. Los Bodhisattvas los ven en diferente colores, mientras que una persona en la que la semilla de la Budeidad ha alcanzado una madurez plena los ve como Budas. Así que el sutra declara: “Si uno puede sostener este sutra, estará sosteniendo el cuerpo del Buda. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 112)

¿Cómo podemos entonces comprender correctamente este mapa para llegar al tesoro que nos lleva? El Daishonin nos alienta: “Cuando invoque la Ley Mística y recite el Sutra del Loto debe de sentir la profunda convicción de que Myoho-enge-kyo es su propia vida.” (MW-1, 4). En otras palabras, Nichiren Daishonin nos enseña, que la vida de uno es el máximo tesoro. En consecuencia el también escribe: “Jamás busque este Gohonzon fuera de usted misma. El Gohonzon existe sólo dentro de la carne mortal de nosotros, las personas comunes que abrazamos el Sutra del Loto e invocamos Nam-myoho-enge-kyo” (*Los principales escritos de Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pág. 217). Esta comprensión es lo que el budismo llama La Iluminación.

El Daishonin para transmitir su mensaje, utilizó la teoría de que “un momento de la vida” posee 3,000 planos — especialmente la posesión mutua de Los Diez Mundos — como el principio básico para la imagen gráfica del Gohonzon. La descripción de la posesión mutua, es que el Gohonzon en sí, es el mundo de La Budeidad, en el cual todos los otros mundos están representados.

A lo largo del centro del Gohonzon está escrito “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo-Nichiren” (No. 1 y No. 2 respectivamente en el diagrama). Ellos ilustran la unidad de la persona y la Ley, o

que la vida del Daishonin incorpora la Ley Mística, como el escribe: “El alma de Nichiren no es otra cosa que Nam-myoho-enge-kyo” (MW-1, 120). Esto también demuestra que fundamentalmente nuestra vida es una y la misma con la ley de Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, como lo demostró el Daishonin durante el transcurso de su vida.

En otras palabras, la inscripción de “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo Nichiren” nos dice que tenemos cualidades idénticas a la vida del Buda original. Podemos manifestar el mismo coraje, esperanza y sabiduría, en proporción a nuestros esfuerzos y oraciones en pos del kosen-rufu con el mismo deseo del Daishonin. Esto es lo que él quiso decir cuando escribió: “Usted mismo, es un Buda verdadero que posee las tres propiedades iluminadas. Debe invocar Nam-myoho-enge-kyo con esta convicción” (MW-1, 30).

A la Izquierda y a la derecha de “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo Nichiren” están varias figuras budistas representando los Diez Mundos en la vida de Nichiren Daishonin. El Daishonin las incluyó en el Gohonzon para indicar que hasta la vida del Buda contiene inherentemente los nueve mundos más bajos.

Al escribir prominentemente “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo Nichiren” a lo largo del centro con los otros caracteres más pequeños alrededor, el Daishonin explica gráficamente que las figuras que están representando a los nueve mundos más bajos, están iluminadas por la Ley Mística, como él escribe: “Iluminados por los cinco caracteres de la Ley Mística, ellos exhiben la naturaleza iluminada que poseen inherentemente. Este es el verdadero objeto de veneración” (MW-1, 212). En otras palabras, estas figuras representan los nueve mundos que están contenidos en el mundo del Estado de Buda.

La forma de representar los Diez Mundos en el Gohonzon varía. En algunos Gohonzons cada uno de los diez mundos está representado por un carácter o caracteres que aparecen en las escrituras budistas. Sin embargo, en otros Gohonzons los diez mundos están representados como grupos, tales como los cuatro noble caminos o mundos. El Daishonin utilizó los dos estilos, y así también lo hicieron

sumo preladados.

El Gohonzon Transcrito por Nichikan

En el Gohonzon transcrito por Nichikan, los diez mundos están representados en dos grupos: Los cuatro mundos nobles (El Estado de Buda, Bodhisattva, Comprensión y Aprendizaje) y los seis caminos más bajos (Extasis, Humanidad, Ira, Animalidad, Hambre e Infierno).

En el Gohonzon transcrito por Nichikan, los cuatro noble mundos están representados por el Buda Shakyamuni (No. 8) y el Buda Muchos Tesoros del que Así Llega (No. 9) los dos representan el Estado de Buda, y los cuatro líderes de los Bodhisattvas de la Tierra — Bodhisattva de las Prácticas Superiores (No. 10) Bodhisattva de las Prácticas Ilimitadas (No. 11) Bodhisattva de las Prácticas Firmemente Establecidas (No. 6) y Bodhisattva de las Prácticas Puras (No. 7).

Los seis mundos más bajos están representados por figuras indicando el Estado de Extasis, La Animalidad y el Hambre. El Estado del Extasis por ejemplo es indicado por los Cuatro Reyes Celestiales — el gran Rey Celestial oyente de Muchas Enseñanzas (No. 4).

El Gran Rey Celestial Sostenedor de la Nación (No. 13), El Gran Rey Celestial del Aumento y Crecimiento (No. 27), El Gran Rey Celestial Cándido (No. 33), y El Gran Rey Celestial del Sol (No. 20), El Gran Rey Celestial de la Luna (No. 16), El Gran Rey Celestial de las Estrellas (No. 15), y El Rey Demonio del Sexto Cielo (No. 19).

La Animalidad está indicada por Ocho Grandes Reyes Dragones (No. 22), y El Hambre es indicada por La Madre de los Hijos Demonios (No. 25) y Las Diez Hijas Demonios (No. 24).

Representando a quienes transmitieron el verdadero linaje del Budismo en el pasado están Tient'ai (No. 26) y Dengyo (No. 23).

Los dioses nativos de la India, El Gran Rey Celestial Indra (No. 17) and El Gran Rey Celestial Brahma (No. 18), están incorporados en el Gohonzon como dioses budistas. Tanto como también dioses nativos del Japón — La Diosa del Sol (No. 31) y El Gran Bodhisattva

Hachiman (No. 28).

Dos nombres están escritos en el antiguo Sánscrito Indio (medieval), o Sidham. Ellos son la deidad Budista Ragaraja (No. 14), la cual representa el principio de “Los deseos mundanos son en sí la iluminación,” y la deidad Budista Achala (No. 21), la cual representa el principio de “Los sufrimientos del nacimiento y la muerte son en sí nirvana.”

Inscrito en el Gohonzon también está una declaración por Nichiren Daishonin que lee, “En los 2,230 años desde que el Buda falleció nunca ha aparecido en el mundo este gran mandala” (No. 32).

Ilustrando la ley de causalidad en el Gohonzon están las dos promesas Budistas —

“Quienes hacen ofrendas acumularán tan buena fortuna que sobrepasará los diez títulos honorables [del Buda]” (No. 5) y “Quienes molestan y angustian [los practicantes de la Ley] sus cabezas serán rajadas en siete pedazos” (No. 12).

Organización Gráfica del Gohonzon

La organización gráfica de los caracteres escritos en el Gohonzon está basada en la Ceremonia en el Aire descrita en el Sutra del Loto. “La Aparición de la Torre del Tesoro” (Capítulo décimo primero), describe la aparición de una torre magnífica: “En ese tiempo en la presencia del Buda había una torre adornada con siete tesoros, de una altura de 500 yojanas y doscientos cincuenta yojanas de ancho y profundidad, que emergió de la tierra y quedó suspendida en el aire” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 170).

Se decía que la medida de una yojana era la distancia que el ejército real podía marchar en un día. De acuerdo a una interpretación, 500 yojanas equivale al radio de la tierra.

Cuando La Torre del Tesoro emergió estaba cerrada, pero Shakyamuni la abrió cuando el Buda de Muchos Tesoros del Que Así Llega, quien apareció sentado en la torre para darle validez a las enseñanzas de Shakyamuni, lo invitó a sentarse junto a él. Esta es la forma que la Ceremonia en el Aire comienza.

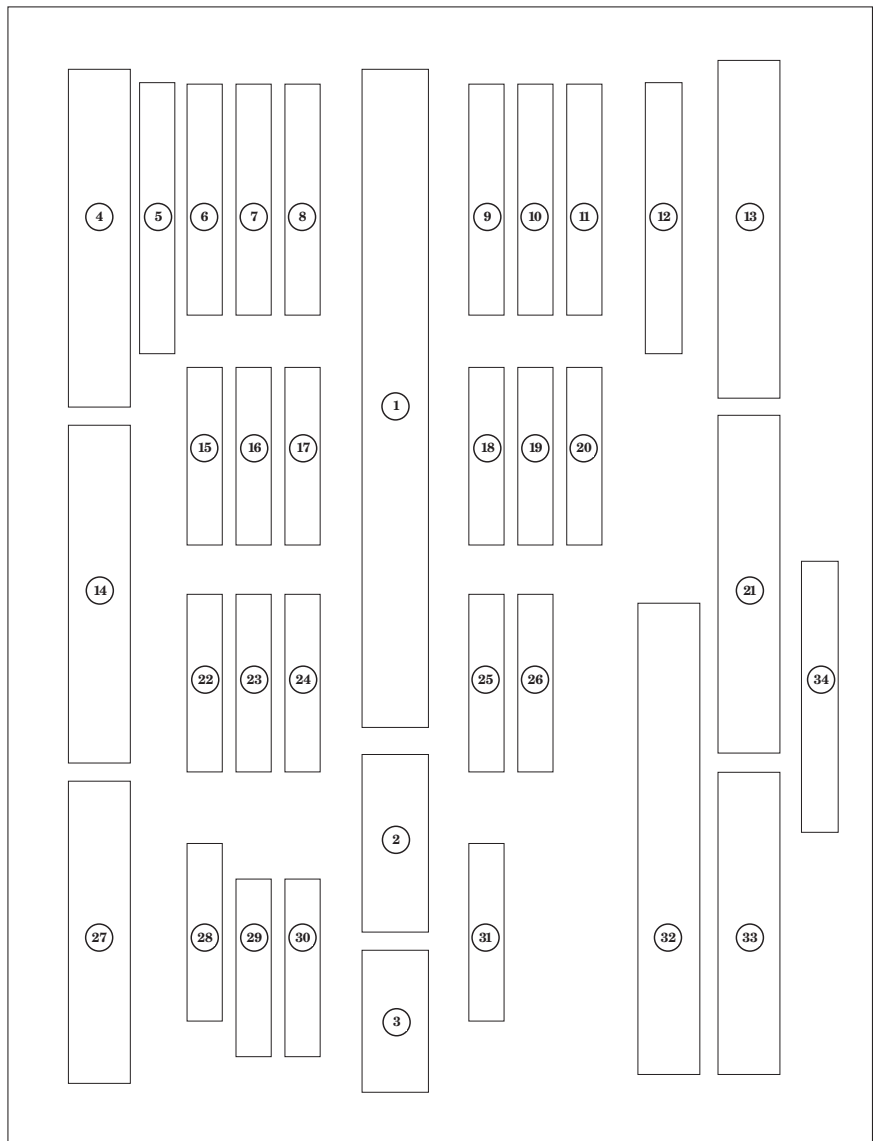
Refiriéndose a la Torre del Tesoro, el segundo Presidente de la Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda una vez dijo: “Dentro de nuestras vidas existe un magnífico estado de vida que está más allá de nuestra comprensión, llamado la Budeidad. Este estado de vida desafía nuestra imaginación; y no lo podemos expresar con palabras.

Diagrama del Gohonzon Transcrito por el Sumo Prelado Nichikan

A continuación la explicación del diagrama. La clave da la fonética original y la traducción al Español de los caracteres escritos en el Gohonzon transcrito por el Sumo Prelado Nichikan.

- 1) *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*
- 2) *Nichiren*
- 3) *Zai gohan* — El sello de firma personal de Nichiren.
- 4) *Dai Bishamon-tenno* — El Gran Rey Celestial oyente de Muchas enseñanzas.
- 5) *U kuyo sha fuku ka jugo* — Quienes hacen ofrendas acumularán tan buena fortuna que sobrepasará los diez títulos honorables [del Buda].
- 6) *Namu Anryugyo Bosatsu* — Bodhisattva de las Prácticas firmemente Establecidas.
- 7) *Namu Jyogyo Bosatsu* — Bodhisattva de las Prácticas Puras.
- 8) *Namu Shakamuni-butsu* — El Buda Shakyamuni.
- 9) *Namu Taho Nyorai* — El Buda Muchos Tesoros del Que Así Llega.
- 10) *Namu Jogyo Bosatsu* — Bodhisattva de las Prácticas Superiores.
11. *Namu Muhengyo Bosatsu* — Bodhisattva de las Prácticas Ilimitadas.
12. *Nyaku noran sha zu ha shichibun* — Quienes molestan y angustian [los practicantes de la Ley] sus cabezas serán rajadas en siete pedazos.
13. *Dai Jikoku-tenno* — El Gran Rey Celestial Sostenedor de la Nación.
14. *Aizen-myo'o* — Deidad budista Ragaraja (escrito en

- sánscrito) y representa el principio de “los deseos mundanos son en sí la iluminación.”
15. *Dai Myojo-tenno* — El Gran Rey Celestial de las Estrellas.
 16. *Dai Gattenno* — El Gran Rey Celestial de la Luna.
 17. *Taishaku-tenno* — El Gran Rey Celestial Indra.
 18. *Dai Bontenno* — El Gran Rey Celestial Brahma.
 19. *Dai Rokuten no Mao* — El Rey Demonio del Sexto Cielo.
 20. *Dai Nittenno* — El Gran Rey Celestial del Sol.
 21. *Fudo-myo'o* — Deidad budista Achala (escrito en Sánscrito Indio o Sidham).
 22. *Hachi Dairyuo* — Ocho Grandes Reyes Dragones.
 23. *Dengyo Daishi* — El Gran Maestro Dengyo.
 24. *Juratsunyo* — Las Diez Hijas Demonio.
 25. *Kishimojin* — La Madre de los Hijos Demonios.
 26. *Tendai Daishi* — El Gran Maestro T'ien-t'ai.
 27. *Dai Zojo-tenno* — El Gran Rey Celestial del Aumento y Crecimiento.
 28. *Hachiman Dai bosatsu* — El Gran Bodhisattva Hachiman.
 29. *Kore o shosha shi tatematsuru* — Respectuosamente transcribo esto.
 30. *Sello de firma de Nichikan* — La firma personal del sumo prelado quien transcribe el Gohonzon, en este caso, Nichikan y consiste de su nombre y sello de firma.
 31. *Tensho-daijin* — La Diosa del Sol.
 32. *Butsumetsugo ni-sen ni-*



hyaku san-ju yo nen no aida ichienbudai no uchi mizou no dai-mandara nari — En los 2,230 años desde que el Buda

falleció nunca ha aparecido en el mundo éste gran mandala.
33. *Dai Komoku-tenno* — El Gran Rey Celestial Cándido.

34. *Kyoho go-nen roku-gatsu jusan-nichi* — El décimo tercer día del sexto mes en el quinto año de Kyoho [1720]. 卍

GOHONZON, DE PÁG. 14

Sin embargo, podemos manifestarlo concretamente en nuestras vidas. La ceremonia descrita en el capítulo de “La Aparición de la Torre del Tesoro,” verifica que podemos manifestar la naturaleza de Buda que yace latente en nuestras vidas.

En otras palabras, la aparición de la Torre del Tesoro es una metáfora que ilustra la magnífica naturaleza de Buda en nuestras vidas. En el Sutra del Loto, la apertura de las puertas cerradas de la Torre del Tesoro representa la transición de la explicación teórica de la Budeidad como un potencial a la verdadera manifestación de la naturaleza de

Buda innata en cada persona.

En el Gohonzon, “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo Nichiren” corresponde a la Torre del Tesoro. Shakyamuni Buda y el Buda Muchos Tesoros del Que Así Llega están sentados en la torre dándole el frente a la audiencia. El resto de los bodhisattvas, deidades y otros seres están dándole el frente a estos dos Budas. En la India, las personas importantes están generalmente sentadas en el lado derecho. El hecho de que Shakyamuni está situado a la izquierda de “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo” cuando miramos al Gohonzon, y el Bodhisattva de las Prácticas Superiores (el líder de los Bodhisattvas de la Tierra) a la derecha, significa que Shakyamuni está dentro de la

Torre del Tesoro mirando hacia afuera y el Bodhisattva de la Prácticas Superiores está dándole el frente a él.

El diagrama del Gohonzon que aparece publicado con este artículo, le ayudará ver la posición y el significado de cada inscripción en el Gohonzon transcrito por Nichikan. Con la expectativa de que la explicación gráfica de los componentes del Gohonzon le ayudará captar el significado del mensaje de Nichiren Daishonin a toda la humanidad: Cada individuo tiene el potencial de convertirse en un Buda, y todo el mundo puede lograr la Budeidad por medio de la fe en el Gohonzon.

Podemos comparar la imagen

gráfica del Gohonzon con nuestras propias vidas. Viviendo en la corrupta época del Último Día de la Ley, nuestras vidas pueden ser fácilmente dominadas por las condiciones más bajas, tales como La Ira o Animalidad, cuando esto sucede es como si pusieramos estos mundos en el centro en vez de Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Nuestras vidas son como la Torre del Tesoro, pero puede que estén cerradas y enterradas en la profundidad de la ilusión. Por lo tanto, nuestro reto es extraer la Torre del Tesoro que ha estado escondida en la profundidad de nuestra oscuridad fundamental, abrirla y establecer a Nam-myoho-enge-kyo en el centro de nuestras vidas, iluminando así nuestras

condiciones más bajas, las situaciones en su lugar apropiado.

El poder de la fe y la práctica por uno y por los demás es que hace esto posible. Nuestro reto es continuar nuestra práctica con la firme convicción en su mensaje, de que estamos dotados de una manera innata con el supremo tesoro. De ésta forma, podemos establecer la Budeidad como la base de nuestra condición de vida, tal como está ejemplificado en la organización gráfica de los caracteres escritos en el Gohonzon.

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Circles of Life



Forty-three communities across the country are using study circles to help solve their problems. Race relations, crime and violence, education, youth, immigration and criminal justice — they're all up for discussion in these gatherings of religious leaders and the public.

By TERRY ELLIS
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Five years ago, following the Rodney King incident that sparked violence in Los Angeles, the mayor of Lima, Ohio, worried. An incident in his town of 50,000 made it clear to David Berger that race relations wasn't just a big-city problem. So he invited the local clergy to address the public along with him.

"When I brought them together, I found I had to introduce them to each other," said Berger. "It struck me as odd and symptomatic of the larger problems in the community. We found that race is a silent and ignored issue in our community."

From that first group of clergy, Berger garnered a consensus that this silence was something religious groups, as well as the government and community at large, needed to do something about together. So they began a search for programs that could guide them. And they found the Topsfield Foundation's Study Circle Resource Center, which since 1990 has promoted the use of small-group, democratic, highly participatory discussions known as study circles.

These were started in Lima five years ago as an exchange between two churches and have continued to expand and generate a wide variety of projects, from soup kitchens to church exchanges and youth mentoring.

Berger receives a steady stream of phone calls from people from other communities interested in the program. "We make no pretense that everything is wonderful," he said. He's also quick to add that the program requires "a lot of hard work and perspiration." But when it's done right — when

people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds are deliberately matched up in study circles and proceed through the study materials — the results are positive.

"We continue to be surprised how this movement sustains itself — the energy and momentum that come out of the discussion help keep things moving," said Berger. "We have enough anecdotal evidence that where it's done well, these study circles matter to people and are making a difference." So far, about 2,000 people have been involved in study circles, and the city has trained between 200 and 250 facilitators to lead them.

While Lima has one of the longest-running programs, the city isn't alone. According to Matt Lighninger of the Study Circle Resource Center, 43 communities around the country, ranging in size from Orford, N.H. (pop. 1,000), to Los Angeles have active study circles. In addition to race relations, they're using materials on topics such as crime and violence, education, youth, immigration and criminal justice.

In October, Miami launched its first study circle program titled "Changing Faces, Changing Communities — Immigration and Race Relations, Education, Language Differences and Job Opportunities." (Study circles in Los Angeles also are studying this material.)

"It's a very young movement, but the growth shows that people realize government can't solve these problems alone," said Lighninger. "The free market can't solve these problems alone. Citizens need to get involved with government, with business, with the community to really make an impact." **WT**



Photos provided by Topsfield Foundation's Study Circle Resource Center