

# World Tribune

No. 3171

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

DECEMBER 26, 1997

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Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI

LAPD Wilshire area commander Captain John P. Mutz 'lends a hand' with SGI-USA member Gail Jennings, Boy and Girls Group members and neighborhood kids at the Friendship Fence around the construction site for the L.A. Friendship Center. 'It warms my heart to know what a difference this center will make to the community,' Captain Mutz says. Community outreach has been a major aspect of the preparation for this new center. (Below) Community activist Annie Jo Robertson, 97, gave an inspiring welcome speech to the SGI-USA.

## Groundbreaking a Community Event

By JOHN BATES

BUREAU CHIEF  
Los Angeles, Dec. 13

In a ceremony surging with positive energy, a host of public officials, community leaders and local neighbors gathered with SGI-USA members today to celebrate the start of construction of the Los Angeles Friendship Center.

Sunny, spring-like weather and songs from the America Rainbow Chorus accented the all-around smiles as speaker after speaker praised the SGI's enterprise. Vera de Vera, U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer's deputy,

commended the SGI's dedication — "Your efforts will make a tremendous difference in the community" — while Dolores Carnizales of Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan's office said of the future center, "This is exactly what we need." Addressing the SGI's focus on inner life and the effect that has on self-esteem, especially of young people, she shared the belief that "only this type of effort is going to turn Los Angeles around."

Los Angeles Police Department Captain John P. Mutz

PLEASE SEE GROUNDBREAKING, 4



## Student Art Exhibition in Japan

The 12th Soka Student Art Exhibition and 8th Soka Student Photo Exhibition are soon to be held in Tokyo. For the second year in a row, SGI-USA student division members have been invited to participate in this annual international event.

<b>When:</b>	March 14–April 5, 1998
<b>Where:</b>	Soka Gakkai Josei Toda International Center
<b>Who:</b>	Open to all youth division college-level students
<b>What:</b>	Oil and water paintings Prints Graphic design Free-style design Black and white photographs
<b>Deadline:</b>	In Japan before March 1

For application information, please contact your region office or Valerie Thomas or Jeff Farr at the World Culture Center, (310) 451-8811.



The World Tribune is the weekly newspaper of the SGI-USA.

OUR ORGANIZATION

SGI-USA (Soka Gakkai International-USA) is an American Buddhist organization based on the philosophy of the Nichiren school of Mahayana Buddhism. The SGI exists in 128 countries and has its international center in Japan, where the organization was founded in 1930. In the World Tribune, you'll see news of our organization both in America and internationally.

OUR PURPOSE

The SGI-USA promotes peace and individual happiness based on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Our position is that peace in the community — whether it be in a neighborhood or the world — is inseparably linked with individuals' happiness. SGI-USA members, through their faith, are seeking to become happier and contribute positively to society. In the World Tribune, you'll see experiences from members about this process, which we call human revolution.

OUR PRACTICE

Our basic practice is chanting the phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon, our object of worship. According to Nichiren Daishonin, the workings of the universe are an expression of the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. So chanting it allows us to be in tune with our environment and create the most value. The World Tribune carries many study articles to explain the practice in detail.

OUR HERITAGE

Myoho-renge-kyo is the title of the Lotus Sutra, which is the foundation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This sutra, Shakaymuni Buddha's highest teaching, sets forth that the Buddha nature is inherent in all living things — all people have the potential to become Buddhas. Nichiren Daishonin, a Japanese priest who lived in the 13th century, championed the Lotus Sutra and introduced the concrete way of putting it into practice, the chanting and sharing of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. In keeping with the sutra's teaching that people are Buddhas, the SGI teaches that the heritage of this Buddhism is passed from generation to generation of the people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the SGI-USA community center nearest you — there are more than 60 across the country. (You can look in the phone book or call our national headquarters at (310) 451-8811.) The community center can direct you to SGI-USA members in your town, so you can ask questions and find out more. Our website address is www.sgi-usa.org or you can e-mail us at sgjusa1@aol.com.

TO SUBSCRIBE

To subscribe to the World Tribune, or our companion publication, Living Buddhism, a monthly magazine, please call us at (800) 835-4558 or e-mail us at SGI SUBS@aol.com.

A Fortunate New Year

EDITORIAL

The very mention of Nichiren Daishonin's "New Year's Goshō" for many of us calls to mind New Year's Day gongyo meetings of years past. Everyone dressed in their Sunday best and laughing. Sake in paper cups and mochi cakes wrapped in napkins. Someone gets up to read the "New Year's Goshō," and another new year begins. "New Year's Day marks the first day, the first month, the beginning of the year and the start of spring," Nichiren Daishonin says here (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 271).

In this short letter, the Daishonin asserts that "a person who celebrates this day will gain virtue and be loved by all..." (MW-1, 271). Usually this is the part we remember the best. We've come to New Year's gongyo to make the most of this first day, to "gain virtue" by starting the year off as best we know how.

But is Nichiren Daishonin saying that anyone who celebrates New Year's increases his or her fortune? There are, of course, many different ways of welcoming the new year — from singing "Auld Lang Syne" to making New Year's resolutions. From the standpoint of Buddhism, does any celebration of the new year lead to virtue?

Later in this Goshō, the Daishonin clarifies that it's the person who upholds the Lotus Sutra who gathers this virtue. It's the person who upholds the spirit of Buddhism at New Year's.

The Daishonin in fact makes a strict comparison between those who are for the Lotus Sutra and those against it, saying that "Japan, in becoming an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, has now invited misfortune from a thousand miles afar, whereas those who believe in the Lotus Sutra will gather fortune from ten thousand miles afar" (MW-1, 272).

It's interesting that Nichiren Daishonin's guidance for the very beginning of the year applies directly to the temple issue we are now experiencing. The Nichiren Shoshu priests have gone

against the Lotus Sutra's spirit by trying to claim this teaching meant for all people as their own special teaching. For instance,

the very idea, which resurfaced in 1997, that the priests can excommunicate people (telling them that they can't attain enlightenment without the priesthood's help) is in opposition to the spirit of Buddhism.

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day gongyo meetings this year are particularly significant because of the Dec. 31 deadline Nichiren Shoshu has set for U.S. members to join the temple as part of its re-excommunication plan (see "Editorial," Oct. 17 World Tribune). If we don't join the temple, each of us will be excommunicated — again — on New Year's Eve. To celebrate New Year's 1998 with the SGI is, then, to stand up to this bullying. It is to share in the fortune of a group of everyday people who protect Buddhism.

The Daishonin says elsewhere that "eight means to open one's body and mind as the Mystic Law" (Goshō Zenshu, p. 745). In 1998, which marks eight years since President Ikeda's 1990 visit to Los Angeles and eight years since the start of the temple issue, the SGI-USA will celebrate not only New Year's but the 70th birthday of President Ikeda, Jan. 2, the fifth anniversary of "The Sun of Jiyū Over a New Land," Jan. 27, and the 40th anniversaries of Kosen-rufu Day, March 16, and President Toda's death, April 2. Culture festivals are planned for Los Angeles in March and Chicago in June. New community centers are to open in New Jersey and Orlando, Fla., as well as in the Boston and Philadelphia joint territories. The Los Angeles Friendship Center and the SGI Headquarters in Los Angeles are scheduled to open by the end of 1998.

As individuals and as an organization, we have the chance to open up everything in the new year. To open our lives. To open our activities. To "gather fortune from ten thousand miles afar." □

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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## WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

### This Era of New Beginnings

I am a 78-year-old practitioner of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I was introduced to this Buddhism 19 years ago by my son, who has been practicing for 22 years. I have chanted 36 million daimoku since I started practicing and have received wonderful benefits. My life has never been more exciting and fulfilling, and I am challenging still greater goals.

I wish to make a comment regarding the temple issue. Recently, due to the discussion of events concerning the priesthood and the SGI, I have realized a new feeling of joy and awe. I am so fortunate to live in this era of new beginnings. Specifically, with regard to the SGI and SGI President Ikeda's struggles to correctly propagate Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I am reminded of Martin Luther and John Calvin, who began new religious organizations to protect the integrity of their beliefs. The similarity of that period in history with the present situation struck me one day just before our monthly discussion meeting, and I shared this insight with the members of my district.

We are now part of a new experience in a historic time. We are truly the pioneers of Nichiren Daishonin's true teachings. The SGI is in the process of guiding us and future generations onto the right path. Leaving the corruption and immoral behavior of priests behind, we are forging the way to crystallize and protect Buddhism. What a privilege to be born in this century!

— EVA BAN, Three Rivers, Calif.

### Voluntary Striving

I have heard the concept of "training" over the past 21 years of my Buddhist practice. However, it is now, as we patiently restructure the SGI-USA geographically, that I feel my life being "trained" in the most natural and humane manner.

I live in the city of West Hollywood, Calif. Throughout the past few months, I have found myself in gatherings with many new faces. I'm getting to know members who have taken on leadership responsibilities and members who have never done so. With little or no attention to titles, we have been carrying on dialogue — not always sharing the same views. What has begun to resonate with me is the fact that we are actually creating an atmosphere, an organization, of mutual respect and total equality.

The era of superstar leaders is clearly behind us. Coming together is a core of strong, self-motivated practitioners who are not looking for one leader to come rescue them or the various discussion groups. Several years ago, SGI President Ikeda said: "Kosen-rufu will be advanced by brave people armed with the spirit of independence who voluntarily strive to fulfill the vow they made at the time of *kuon ganjo*." Here, as 1997 draws to a close, I find myself in the midst of such people. I am shedding years of judgment and criticism. I — who for over two decades, have accepted different leadership positions — am stripped (so to speak), forced to challenge my ego and to expand my life. How wonderful. I believe I'm on the path of discovering what it means to truly treasure both my life and the lives of others equally. It is precisely this process which gives me tremendous hope for the future of our movement and specifically for the growth I envision in my city of West Hollywood.

— RICHARD CASSELMAN, West Hollywood, Calif.

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

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

## Willing To Speak Out

### PERSPECTIVE

**Yukiko Sugihara's talk at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles gave Yvette Edmond even more courage to speak out against discrimination.**

**B. YVETTE Y. EDMOND**  
SANTA MONICA, CALIF.

Ever since I can remember, I have hated discrimination in any form. My experiences as an African American woman left me with intolerance for any type of discrimination. I often find myself speaking out against discrimination, even when it is not aimed at me or any group to which I belong. In September of this year I made a pledge with another SGI member to challenge discriminatory statements any time I hear them.

I have always believed that two of the main causes for hate and discrimination are that good people allow such statements to be made while disagreeing in silence, and that those who discriminate lack the ability to fully comprehend others' suffering.

I have always wanted to understand the karma and how to end the heavy suffering of people of African descent, both in America and abroad. Specifically, America's history of slavery has been a source of shame for me. Although sympathetic to others' suffering and a willing participant in the struggle to end discrimination, I have often wondered in front of the Gohonzon, "Who will care about and who will truly understand the plight of the descendants of Africa?"

On Dec. 7, the Simon Wiesenthal Center and Museum of Tolerance presented an evening with Yukiko Sugihara as part of the center's Makiguchi Lecture Se-

ries (the first lecturer in this annual series was SGI President Ikeda in 1996). She is the widow of Chiune Sugihara, who served as the Japanese consul to Lithuania at the beginning of World War II. While living at the consulate, the Sugiharas one day found the building surrounded by more than 300 Jewish people, many of whom had walked from Poland to seek travel visas, so that they might escape into Russia and avoid being rounded up and killed by the Nazis.

Mr. Sugihara faced a dilemma: Trying to save people by granting visas meant defying his government, destroying his career and endangering his family. On three occasions the Japanese government expressly ordered him not to grant the visas. However, after consulting his wife, who gave him her full support, and after his 5-year-old son asked him to help the Jewish people, Mr. Sugihara began granting visas.

At the time, the Sugiharas' children ranged in age from 5 years to a few months. The Sugi-

time the Sugiharas left, more than 3,000 visas had been granted. The Sugiharas had fought to the last minute.

That was only the beginning of the story. Because of their actions, the Sugiharas, along with their children, were placed in an internment camp for one year. After finally returning to Japan, Mr. Sugihara was dismissed as a government official. According to Mrs. Sugihara, he never made excuses or regretted his actions on behalf of the Jewish people, even though it cost him and his family personal hardship.

Mrs. Sugihara is a frail woman about 5 feet tall and well into her 80s, yet she travels all over the world to tell her story of courage, humanism and compassion. She told us that she felt the important thing was that all racism be erased and that young people who had not known war learn about it through books and stories, so that they never desire to create war.

At the end of her talk in Los Angeles, a man who as a young boy had received visa No. 2,013 presented her with flowers and thanked her for his life. He reported that of the "Sugihara Jews," there are today more than 50,000 descendants. The Sugiharas' courageous actions made a difference. Their action gives life to President Ikeda's declaration that the change in the destiny of a single individual can bring about a change in the destiny of a nation.

When I first encountered Mrs. Sugihara, she was sitting casually in the lobby of the Wiesenthal Center talking with anyone who would come by to meet her. She was truly a common human being.

This encounter helped me come to terms with my American experience. I believe one thing to learn from this lecture is that we must not be ashamed of the hardships we face but must all continue to share our stories so that the world never forgets the consequences of war, hatred, slavery and oppression, and that we must each, as common people, be willing to speak out against discrimination without concern for our lives. WY



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI  
**Yukiko Sugihara, speaking at the Simon Wiesenthal Center, described her husband's enabling more than 3,000 Jews to escape the Nazis in World War II.**

haras feared that they would become targets for the Nazis, but Mr. Sugihara continued to grant visas. He signed visas all day and into the night until his hands and arms ached. After more than 300 visas had been granted, the Sugiharas were ordered to leave Lithuania and be stationed elsewhere. Even when all their official papers were packed, and they were boarding the train to leave, Mr. Sugihara continued to write visas by hand. By the

## Recovery Group Marks First Anniversary

By JERI LOVE  
CORRESPONDENT

North Hollywood, Calif., Oct. 19

The daimoku was strong and the spirits were high as members of the so-called Lotus Group recently celebrated their first "year of consistency" — meeting on the third Sunday of every month, despite obstacles, to help members use their Buddhist practice to overcome the suffering of addiction in their lives.

"We are committed to proving the validity of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism as the basis for our development as first-rate human beings," said Frazier Thompson, co-founder of group. "Through our faith, education, awareness and by encouraging self-empowerment, we have an opportunity to revitalize appreciation for our own lives."

The meetings are open to members and guests who either have an addiction problem or are in a relationship with a person who is addicted. The members define addiction as "a pathological relationship with any mood-altering person, place, substance or thing that has life-damaging consequences. The key word is *pathological*. This is what separates a habit from addiction, and it is why there is no such thing as a positive addiction."

The meetings serve as a forum, providing an open and supportive environment where participants have an opportunity to share, participate in



Photo by JERI LOVE

Members of the Lotus Group celebrate the one-year anniversary of their informal gathering, which meets monthly to help members use their Buddhist practice to overcome addiction.

faith-based dialogue and come to terms with their own issues, as they relate to addiction and co-dependency.

It was at Robert Inatomi's suggestion that the members start meeting a year ago. Having a son in recovery for six years, Mr. Inatomi, who is Los Angeles #1 Joint Territory guidance staff, said that addiction affects everyone, not just the person with the problem.

"Whatever you're chanting for, don't give up," Mr. Inatomi told the members during his words of encouragement. "All of your prayers will be answered."

He added, "The sooner you get to the Gohonzon, the quicker you will have the freedom to live a full life."

At the end of the meeting, the members made a determination to expand this faith-based activity to reach out to more members who are suffering because of addiction. W

## Groundbreaking for Friendship Center Is a Community Event

GROUNDBREAKING, FROM PAGE 1

thanked the SGI "for being here. Our mission will be to support you wherever we can in whatever way we can, and make sure you can do the work you do."

And keynote speaker Lulu Washington, whose Contemporary Dance Theater is based in the neighborhood, sensed "positive energy — an overwhelming force bubbling up and expanding out into the area." She called the future center a "safe haven where young people can come and be inspired," a trans-

formative presence that she believed can bring about what are called in Swahili *umoja* and *ujama* — unity and harmony.

But it was 97-year-old community activist Annie Jo Robertson who made the greatest impact with her advice on "how to stay here even longer than me" — "You have to treat people the way you'd like to be treated," she said.

The Friendship Center, the first SGI structure in Los Angeles, to be built from the ground up, is scheduled to open in late 1998. W

## SGI Vice Presidents Appointed

By TED MORINO

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., Dec. 12

The reappointment of SGI-USA General Director Fred M. Zaitzu and General Director Emeritus George M. Williams as SGI vice presidents was announced at the SGI's annual directors

meeting, held in Japan on Nov. 14.

SGI-USA Senior Vice General Director Daniel Nagashima was also appointed as an SGI vice president.

There are 16 SGI vice presidents throughout the world, each serving a two-year term. W

## New Byakuren Chief Appointed

Irene Wang is appointed the new SGI-USA Byakuren chief, Dec. 4.

By IRENE WANG

SGI-USA BYAKUREN CHIEF

In 1986, shortly after my arrival in the United States, I reconnected with the SGI and also started attending high school and participating in the Fire and Drum Corps. Despite my faith in the practice, I did not enjoy the activities, because I was forced by my mother to go. Sometimes we had to get up at 4:00 a.m. so we could do gongyo and be at the meeting site by 7:00, three hours before the meeting started.

But I was so impressed by the people who worked behind the scenes, like the Byakuren members, so I joined Byakuren when I turned 18.



Photo by LISA HOLLIS

Irene Wang, Byakuren chief.

Last year, I supported the 21st SGI General Meeting and other events at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. I was assisting with the translation equipment used for representatives from throughout the world. Before each major meeting, five Byakuren members would

spend many hours changing 3,000 batteries in the equipment. Facing mountains of equipment and batteries, I realized how noble the Byakuren mission is. If just one machine lost power, one person from a distant country would leave the meeting feeling discouraged.

As Byakuren chief, I am determined to provide the same opportunities for Byakuren members that my Byakuren big sisters gave to me. I will raise capable young women by supporting and entrusting them with important responsibilities, making sure that the Byakuren organization will provide a warm environment in which all young women can challenge themselves and overcome all obstacles in life. The SGI-USA Byakuren is looking forward to developing into a group that is global and capable of coordinating movements to welcome international members. W

## The Student Files

**Name:** Minako Shibazaki

**School:** University of Texas at San Antonio

**Major:** Bilingual-bicultural education



I am currently going for my master's in bilingual-bicultural education with a concentration in English as a Second Language. Upon moving to the United States from Japan, I enrolled in ESL courses and found them to be invaluable to my learning process. My goal now is to teach English to non-English speakers using what I have learned as an ESL student myself.

In my program, not only do we study the English language but also the philosophies

and religions of various cultures. Unlike other students, who have to do research to find out about religions, I can discuss the Daishonin's Buddhism with my classmates and teachers based on what I've learned at meetings and from my experiences.

So most of my classmates know that I am a Buddhist. And many of them come to me to find out more about this Buddhism. In fact, some often call me for advice from the Buddhist perspective! W

SHELLEY COHEN, BOSTON

# I Can Win

**Low self-esteem kept Shelley Cohen from excelling in her career as a teacher. Thanks to her Buddhist practice, Shelley — still challenged but no longer hobbled by this self-doubt — now has a job where she can show just how good she is.**

Ever since I can remember, I have been plagued by self-doubt and low self-esteem. All through public school, I was sure that my teachers hated me. During my college years, I often felt lonely and incapable. I transferred twice, each time hoping that a new campus environment would alleviate my unhappiness.

At age 20, my mother died, and my fears deepened. Over the years, I consulted many therapists, who assured me that I was a capable and intelligent person. However, in the depths of my life, I did not believe them, and I continued to cling to my feelings of inadequacy.

In my mid-20s, I was introduced to the Gohonzon by a roommate. After two years of observing the changes she was making in her life and reading her copies of the *World Tribune* (without her knowing it), I decided to try chanting. In March 1979, I received the Gohonzon. At the time, I was attending graduate school and working toward a degree in early childhood special education. My Buddhist practice enabled me to appreciate being in school. For the first time, I simply enjoyed learning and meeting new people. I did very well in all my course work.

During direct service with the children, however, my self-doubt emerged, especially when I knew I was being observed and "judged" by someone else. Even though I knew I had the potential to become a good teacher, I just didn't seem to have any control over these deep-rooted feelings of not being good enough. I always felt that someone else could do it better.

In her essay "How Will We Make a Great America?" Wendy Clark, SGI-USA women's divi-

sion chief, writes: "The greatest gaps...are the gaps we have within our lives. They show up as little voices in our lives that judge and criticize our dreams, that tell us that whatever we're doing or thinking is not good enough. Or as that part of our lives that will only settle for perfection, thus keeping us from doing anything at all.... They separate us from our true selves, which, after all, is a large part of what keeps us from displaying our inherent humanity and realizing our potential."

I feel that the process of "actively closing the gap" exactly describes my battle over the 10 years or more from the time I received the Gohonzon.

I am not going to discuss the details of my decade of struggle. I will just say that from 1979 to 1989, I was fired from all four teaching positions that I held. During this time, I continued to chant consistently and to maintain my position as a women's division district leader.

I remember chanting just to be normal, to be able to change my karma, so that I could keep a job and not have to face this sense of loss and defeat every year. I also constantly sought guidance. Rob Eppsteiner, Boston Joint Territory chief at the time, always motivated me to have a start-from-now attitude and to continue to challenge my situation.

Even though I used my Buddhist practice to make specific breakthroughs and changes, my self-doubt would resurface in a new situation. I was suffering so much from one job that I would get up at 4:00 a.m. and chant two hours of daimoku before work. Chanting to change myself was like banging my head against a wall, because I had to fight against so much negativity. Reading SGI President Ikeda's guidance invariably encouraged me. I continually read this poem:

*Struggles and hardships!  
In their midst, you will  
develop true humanity.  
In their midst, you will  
forge an iron will.  
In their midst, you will  
know real tears.  
In their midst, there lies the  
human revolution.*

Eventually, I began to appreciate this negative situation as an



'Self-doubt is a constant battleground for me,' says Shelley Cohen. But it's a challenge she faces and wins every day.

opportunity to see what exactly in my life I needed to change to be happy and to realize my childhood dream of being an effective teacher.

One day after chanting, I looked through the want ads and saw that a nearby preschool (non-special education) was looking for a summer toddler teacher. I applied and was offered the position. I enjoyed the change from the intensity of special education, and I continue to work there still. In this environment, I focused on curriculum development and used the classroom behavioral skills I had gained from my previous jobs. I soon developed an excellent reputation at the school. The salary, however, was extremely poor, and I was struggling financially.

Four years ago, I began to look for a position in the public schools, as an integrated preschool teacher. The first year, I applied to the programs I saw advertised in the newspaper. Although I was granted interviews, I was not hired. I then began to meet periodically with a career counselor at the college placement office. We developed a great rapport. She, too, constantly encouraged me not to give up.

Again and again, I had to face the Gohonzon with a determination to win and to battle my tendency to be discouraged. Even the teachers at my school did not believe that I would ever achieve my goal. Although I still had not obtained the position I wanted, I found that my environment was working to protect me. My uncle, determined to help me find a job, paid for me to take several education courses so that I could be current in the education field. He also enabled me to see a career counselor more consistently. This counselor informed me that I needed to network, and I realized that I needed to adapt more dynamic job search strategies.

In July 1996, I saw that the perfect position for me was available in a public school program. I chanted intensely and then called the director. I had met her on a few occasions at my current preschool but had never worked directly with her. I was granted an interview but again felt discouraged about the possibility of being hired. I continued to chant to win, however.

A month later, I had the job with full benefits. My salary increased tremendously.

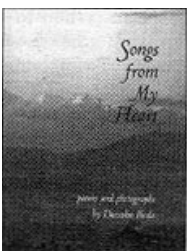
I am doing well at my position. All the children in my class are making gains. More important, however, my supervisor tells the other teachers that they should come see the happiness and excitement of the children in my class. I no longer fear that I will be fired from my teaching positions. I have extended my hours in the public school and now can devote all my energy to this program.

Through my Buddhist practice, I have realized that I do not have to be perfect. I can make mistakes. And I can also learn from them and change. Wendy Clark also writes: "In reality, 'actively closing the gap' is the opposite of being a victim. It's the opposite of losing our self-identity and self-esteem to feelings of shame and inferiority. It is the experience of having absolute control of ourselves and absolute control of our relationships with others and with our environment."

Self-doubt is a constant battleground for me. However, I feel so much better about myself. I know that if I chant hard enough, I can tap the Buddha nature in my life. I can bring it out and have a positive effect on the world around me.

I can win!

WT



## A Great Gift Idea!

First printed in 1978, *Songs from My Heart* by Daisaku Ikeda is a collection of poems celebrating youth, change and progress. Translated by Burton Watson with power and emotion true to the author, these genuinely are songs from the heart of Daisaku Ikeda.

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JAN. 27, 1993 — 'THE SUN OF "JIYU" OVER A NEW LAND'

# The How-To of 'Jiyu'

## SIGNIFICANT DATE

By JEFF FARR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**April 29, 1992.** The not guilty verdict is handed down in the Rodney King trial, and Los Angeles goes crazy. The policemen who beat King seem to be off the hook — even though most Americans saw the tape of King being clubbed 56 times. It's the last straw for many Los Angelenos frustrated with the racial injustice they see in their city. For several days, civil unrest continues as the world watches via CNN — with jaws dropped. This is sunny Southern California? This is America, the great melting pot?

**Jan. 27, 1993.** On his first visit to Los Angeles since the riots, SGI President Ikeda introduces a new poem, "The Sun of Jiyu Over a New Land." "Although this poem is dedicated to the Los Angeles members," he begins, "it goes without saying that its message is relevant to all SGI-USA members." In verse, he shares his reaction to the unrest: how heart-broken he was when he heard the news, how he set everything aside to pray for the people's safety. And he asks all Ameri-

cans to seek their true roots in the life-condition of *jiyu* or Buddhahood — in roots deeper than race, in roots that we all share.

But once we believe in these roots, once we accept this identity, how do we express *jiyu* to others, to society? This is the question we've been asking ourselves for five years. In the poem, President Ikeda gives some practical points on what we might call the "how to" of *jiyu*:

*Buddhism is reason.  
Therefore always maintain self-control.  
Be the master of your actions.  
Exercise common sense in society.  
Keep a smiling countenance at home.*

Nichiren Daishonin, too, emphasized that Buddhist practice comes down to how we act in the real world. In "The Three Kinds of Treasure," he said that "the real meaning of the Lord Shakyamuni's appearance in this world lay in his behavior as a human being" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 240). This letter was written to Shijo Kingo in 1277, when Kingo was in a lot of trouble with people around him — his lord had reduced his holdings, his peers were spreading rumors about him, etc.

And the Daishonin strictly encouraged him to keep his composure. No mat-

ter what people said to him or did to him, he shouldn't lose his temper. This is the way of *jiyu* as set forth by the Daishonin.

Today's society is one big difficult situation — and what it needs most is people of composure, people of ideas and solutions, people of *jiyu*. The role of our Buddhist organization is thus to renew our troubled society through the positive example we set as a group.

For five years, the Los Angeles organization and the whole SGI-USA have grown by trying to realize this principle of "The Sun of Jiyu" through projects benefiting not just the organization but the country. The poem was a motivation behind the formation of a national Diversity Committee, which met for a year and a half and showed how a religious organization can face issues of diversity. And it was an inspiration behind the organization's geographic reorganization — the effort to invest our organization in communities and let communities feel invested in us.

Next March, the Los Angeles organization will hold a culture festival celebrating the poem's fifth anniversary and all the progress we've made since Jan. 27, 1993. The poem's fifth anniversary is a reminder that the time has come for the SGI-USA to take increasing leadership in American society as the "brilliant, burning sun" of President Ikeda's poem. ☐

## DETERMINATION

# Do, Or Do Not!

## BUDDHIST CONCEPT

By SEWARD HUNG  
NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

**D**etermination — either you've got it or you don't.

Long ago, in a galaxy far, far away... No, I'm not referring to the world of Luke Skywalker in the *Star Wars* movies. I'm talking about the previous incarnation of the SGI-USA, better known as NSA. Back then, the Buddhist term for determination or deep-seated resolve, *ichinen*, was thrown around a lot. You would often hear statements like "I've got a lot of *ichinen*," or "My *ichinen* is strong." Just what is *ichinen*, anyway, and why should we care about its meaning?

*Ichi* of *ichinen* literally means one but can also mean only, first, highest or ultimate. *Nen* literally means present thought or present mind. Taken together, *ichinen* can be construed to mean our highest present thought. The Buddhist view of determination, then, is our foremost prayer.

The last time I checked, *foremost* was a superlative. By definition, a su-

perlative is a yes-or-no, on-or-off condition. Something is either the best, worst, loudest, softest, biggest, smallest — or it isn't. No in-betweens allowed. Many people used to (and actually still do) use *ichinen* as a variable quantity: "I've got a lot of *ichinen*." "My *ichinen* is strong."

The truth is, in Buddhism either we have determination or we don't. It's an endpoint, if you will. Our foremost prayer is the result of a great deal of concentration, soul searching and courage.

For example, either you have the determination to exercise or you don't. My inability to work out regularly is not the result of insufficient or weak determination — the determination simply wasn't there to begin with. Either that or I somehow lost it along the way, much to the disappointment of my doctor.

This leads me to my main point in discussing Buddhist determination: how it relates to our enlightenment. From time to time — usually when I behave too much like a foolish mortal — I ask myself whether I have the determination to become enlightened or not. This usually causes me to chant about what I must do to bring out my best.

Now that I'm in my mid-30s, I'm just getting a glimpse of how painfully short life is. If I live to be 70, then half of my life is already gone! Truly, as Nichiren Daishonin writes, "Time passes as quickly as a white colt glimpsed though a crack in the wall" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 41). When I consider how many dreams I have yet to realize (with attaining enlightenment as the ultimate goal), I can't help but feel the need to reexamine and revitalize my practice each and every moment — to make sure I have determination.

Unfortunately, my mind tends to wander off from my dreams — often. That's why I need to chant. If I could depend on concentration or willpower alone to get things done, I wouldn't need the Gohonzon or Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Experience has shown me otherwise.

Chanting is the way to engrave my purpose in my heart, where it becomes my determination. In *The Empire Strikes Back*, Luke Skywalker's teacher Yoda warns him to "do, or do not! There is no 'try'!" The Buddhist view of determination, likewise, is that it's a matter of doing. It's a manifestation of courage and faith, not a relative measure of commitment. ☐

## SIGN POSTS

APPLYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS TO DAILY LIFE

## Something Is Wrong

By CRAIG GREEN  
SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

**I certainly have no intention of censuring the sons of the Buddha. My only hatred is for the act of slandering the Law.** (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 35)

This comes from the "Rissho Ankoku Ron," which Nichiren Daishonin submitted to the Japanese government. He argued that by supporting the priests of heretical temples, the government was in fact leading the people of Japan into hellish times. The Daishonin clarifies that his stance is not against priests — it is against slanderous acts that priests are performing.

One of the most profound aspects of our practice is the assurance that the entirety of our lives — our destiny — lies within our control. With our actions and prayers to the Gohonzon, we can change any situation into one of tremendous value and joy. Yet, the priests of Nichiren Shoshu would have us believe otherwise. Nikken, and those who support him, would have us believe that our growth depends upon our obedience to a high priest. They would have us believe that priests, by the very nature of their position, are higher in stature than lay believers. They would have us believe that true happiness will never be ours without their say so.

When I think about these illogical, perverted theories of Nichiren Shoshu, I sometimes wonder what Nichiren Daishonin would think. I think about the unconscionable actions that Nikken has taken — from excommunicating millions of SGI members to petitioning the Japanese government to disband the Soka Gakkai. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism was founded on a deep concern for common people. It was not intended to be a pedestal for priests to look down on lay believers. Nor was it intended to be a vehicle of authority for a high priest.

There is nothing wrong with being a priest or being part of the priesthood. But when you intentionally lead people away from the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin, something is wrong. Slanderously wrong. ☐

# The Power of Youth Is Magnificent

*SGI President Ikeda gave the following address at the conferral of an honorary doctorate from the National University of Mongolia, Nov. 8. The conferral was held in conjunction with the 16th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, which commemorated Nov. 18, the anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding.*

I will begin by offering my greetings and expressing my deepest appreciation and respect to President Tserensodnom Gantsog of the National University of Mongolia and his wife, Chuluun Ulziisaikhan; Vice President Abish Mekei; and distinguished members of the faculty. I humbly accept the honorary doctorate of humanities just bestowed upon me by the National University of Mongolia, a proud academic institute of great promise forging a rainbow bridge of peace and friendship into the 21st century. Once again, allow me to express my profound gratitude for this great honor.

Mongolia is well known for its beautiful, golden autumns. For SGI members, the autumn month of November is also a golden month in which we celebrate our organization's founding. I share the honor I have received on this auspicious occasion with my fellow members in 128 countries around the world.

## **The Beautiful Land of Mongolia**

I am reminded of a stanza from the poem "My Homeland" by the great Mongolian poet Dashdorjiyn Natsagdorj:

*The snowcapped peaks  
gleaming in the distance  
The broad grasslands  
unfolding beneath the  
vast blue sky  
Noble summits commanding  
the horizon  
An endless sea of grass  
soothing the spirit  
This is the beauty of*



SGI President Ikeda receives an honorary doctorate from the National University of Mongolia, described by the SGI leader as an 'institute of great promise forging a rainbow bridge of peace and friendship.'

*Mongolia, my homeland.*

The skies over the beautiful land of Mongolia are vast and blue. The earth is green and stretches as far as the eye can see. The snowy mountains that tower in the distance are enormous. Everything in Mongolia is large in scale, as are the hearts of the Mongolian people. How different from Japan, with its cramped space and narrow-minded people.

## **Education Is the Key**

Mongolia is a great nation of youth and education, brimming with a lively desire for learning. The average age of Mongolian citizens is 18. I have heard that one-third of the population is either students or otherwise involved in the educational system. Education is the key to fostering people and to building the future. No matter how wealthy a nation may be, it has no future without the education of its citizens.

Today, we have the honor of welcoming a youthful prince of intellect and learning who has stood at the forefront of education in Mongolia, President Gantsog. He is a brilliant physicist and only 36 years old.

On Nov. 2, we laid the foundation stone for Soka University's new main building [scheduled for completion in 1999]. On that occasion, we placed in the foundation commemorative medals from 180 universities around the world. The very first medal to arrive, before any of the others, was from the National University of Mongolia. I couldn't help but be impressed with the lightning response of the university's youthful president.

The power of youth is magnificent.

Incidentally, the interpreter for Dr. Gantsog's address earlier, Yukimasa Nakano, is a graduate of Soka Senior High School in Tokyo. I understand that he decided to study Mongolian because he was certain that at some time in the future the Soka Gakkai would hold exchanges with Mongolia. I praise him for following through on this decision and thank him for his efforts today.

*A postgraduate student at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Mr. Nakano is currently attending the National University of Mongolia as an exchange student.*

## **A Request I Could No Longer Refuse**

We are very fortunate today to have members of both the Makiguchi and Toda families in attendance. I was only 32 when I succeeded President Toda and became the third president of the Soka Gakkai. Mr. Toda clearly stated his wish for the future, declaring: "I will entrust the position of third president to someone young. Young people are most trustworthy. If everyone supports the third president, our great dream of kosen-rufu can be accomplished." When my beloved mentor died, the media went mad with wild predictions that the Soka Gakkai would fall apart or collapse. As always, their reports about our organization were reckless and unfounded.

At that time, I was on trial for election violations I never committed, and I was very ill, too, suffering from a constant high fever. I was approached repeatedly about taking on the position of president, but I felt compelled to decline. Eventually, however, I could no longer refuse the request to do so. In a diary entry at that time, I wrote: "I am a youth, I am a

man. I must advance courageously. I must ride out the crashing waves and raging storms, and make my way over the mountains and across the desert."

I was well aware of how demanding the job of Soka Gakkai president was. I knew that I must stand alone and face the harsh onslaught of the three powerful enemies of Buddhism described in the Lotus Sutra. I knew that unless I was prepared to give my life to the cause, I could not fulfill my responsibilities.

That is what it means to be the president of the Soka Gakkai, an organization promoting a movement genuinely and wholeheartedly dedicated to the people. On the day I was inaugurated as the third president, my wife said to me [expressing her determination to stand alone], "Today, there is a funeral in the Ikeda family." [This episode is related in *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1. "Golden Autumn" chapter.]

Among my seniors, some were looking on, hoping I would fail. Ignoring them, I moved straight ahead, aiming toward the seventh memorial [the 6th anniversary] of my mentor's death, determined to do what I had to do each day, no matter if it cost me my health or even my life. For those first few years, I was so busy that I hardly even noticed the coming and going of the seasons.

After reaching that first milestone [Mr. Toda's 7th memorial on April 2, 1964] and completing the goals I had set to accomplish by that time, I announced [at the 7th Student Division General Meeting in June 1964] plans for the establishment of Soka University, a task that had been bequeathed to me by my mentor. I was 36 — the same age as President Gantsog today.

## **The Road of Youth**

There are two beautiful Mon-

PLEASE SEE YOUTH, NEXT PAGE

YOUTH, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

golian proverbs, "Youth is a flowing spring" and "The road of youth is long."

Youth will be the leading players, the stars, in the unfolding drama of our future.

It was also fearless young people who, in recent years, carried out the bloodless revolution that brought democracy to Mongolia. In 1990, a small group of youth gathered in a plaza with temperatures some 20 degrees below zero and risked their lives to proclaim loudly and bravely that the time had come to stand up for human rights. Their passionate resolve spread throughout the nation. *Mongol* means one who is brave, and it was brave young people who changed the course of Mongolia's history.

Please allow me to share with the youth division, the successors of our movement, some lines of poetry that reflect this spirit of the Mongolian people, in the hope that they may emulate it:

*A voice of truth  
that causes cowards to  
shudder  
when they read it  
is what we need.*

A voice of truth that makes the cowardly, the base, the treacherous, tremble in fear — that is a true lion's roar.

Therefore, I call to the youth division: Rise up! Take responsibility! I would like all of you to create a momentous history and accumulate good fortune during your youth that will last a whole lifetime. From now into the coming century, please strive



President Tserensodnom Gantsog (center) of the National University of Mongolia and his wife, Chuluun Ulziisaikhan (left), chat with President and Mrs. Ikeda.

to build a bridge of golden and unceasing triumph, to open a great path so that all who follow in your wake can advance with confidence and courage.

Mr. Toda once said to me, "Daisaku, I would like to ride across the Mongolian plains with you on horseback." We often spoke to each other in this grand spirit.

Another time, he said, "Daisaku, let's go some day together to my hometown, Atsuta Village."

As mentor and disciple, we were completely one at heart.

**Giving Voice to Inner Feelings**

The Mongolian people love poetry, and they often gather to

recite and enjoy poetry. This reminds me of the vigorous poetry of ancient Japan collected in the *Man'yoshu* (Anthology of Ten Thousand Leaves). The poetry of that age reflected the energy of the common people. It had a strength and power that was lost in later times, when Japanese poetry became a diversion of an idle, decadent aristocracy.

Among the many meetings held today is the general meeting of Tokyo Territory No. 2 — a territory that includes Hachioji where Soka University is located. The ancient name for this region is Musashino, a place that, incidentally, appears frequently in the poetry of the *Man'yoshu*.

Giving voice to inner feelings is the mark of human beings. It is important that people lead vital and fulfilling lives and express themselves with energy and vigor. Unless we restore that life and vitality to the people, I believe, Japan has no future in the 21st century.

**So That No One's Deceived by Lies**

Genghis Khan (c. 1167–1227), that great Mongol ruler of centuries past, declared, "A strong leader creates prosperity only in his own time, but a wise leader creates prosperity for future generations as well." One reason for the problems we face in society today is that our leaders are self-centered. They think nothing of those who will be left to deal with their legacy; they care nothing for the future.

Likewise, an authoritarian religion always tries to make slaves of the people. Several Mongolian proverbs have something to say about the priests of such a religion: "When things go well, the priests take the credit; when they go poorly, they blame it on karma." "Where there are flies, there will be maggots; where there are monks, there will be lies." These are keen observations, indeed, and they point out why it is so important for us to educate every individual thoroughly, helping everyone become wise and critically aware, so that no one is deceived by such lies.

I am particularly impressed by the Mongolian educational system's focus on the student. It strikes a chord with my own sentiments.

**Members Always First**

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai's first president and founder of the system of Soka education, asserted:

Teachers should come down from the throne where they are enconced as the objects of veneration to become public servants who offer guidance to those who seek to ascend to the throne of learning. They should not be masters who offer themselves as paragons but partners in the discovery of new models.

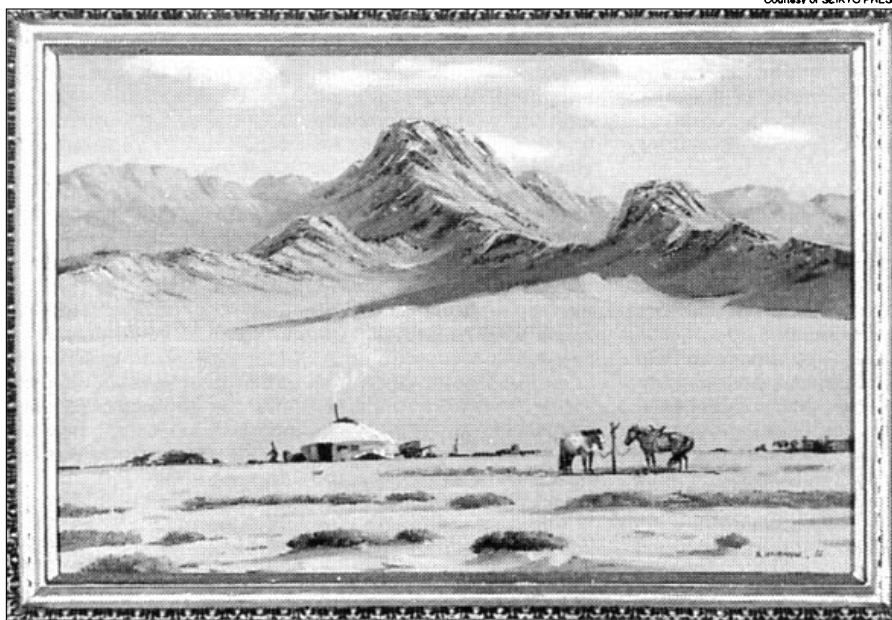
This is a very insightful statement, in my opinion. Instead of seeking to make oneself the object of respect, the true leader, the true educator, points out the ideal, the goal, the model, and then leads the way toward it in a spirit of mutual growth.

This is a philosophy of the unity of senior and junior: though they have different roles, both parties are united in the educational process. How unlike this is the present situation in Japan! Seniors are arrogant and treat their juniors badly. Teachers are haughty and look down on their students. We see this same pattern at work in the way many politicians scorn their fellow citizens. This is intolerable. The people should always come first and foremost. They deserve the utmost respect.

The same should be true of the relationship between leaders and members in the SGI organization: The members always come first. The real test of a leader is how well he or she has nurtured and educated capable successors. Let me make this fact perfectly clear — the true victors, the truly great leaders, are those who have done a magnificent job in raising young people who will carry on the baton in the future.

**This Step Creates Our Future**

Sadly, until now, the history of interaction between Japan and Mongolia has been dominated by two dark episodes. The first was the Mongol invasions of Japan in the 13th century, and the second was the Nomonhan Incident of 1939.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, on careful reflection, I am reminded that the seeds for a great and enduring peace were being planted at the very time these events were taking place [namely, through the actions of Nichiren Daishonin at the time of the Mongol invasions and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi at



This rendering of the Gobi Desert was presented to the SGI leader.

YOUTH, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

the time of Japanese imperialist expansion] — seeds that are now bearing fruit.

In 1275, Japan's military government executed five Mongol envoys at Tatsunokuchi in Kamakura. This was an unforgivably barbarous act. All of them — from the 34-year-old mission head on down — were official emissaries dispatched by their country. Nichiren Daishonin lamented their fate: "How pitiful that they [Japan's rulers] have beheaded the innocent Mongol envoys!" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 179).

If the Japanese military government had heeded the Daishonin's remonstrance [expressed in the "Rissho Ankoku Ron"], the lives of the Mongol envoys would have been spared. Nichiren Daishonin was not concerned with rivalry between nations or differences between peoples. I think this passage demonstrates his desire to extend a network of humanism, based on the supreme dignity of the individual, to embrace all humanity.

Centuries later, when the Japanese army was invading Mongolia, triggering the Nomonhan Incident, President Maki-guchi was fighting against the ever-rising tide of militarism. Through one-to-one dialogue and small discussion meetings, he quietly but purposefully went about building a grass-roots movement for peace. In that year, in the midst of that fierce struggle, he declared with regard to his dream and vision for the future: "One day there will be a school that puts the theories of value-creating education into practice. Young Toda will carry on my work and realize that dream. We'll have schools that go all the way through to the university level."

I, in turn, inherited that mission from Mr. Toda, and I have made it a reality.

In any event, Buddhism teaches us: "If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], p. 172). This passage from the Shinjikan Sutra reveals the essence of the workings of the human spirit. The step we take at this moment creates our future.

Japan, without any philosophy of its own, has always placed little value upon establishing true



'Courage is the heart of Buddhism,' President Ikeda tells members who fill Soka University's Ikeda Auditorium on Nov. 8.

friendship with the other nations of Asia. Such shortsightedness is odd, and it is one reason Japan has become "the orphan of Asia," isolated and alone. I would like to fill in the void created by the unfortunate past history between Japan and Mongolia with the power of culture and education.

In the past, Mongolia's broad-ranging international vision has linked East and West and even influenced the European Renaissance. Mongolia is also in a geographically pivotal location, bordering many other nations. I am convinced that Mongolia will be a focus of international attention in the 21st century. Working together with the people of Mongolia, I would like to lead the coming century away from war and conflict toward peace and cooperation.

Today is also the general meeting of Japan's Hokuriku region, where Mr. Toda was born.<sup>2</sup> The year 2000 will be the 100th anniversary of my mentor's birth. Let us celebrate that auspicious event — which coincides with the dawn of the 21st century — with great festivity and joy. Let us all gather together on that occasion!

I am confident that all of our comrades who have died in this century will, based on the principle of the eternity of life, once more resume their place in our movement, ready to fulfill a new mission in a new era.

I thank all the representa-

tives here today from across Japan, as well as members of the arts division, representatives from the Association of Youthful Priests Dedicated to the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu, and SGI members from 26 nations outside Japan who have come from so far to attend this gathering.

### I Have Called Them Forth

In closing, please allow me to quote some passages from Nichiren Daishonin's writings:

Do not spend this life in vain and regret it for ten thousand years to come. (MW-5, 173).

\*\*\*

If I do not call forth these three enemies of the Lotus Sutra, then I will not be a true votary of the Lotus Sutra. (MW-4, 20)

\*\*\*

Understand then that the votary who practices the Lotus Sutra exactly as the Buddha teaches will without fail be attacked by the three powerful enemies. (MW-1, 105-06)

\*\*\*

Do not expect good times, but take the bad times for granted. (MW-1, 242)

\*\*\*

Each of you should summon up the courage of a lion and never succumb to threats from anyone. (MW-1, 241)

\*\*\*

Those with the heart of a lion will surely attain Buddhahood as Nichiren did. (MW-1, 35)

\*\*\*

Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken even a bit, demons will take advantage. (MW-1, 241-42)

Courage is the heart of Buddhism. I have called forth the three powerful enemies just as the Goshu teaches. The Daishonin urges us to continue exerting ourselves day after day, to keep moving forward. Otherwise demons will take advantage and we will not attain Buddhahood.

I pray for the bright and glorious future of the National University of Mongolia and for the health and success of President Gantsog, his wife and all the faculty members here today. Pledging to ride enthusiastically and cheerfully to the great prairie of triumph of the people in the 21st century, I once again express my deepest thanks and appreciation. W

1. Nomonhan Incident: military conflict between the Japanese army and an alliance of Mongol and Soviet troops near the village of Nomonhan, on the border between northwestern Manchuria and Mongolia, from May through September 1939. The Japanese forces, which were seeking to push into Siberia through Mongolia, suffered a devastating defeat in the conflict.

2. In the Soka Gakkai organization,

Hokuriku region is comprised of Toyama and Ishikawa prefectures. Mr. Toda was born in Ishikawa Prefecture. He and his family moved to Atsuta Village in Hokkaido when he was 2 years old, and it was there that he spent his formative years.

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# A Year of Growth for Oregon's Youth Band

The determination of a core group of young people makes all the difference as Portland's youth band challenges major events and builds hope for its future.

By PORTLAND, ORE...  
YOUTH BAND MEMBERS

The Portland Music Corps is a youth band established on Sept. 10, 1996. A young man, Harry Tolliver, and a young woman, Melissa Giesy, started this band. Harry came from the Los Angeles Brass Band and was shocked when he found out that Portland did not have a band when he first arrived in 1994. There had not been a band in Portland since 1991.

At first, Harry did not want to start up a band. He remembered how hard it was to get the Los Angeles Brass Band back on its feet after 1990. Therefore, Harry told everyone he would need some help, for he knew it was going to be harder starting this band up. That is when he met Melissa, and she proved to be the missing thing that Harry was looking for.

We started calling everyone we thought could play or would want to play an instrument. Our practices were very small. At first we only had four members attend. Even if just one member showed up, we would hold practice and help that person develop his or her skills.

We started meeting every Tuesday night to chant. Seattle Joint Territory was gearing up for the October 1996 youth festival,



Members of Portland Territory's youth band developed camaraderie and a sense of mission in 1997.

which would be our first performance. We had 14 members participate, including members from Eugene Headquarters.

So much daimoku went into this production. Our band members did excellently, and because of it the core of this group was solidified.

Toward the beginning of this last summer, the youth band members in Portland had to face many choices and challenges. The decisions we had to make involved performing at several meetings, marching in Seattle's Sea-Fair Torchlight Parade, and traveling to the Fife and Drum Corps, Music Corps and Youth Band conference at the Florida

Nature and Culture Center. Since our band had only recently been formed, our confidence and skills were lacking.

March 16 we performed with Seattle members as the Seattle Joint Territory Youth Band. The performance was beautiful to everyone except the band members. Although we had worked hard, we felt that the Seattle and Portland combined performance did not live up to our expectations, and as a result, a gap was created between us.

During the preparations for March 16, Melissa decided to have her own campaign to involve more young women's division members in the band,

since she was the only woman in the Portland band. This finally came to be in May, when out of nowhere, four motivated young women came into the band. Melissa was so amazed at how all of a sudden her prayers were answered.

On May 3, we had another performance and with five young women in the band! We were looking more like a youth band than a brass band.

Later, Harry asked if we wanted to take part in the Seattle Sea-Fair Torchlight Parade. Our reaction was not a happy one. Not only would we have to practice marching in the hot sun, we also felt awkward about work-

ing together with the Seattle band due to some hard feelings left over from March 16. While at first we opposed the idea, through heart-to-heart discussion and studying SGI President Ikeda's guidance, we resolved our differences.

We had two joint practices, which went surprisingly well. We quickly learned how to march. And preparing together helped form a bond again with Seattle. The parade was a great success and a great experience for all. It was the turning point for our band and a chance to start over with a positive attitude.

After we had become close again to Seattle, we then decided to go to the Fife and Drum Corps, Music Corps and Youth Band conference in Florida together. Ten representatives from Portland participated. Some of us had questions we needed answered and this seemed like the perfect opportunity for that. There were many leaders in attendance, and they were all eager to help and offer guidance. It was a caring and comfortable environment, except for the giant mosquitoes.

As a group, we learned a lot this summer. We learned to work together, keep an open mind and be optimistic in any situation. We learned about ourselves, one another and about the organization as well as about faith and our practice.

We see an absolutely bright future for the Portland Music Corps. There is a strong foundation built on faith and imagination rather than old formalities. The youth raised in this generation are good examples of how to have vitality, use group interaction and develop unity.

## HARRY TOLLIVER JR., PORTLAND, ORE.

# The Kid Who Wouldn't Give Up

As a 6-year-old, Harry Tolliver Jr. beat the odds to become part of the band. Fifteen years later and still playing, he credits the band with helping make him the person he is today.

A 6-year-old boy picks up a trumpet and goes to Brass Band practice. Some would say that this boy is too young and that he can't perform with the Brass Band. That would have been true back in the '80s, but this boy beat those odds. Well, that 6-year-old boy was me, Harry Tolliver Jr.

I joined the Los Angeles Brass Band when I was 6, and I have been in it for 15 years now. I'm 21 and am glad I beat those odds. The Brass Band trained me to be the leader I am today. I learned a great deal back then in the '80s and being in the band helped me to deal with real-life problems that my parents could not prepare me for or that I felt like I could not talk to them about.

It was hard for me to get up early in the morning to go to prac-

tice back then, but somehow my brother, James, and my father would get me dressed and on my way to practice. I wanted to be part of the band so bad that I would bug my parents to teach me gongyo every day.

When I arrived at practice I used to try my best to fit in and not make any mistakes, but no matter what I did I would always hear guys saying things like "What is

he doing here?" or "I know he's not performing with us." Those words hurt me so much that I wanted to go hit something or someone.

My brother told me for weeks I needed to go talk to our Brass Band chief, who at that time was George Kataoka; so I did just that. When I walked up to him, I tapped him on his knee cap and told him that I needed to talk to him.

I told him I did not understand why I could not be in the band and why the guys treated me like a little kid or something, and maybe I should just give up. George first told me that I was a little kid but that I shouldn't give up so easily.

He then explained that the age cut-off for the band was 12, and he looked me in the eyes and asked me why I wanted to be in the band so much. I told him I

loved coming to practice because I liked being around the other guys and it was fun to me. He then asked me if I was planning to perform with the Brass Band at the upcoming meeting at the Long Beach Convention Center. I told him that I was. He went on to tell me that I should chant to perform in it and that if I went to practice every Sunday, maybe I could play with the band.

I stood up and told him that I have been chanting, and I hadn't missed a day yet.

At the time I had no clue what I was doing, nor did I really understand what George had told me. All I did know was that he didn't say I couldn't be in the band and he didn't say I couldn't perform in

PLEASE SEE TOLLIVER, 11

IRENE ISHII, SEATTLE

## I Have Learned — Daimoku Is the Key

Photo by DIXON HAMBY

Being drum major has helped Irene Ishii develop her leadership skills and better understand the power of faith.

I always knew that participating in Fife and Drum Corps and Youth Band activities were important. I first went to a practice when I was 11 — but I decided I didn't like it, and so I quit. Two years later, my brother, David, urged me to play in the Youth Band, and so I went.

Now I am 19. A year and a half ago, my brother and I were both appointed chiefs of the Music Corps and Fife and Drum Corps. At that time, I was only 17 and my brother was 21. Sometimes it felt like a competition between us as to which group would become more successful, but now we work together to develop each member.

Last summer, my brother and I worked together to lead the Seattle Joint Territory Youth Band in the largest parade in the Northwest, the Sea-Fair Torchlight Parade. Having just graduated from high school, I wanted to go on my senior trip and come back refreshed, but work conflicts and responsibilities did not allow me to go.

I never realized how many responsibilities I had to fulfill for this parade. I expected there to be a lot of work, but I didn't realize that I would have so little time. I depended on my brother to do what I should have been doing. He fulfilled many of my responsibilities, while I struggled with my tight work schedule.

Practices were at times quite discouraging for me. I wanted to engrave SGI President Ikeda's passion in the participants' hearts. Yet inside, I felt like I did not have the strength to lead this band. I did not have any experience as a drum major and lacked confidence.

When the parade finally came about, it did not matter that I was not the No. 1 drum major, because I knew that I was burning with passion and was so proud to be representing the SGI, helping to move the hearts of the 1 million people who saw the band on the streets.

My appreciation for my family and especially my brother had



Irene Ishii at the Sea-Fair Parade.

escalated completely. The struggles my brother and I overcame deepened our relationship. My sister, Susan, always looked after us when doing Byakuren, and my mother sewed many uniforms, including the one I proudly wore in the parade.

Through the times when I was down, I know that my family, as well as others, supported me and chanted for me. As a leader, I have learned that daimoku is the key to success in anything.

This past year, the Seattle Fife and Drum Corps and Music Corps have been growing and uniting. Our biggest goal for 1997 was success in the Sea-Fair Torchlight Parade. The Fife and Drum Corps and Music Corps came together as a Youth Band. The Fife and Drum Corps Dance Team, too, united with us so that we all became one unit in this parade.

After experiencing tremendous joy, the members decided that we would continue to work together as a Youth Band. Our numbers remain steady and our musical abilities are growing. The leaders of the Youth Band have refreshed their determinations to make the Youth Band a place where the members can grow in their lives, while strengthening their Buddhist practice and musical abilities.

The groups in Seattle and Portland are striving to maintain unity and support one another 100 percent. In the past, Seattle and Portland have functioned as two units instead of one. The same is true now, but we also support each other and feel more unified through stronger bonds of friendship.

The Youth Band in the Seattle Joint Territory is truly changing. We are becoming better and trying harder to grasp President Ikeda's spirit in our lives. ☐

KEONI LA GASA, SEATTLE

## Having the Guts To Say, 'I'm Gay'

This Seattle Youth Band member uses his Buddhist practice, and the prospect of marching in a parade, to face his identity and stand up for the gay community.

My experience with the Youth Band has been quite different than others'. In the band many people faced different things, while I had to face my identity. I came out of the closet when I was 15, meaning that I had the guts to tell people, "I'm gay."

I was not living with my mom at that time. My parents had separated, and my father had quit practicing, so I couldn't really chant. My father moved from Spokane, Wash., to Tumwater (a suburb of Olympia, Wash.). I had no contact with my mother except by phone because she still lived in Spokane.

During my freshman and sophomore years in high school, I struggled because people did not accept who I was. My mom moved from Spokane three months before my sophomore year ended, and I wasn't going to finish the school year.

When I heard about the Youth Band, at first I didn't want to go, even though I had experience in a marching band. I have performed in high school marching band, Color Guard and also Drum and Bugle Corps. I really wanted to do the Youth Band, but my fear held me back.

I went to the Gohonzon and prayed to find my inner strength to stand up for myself. I chanted and chanted. The next morning, when I got up, I felt a change in me. I felt no one could stand in my way and stop me from enjoying myself. I said

to myself: "Keoni, you have to stand up for yourself, and you also have to stand up for the gay community. You have to educate others and tell them that 'we are everywhere in the world.'"

That was when I told my mom that I wanted to march in the Sea-Fair Torchlight Parade. She was so proud of me, and that made me feel good, too.

The first day, I made so many friends that I was proud I broke down the wall of fear. If people asked me, "Are you gay?" I just told them the truth like it was no big deal, and it wasn't. There are many people in the world today who are gay, and gay people have been on the earth for years.

I was also proud that I had a chance to encourage others to practice. After the parade, I felt that I had made a big step in the start of my new life. I also learned that if you are determined to chant about something, you will find whatever it is you need to help you with your struggle. Nothing can get in the way of your life if you are determined to fix it. That is what I learned and accomplished with this parade that everyone in the Youth Band and

Fife and Drum Corps Dance Team worked so hard for.

I thank everyone who became my friend and the people behind the scenes who made it possible for us to have fun and enjoy our time in the parade.

In October, I passed the GED. I plan to start college next fall to study business and floral design, and I hope to eventually own my own business. Because of the compassion I feel for the gay community, I am chanting for the happiness of those who have the same struggles that I had.

Mahalo nui loa (thank you very much). ☐



Keoni La Gasa

TOLLIVER, FROM PAGE 10

Long Beach either.

The week of the performance I practiced for three hours a day, trying to get the music right. I started to chant to the Gohonzon like each day was my last one. Two days before we were going to have a run-through, my father was talking to then-General Director George M. Williams, and I walked up to my father to tell him that I needed to get a ride home.

When Mr. Williams asked me why I was in such a hurry to get home, I told him I needed to practice for the Long Beach performance. Before I knew it, Mr. Williams sat me down and told me how he used to be in the Brass Band, and that he played the alto saxophone, and that his favorite song was "Danny Boy." He encouraged me to keep fighting to the last minute.



Harry Tolliver Jr. says the Brass Band is like a family to him.

When I got to Long Beach I ran into George Kataoka and he looked at me and smiled. He then told me that one of the third trumpet players called in sick. I was so happy that I grabbed my horn and ran up to my brother and started to yell: "I'm in! I'm in!"

The Brass Band is more than an activity to me, it's like a fam-

ily. The guys in the Los Angeles Brass Band were like brothers to me. In 15 years I have not missed a performance. I loved the Los Angeles Brass Band and all the leaders back then who kept on me and tried to tell me that I couldn't perform or who would not let me give up when I had problems.

For my second performance I started to play the alto sax. It was my way of saying thank you to Mr. Williams for everything he has done for me and my family. In the band, I've learned a lot about myself, and the training I received has helped my schooling and my athletic career. It has also helped me deal with situations that challenge most people my age.

Now I am in Portland, Ore., where I have a new SGI family, and every time I play my sax I play with appreciation for the Gohonzon and the SGI. ☐

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Joint Executive Conf., SGI of Hong Kong (Feb. 13)	April 4
Jilin University, Hong Kong (Feb. 20)	April 11
Executive Conference, Okinawa (Feb. 23)	April 18
Representative Leaders Conference (Feb. 1)	May 2
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8th HQ Leaders Meeting (Feb. 8)	May 23
WD Executive Conference, Okinawa (Feb. 26)	May 30
Tokyo Chapter Leaders Meeting (Mar. 8)	May 30
10th HQ Leaders Meeting (April 21)	June 13
Shanghai Univ., honorary professorship (May 12)	June 20
9th HQ Leaders Meeting (March 5)	June 27
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WD Leaders Meeting (March 24)	July 11
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Opening of the SGI Spring Training Course (April 19)	Aug. 8
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SGI Executive Conference (April 17)	Aug. 22
Message to U.S.-Japan exchange (Aug. 17)	Aug. 29
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12th HQ Leaders Meeting (June 16)	Sept. 19
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14th HQ Leaders Meeting (Aug. 27)	Oct. 24
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Photo by CAROL BARNSTEAD



Children cultivate the Gandhi Garden across from the New York Culture Center, spring 1997.

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Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

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High school, 1st place ..... Dec. 5  
Nancy Lin, Tampa, FL: High school, 2nd place ..... Dec. 5  
Jennifer Kubota, Ft. Lauderdale, FL:  
Elementary, 1st place ..... Dec. 5  
Erica Badial, Vacaville, CA: Elementary, 2nd place ..... Dec. 5  
Jennifer Numagami, Pottstown, PA:  
Elementary, 3rd place ..... Dec. 5  
Cora Christensen, La Vista, NB: College, 1st place ..... Dec. 12  
E-Chern Mark, Monterey Park, CA:  
College, 2nd place ..... Dec. 12  
Michael Day, Alamogordo, NM: College, 3rd place ..... Dec. 12  
Brittane D. Lewis, Houston:  
Junior high school, 1st place ..... Dec. 12  
Nicole Chu, Culver City, CA:  
Junior high school, 2nd place ..... Dec. 12  
Chandary Hy, Aurora, CO:  
Junior high school, 3rd place ..... Dec. 12

# Making Differences Matter

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Anthony Robinson offers his thoughts during a diversity awareness workshop for bank employees in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. American companies are spending a greater share of their training dollars on diversity training, a trend that's expected to continue as the American work force diversifies. By the year 2025, demographers predict, 40 percent of the potential employment pool in the United States will be Hispanic, African American and Asian American, as compared to 24 percent today.

By DORIS McCLOSKEY  
CHICAGO CORRESPONDENT

In recent years, there has been a focus on diversity and its value in the workplace. If so many of us agree that diversity is valuable, why have so many diversity efforts not fulfilled their promise?

Robin J. Ely, associate professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and David A. Thomas, associate professor at the Harvard Business School, are asking the same question. Their research is changing the way business will be done in the 21st century.

If we are to benefit from diversity, their research suggests, we must examine ourselves. "We must abandon an underlying and flawed assumption about diversity and replace it with a broader understanding," they write in a report published in the *Harvard Business Review* last year.

They found that most people look at diversity in one of two ways: the discrimination and fairness paradigm

or the access and legitimacy paradigm. The researchers found that when people simply think it's the "just" thing to diversify their organization, they often expect women and people of color to be so homogenous that their gender or ethnicity blends in. The second approach sees diversity as access to markets and usually results in women and people of color being assigned to work with "their type." Both approaches continue to create problems.

Ely and Thomas found a new perspective emerging among companies benefiting from diversity — a perspective that values individuals because of their different experiences. "Diversity should be understood as the varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring," they write. When valued and listened to, individuals bring knowledge and experience about how to actually do the work: how to design the process, how to reach the goal, how to create effective teams, communicate ideas and lead. This in turn helps companies grow and im-

prove. The researchers call this new approach the learning and effectiveness paradigm.

"Diversity is a tough issue because you are forced to work on relationships, your own with other people," Dr. Ely said in an interview. It's humanizing, unlike other work-related problems. She explained that her interest in diversity developed out of a consciousness-raising group on women's issues when she was only 15. "As you are exposed to the oppression experienced by others, it broadens your experience and you begin to see the connections between people," she said.

Companies that are benefiting from diversity are taking on the time-consuming job of truly understanding another culture and how it affects a person's actions and communication. They are encouraging open discussion. "They actively work against forms of dominance and subordination that inhibit full contribution," the researchers report. And they make greater efforts to build trust.

A shift toward this paradigm requires a high-level commitment to changing oneself.

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