

World Tribune

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THE YEAR OF VICTORY OF THE PEOPLE FOR THE NEW CENTURY

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Hamburgers are truly an American food. Here Diane Hill of Waverly, Neb., offers up a whopper at a tailgate party.

Want Fries With That?

In this essay,

Lisa Jones explores the 'meat question' — meat-eating vs. vegetarianism — suggesting that from a Buddhist perspective our dietary habits warrant reexamination and new dialogue.

By LISA JONES
STAFF WRITER

Buddhists are often assumed to be vegetarians. In America today, however, many Buddhists aren't. While some abstain from meat-eating out of compassion for all living beings, others feel that eating meat is part of ordinary life and, therefore, part of practicing Buddhism amid the realities of society. So what exactly is the Buddhist view of vegetarianism?

The Theravada and Mahayana precepts, or rules of discipline, include the directive not to kill, which presumably prohibits the killing of animals as well as humans. The precepts also say, however, not to sell liquor and not to sleep on an elevated or broad bed. So how realistic is it to adhere to these precepts today?

Nichiren Daishonin believed that to observe precepts in modern times would be of no benefit. He therefore defined the sole precept (known as the diamond precept) for the Latter Day of the Law as embracing the Gohonzon. Buddhism teaches that by embracing the Gohonzon one receives all the benefit of observing all other precepts.

But that's not to say that killing is OK.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda explains this in his dialogue with Josef Derbolav, published as *Search for a New Humanity*:

Considering himself generally superior because of the particular mental superiority he undeniably has, Western man has tended to look down on other living creatures, whom he believes exist for him to exploit. He, therefore, has felt justified in killing them as he wishes....

The Buddhist view is entirely different. Buddhism puts great value in life itself, no matter what its manifestation. Each creature wishes to preserve its own life, and Buddhist thought regards it as wrong to take that life. The sin of killing is intensified when the victim is aware of the dignity of life and wishes to use its own life in a valuable and creative way.

President Ikeda further says:

Although sin is committed when human beings take the lives of other creatures for food, efforts to preserve one's own life are considered good. And the good is all the greater if the life preserved is used for the sake of the happiness of other people. Such taking of life must, however, always be for the sake of main-

PLEASE SEE VEGETARIANISM, 4

SGI PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

March 16 — The Eternal Flow of Peace

To my dear SGI youth division members of the world:

Forty years ago, on this day, the youth division made a solemn pledge under our great mentor, President Toda, to be the successors to the task of kosen-rufu, the spread of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

To fulfill that pledge, I have always been at the forefront, advancing resolutely along the path of mentor and disciple. Sowing the seeds of the Mystic Law throughout the world, I have paved the way toward kosen-rufu.

And now you — the leaders of the 21st century to whom I must entrust the baton of kosen-rufu, which I received and have been running with — are starting to emerge in succession the world over. In your respective countries, through creating the humanistic solidarity of youthful souls, you are demonstrating the splendid actual proof of victory in your community and society. Nothing could bring me more joy and reassurance than this.

The Daishonin states: "If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 4, p. 272). Kosen-rufu is a long struggle; it is the eternal flow of peace.

I ask that each of you, the young leaders of the new century, please realize that now is the time to develop yourself. So please journey boldly along your chosen course of magnificent humanism, surmounting all billows and swells so that you may estab-

PLEASE SEE MESSAGE, 10



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 devotion. 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, Shakyamuni 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.

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Our Children, Our Future

EDITORIAL

The SGI-USA's exhibition on children's rights recently opened in Oklahoma City. Now halfway through a 15-city, two-year tour, the exhibition has been seen by more than 10,000 people.

Great. But how does that help children? After all, look at these statistics:

- In the past decade, some 2 million children have been killed, 4-5 million disabled, 1 million orphaned and 12 million left homeless by war.
In many countries, children are routinely sold into servitude — for example, children as young as 6 work as maids in Bangladesh.
More than 2 million girls between ages 4 and 12 undergo genital mutilation every year.

Staggering, isn't it? But if you hadn't read these statistics, would you be as moved at this moment to take a stand for children? That's the purpose of the SGI-USA's exhibit — to inform and to motivate.

After all, children are our future. And what we teach our children today is the kind of future we can expect.

The key is education. Not just the kind that students get at school but the learning process that goes on every day, all day. Children are constantly learning from everything around them. And we are their teachers. What our children learn is our responsibility. Each of us. Whether we are parents or not. Whether we are directly involved with children or not.

In SGI President Ikeda's novel The New Human Revolution, during the ravages of World War II, when the Japanese government literally conscripted children into working for the military, Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda said: "If [children] continue to be tainted with xenophobia and come to regard fighting and dying for their country as the highest virtue, then their whole lives will be ruined. The country's future will also be extremely bleak" (vol. 1, p. 211).

Abuse the education of our children, and the future is hopeless. One leads to the other. It's that simple. And it's frightening when we realize that the conscription of children continues today in many war-torn countries around the world.

The world situation may seem overwhelming,

but you can start with your part of it. Embrace the children around you. Support their right to be children: to be sheltered and cared for, to be properly fed, to be educated, to play. And never to be exploited in any way.

Even in our everyday dealings with children we can have great effect. Speaking to members in Thailand, SGI President Ikeda said:

It is important to respect each child as an individual, as a person in his or her own right. We must never treat children casually or patronizingly just because of their young age, thinking "they wouldn't understand" or "this will be good enough for them."

Within each child exists a fine adult. It is important that we speak to that adult. This will lead to the development of the child's character. At the same time, those who interact with children in an adult manner will themselves grow and develop as people... Children have far keener perception than most adults imagine.

We are today witnessing a worldwide groundswell of effort, of emotion, of commitment and conviction for children's rights:

- Oct. 25, 1996 — Thousands of Colombian schoolchildren march in Bogota as part of a national referendum on children's rights.
July 6, 1997 — Mexican children vote for their rights alongside adults in a federal election.
Jan. 17, 1998 — Three parallel Marches Against Child Labor begin and will eventually wind through Asia, Africa, Latin America, North America and Europe.

In addition, the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child — a document that declares children have the right to life and the right to be heard, that children's rights are human rights — broke all records as the most widely ratified human rights agreement in history (all but two countries, Somalia and the United States, have ratified it to date).

Efforts like these and the SGI-USA's exhibition are significant, but only as far as we learn for ourselves the crucial importance of children's rights, what this issue means in our lives, and what action we can take.

Would you like to do more reading about children's rights? Check these Web sites:

- UNICEF (http://www.unicef.org)
Children's Health Environmental Coalition (http://www.pagejunc.com/chec)
Our Children | FrontLines (http://www.pta.org/prevadv/oc/OCMayJun/regula/frontln4.htm)
Child Rights Information Network (http://www.crin.ch/)
Children's Rights Links (http://134.84.205.236/chillink.htm)

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WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Chant for Nikken?

I want to say thanks for your article in the Feb. 6 *World Tribune* titled "Should We Chant for Nikken's Happiness?" I agree wholeheartedly with your points about the inseparability of prayer and action in our work for kosen-rufu. On many occasions, I have been frustrated with members and leaders who suggested that all I needed to do was "just chant" when faced with a particularly painful problem or injustice. Therefore, I welcome your article's emphasis on recognizing evil and taking action against it and will keep this important guidance in mind as I continue my practice.

In my view, however, your article is missing a significant point. While it is so important to understand the importance of taking action to remove this serious threat to the advancement of kosen-rufu, I believe that your article should have begun with a resounding "YES!" to the question "Should we chant for Nikken's happiness?"

Daimoku remains our strongest, surest weapon in our efforts to defeat evil, to create happiness for ourselves and others and to advance the cause of world peace. Nikken may be many things, including an enemy of kosen-rufu,.... but I also believe that he must be a fundamentally unhappy person,.... even if he is not consciously aware of being that unhappy....

Your article didn't say "Don't chant for Nikken's happiness, just take action against him." But I think that by not saying clearly that "Yes, chanting for his happiness is an important, though incomplete, means to stand up to the priesthood and advance kosen-rufu," you might inadvertently discourage people from using the powerful sword that is daimoku against Nikken and his evil actions.

—AMY LUSK, Chicago

The question submitted for the "Questions and Answers" column concerning the advisability of chanting for Nikken's happiness was excellent, one that had been on my mind for months. But the response missed the mark.

In the first place, Greg Martin and Richard Yoshimachi, who wrote the response, didn't seem to be replying to the question as printed. The questioner asked, simply, "Should we chant for Nikken's happiness?" Instead, the columnists seemed to be responding to a question more like "Should we chant for Nikken's happiness in lieu of taking any other actions to combat his slander?" They implied throughout that chanting for the happiness of someone who is causing us problems naturally precludes taking concrete actions to correct the situation....

As to the original question, in my opinion, yes, we should definitely be chanting for Nikken's happiness. Not only is it the compassionate thing to do but it is a logical measure as well. For how can Nikken ever truly be happy in this lifetime until he recants his slander...? Therefore, for Nikken to be happy implies the battle has been won. And what better ally could we possibly have in that battle than a reformed Nikken himself? We must never doubt that his own human revolution is possible.

Finally we must separate the evil from the evildoer in our minds. I agree with the columnists: "Refuting Nikken's teaching and calling for his resignation are the ultimate in compassionate behavior...." As for Nikken himself, to paraphrase the Ghost of Hamlet, "Leave him to his karma."

—KEVIN GARVEY, Glendale, Calif.

Editor's note: Yes, chanting for Nikken's happiness is in the spirit of Buddhism. What should underlie such a prayer, however, is true compassion that manifests itself as righteous anger toward his behavior, that functions to destroy the Law and the happiness of humanity. Simply hating Nikken or holding a grudge does not solve the problem. The Study Department will be revisiting this question in a future issue.

The March Continues

PERSPECTIVE

This is National Women's History Month — a reminder that the history of the struggle for women's rights is the history of human rights.

By ANNE PERUSEK
CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO

In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha stated, "From the start, I pledged to make all people equal to me." At the time, such an inclusive remark was beyond the grasp of most people. In the final years of the 20th century, Shakyamuni's words are considerably less revolutionary but still praiseworthy. Equality is difficult to grasp, as history and current events indicate.

I am writing about this because it is March — National Women's History Month. In addition, March 8 was International Women's Day. On March 8, 1857, hundreds of women workers in New York's sweatshops staged a strike against low wages, long working hours and inhumane working conditions. In 1977, the U.N. General Assembly voted to observe International Women's Day, citing two reasons: "to recognize the fact that securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms requires the active participation, equality and development of women; and to acknowledge the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security."

It's significant that the United Nations recognizes that women must have full equality and participation in society to establish a peaceful, stable world. At the U.N.-sponsored international conference of women, held in Beijing in 1995, women's rights were declared to be human rights. Shakyamuni said much the

same thing thousands of years ago, in the 12th chapter of the Lotus Sutra. The story of the dragon girl's enlightenment takes place in this chapter and is really a declaration of gender equality. In this story, the Buddha's disciples, all men, did not believe that the dragon king's daughter could reach enlightenment. After all, if she could reach Buddhahood without first becoming a man, it meant that she and all other women were their equals, which seemed incomprehensible to them.

The July 1997 *Living Buddhism* discusses the story of the dragon girl in detail, and SGI President Ikeda addresses the resistance to equality as it has played out in the history of Buddhism. "When explanations are tailored to the biases of society," he said, "there is a danger that even people of sincere faith will become attached to those biases, leading to a distorted interpretation of the teaching. The effect often is that when a distorted teaching gets handed down it does nothing but exacerbate and harden the discriminatory attitudes of society. If we were to trace the historical view of women in Buddhism, we would probably find many such instances."

More than 700 years ago, in medieval Japan, Nichiren Daishonin addressed gender equality. He wrote many personal and doctrinal letters to women, such as "The Sutra of True Requit," given to Sennichi-ama. In it, he stated: "[A]mong all the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime, the Lotus Sutra stands in first place, and that among the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, that of women attaining Buddhahood is foremost" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 250).

Another letter describes the obstacles facing women. In "Reply to Myoho Bikuni Gozen," the Daishonin encourages her through the story of the first Buddhist nun, Mahaprajapati, who gave up her status as a royal consort to seek enlightenment. Through the Lotus Sutra, Mahaprajapati does become enlightened and is named Buddha Beheld With Joy by All Sentient Beings.

This year, 1998, marks the 150th anniversary of the Seneca Falls Convention, where progressive women and men demanded that women have social

and political equality. This included the right to be educated, to own property, to have financial independence, health care and child custody, to file for divorce and, most shocking of all, the right to vote. You might say that the Seneca Falls Convention demanded that women have the right to have a life. At the time, nearly all newspapers around the country condemned the convention. Opponents picketed and attempted to prevent participants from entering. If some of their demands sound familiar, it is because they are still in contention today.

In studying this history of the women's rights movement, I've discovered that the movement was composed of all types of people, not just white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. It took 75 years and enormous effort for women to win the right to vote. In this country, at least, it was a bloodless revolution. This is something to take pride in. There isn't space to tell the individual stories of dedication and sacrifice, but they are there. It's important to be aware of this: In thinking about where we want to go in the future, we have to know where we came from and appreciate those who helped us gain many of the rights we now take for granted.

As SGI President Ikeda said: "The human rights declaration [The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, 1789] is well-known. Yet it defines *people* to mean men. A woman named Olympe de Gouges (1748-93) criticized this document and in 1791 announced a 'Declaration of the Rights of Women and Female Citizens.' However, she was branded an anti-revolutionary and sent to the guillotine.... The fundamental point of the declaration of women's rights arising from the Lotus Sutra is that each person has the innate potential and right to realize a state of life of the greatest happiness. Our realizing such happiness will ensure that this noble history of sacrifice and struggle has not been in vain. The goal is for each person, like the dragon girl, to set out on a voyage to attain absolute happiness, while helping those adrift on the sea of suffering do the same without anyone being victimized." WU

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MEAT



Some nutritional studies suggest vegetarian-related health risks are due to possible deficiencies of certain essential vitamins and minerals — including iron, zinc and vitamin B-12 — that are found in substantial amounts, and in more biologically available form, in beef and other meats.



Some nutritionists say that even if a properly balanced vegetarian diet could meet nutritional needs, such a diet would be difficult to formulate.



Meat has been an important part of the human diet for thousands of years, many people argue. (If it ain't broke, don't fix it.)



Human beings are omnivores, many people claim. That's why we have canine teeth as well as molars. We are designed to eat meat.



"Findings would seem to argue for eating a nutritionally adequate diet in moderation rather than striving to completely avoid animal fat," according to the American Medical Association's *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

VS.

VEGGIES



A Loma Linda University study concluded that vegetarians live on the average 7.9 years longer than meat-eaters.



U.S. government reports claim that 75 percent of all carcinogens and toxins come into the human body through the consumption of animal products, while only 16 percent enter via plant products.



Vegetarians claim that the chemical composition of human teeth is the same as a cow's — completely different than that of, say, cat or tiger teeth.



The intestines of carnivorous animals are short and smooth; human intestines are five to seven times longer than a carnivore's and are filled with little pockets.



For all the alleged deficiencies of the vegetarian diet, there are thousands of healthy vegetarians living active lives. Meanwhile, the No. 1 killer in America is heart disease, which study after study has linked to the cholesterol and saturated fat from diets rich in animal products.

VEGETARIANISM, FROM PAGE 1

taining or improving the quality of life. Killing for pleasure is unjustifiable. Furthermore, killing for self-sustenance, too, is sinful if one's own life is not put to use in a valuable way.

As President Ikeda explains, Buddhism takes a balanced view: Killing animals for food is neither strictly wrong nor invariably right. As Mr. Ikeda says, "Taking of life must...always be for the sake of maintaining or improving the quality of life." So the crucial question is: Does meat-eating maintain or improve the quality of life?

With regard to nutrition, meat is healthful and harmful to eat — depending on whom you ask. Meat-eaters and vegetarians alike can quote government reports and scientific studies that support their conflicting views. Is meat-eating good or bad for the environment? That question, too, is hotly debated. (Please see box this page.)

Considering the Buddhist belief that each human being has a unique mission to fulfill in life, it's conceivable that we each have unique dietary needs. Maybe there are some people who require a strictly vegetarian diet for optimum health, and maybe there are some who re-

quire meat. It's likely, too, that our dietary needs will change throughout our lives. Individual choice, then, is an important component of healthy eating.

In Buddhism, individual choice and personal responsibility go hand in hand. Yet many of us don't give much thought to where our food comes from or how our food choices may impact our ecosystem. Our sense of responsibility to ourselves and our interconnectedness with other living beings prompt us to examine our eating habits and expectations.

Why, for example, is it OK to eat a chicken, but not a house cat? Is it because a cat seems more familiar to us and more human-like than a chicken? Or, if it's natural for animals to kill and eat one another, is it natural for human beings — as "sophisticated animals" — to kill and eat one another?

Consider this passage from the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, which describes conditions in Japan in 1278: "The country of Japan has been visited by continuous famine for the last several years, and supplies of food and clothing are exhausted. The domestic animals have all been consumed, and persons who eat human flesh are appearing. They tear flesh from the bodies of the dead, children and the sick, mix

it with fish or deer meat, and sell it. People purchase this mixture and eat it. Thus, this country has unwittingly become an abode of wicked demons" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 139).

In this age of mass-produced and processed food, when we buy meat products, can we be absolutely certain what they contain and where they've been?

Regardless of whether you've suddenly decided to swear off sushi or you just got a craving for venison, the "meat question" warrants examination and dialogue.

And by the way, Buddhism posits that plants can attain enlightenment. Something to consider when making a salad.

Lisa Jones is a vegetarian — usually — because she thinks that meat is icky. She tries to let her intuition guide her dietary choices. She has a vague hope that one day her life-condition will be so high that she'll subsist solely on café latte and lemon rind. You can e-mail her at ljones@sgi-usa.org.

If you're interested in contributing an essay, please call us at (310) 451-8811 or e-mail the 'World Tribune' at SokaNews@aol.com.

Meat and Sustainability

■ By some estimates, 70 percent of America's grain is fed to farm animals. It takes almost 7 pounds of grain and soy to produce 1 pound of pork; the same amount of grain could feed five times as many people if they were to eat it directly instead of eating the animals.

■ According to some calculations, to produce just 1 pound of grain-fed meat requires from 300 to 500 gallons of water. U.S. poultry operations use 96.5 billion gallons of water annually.

■ Supplying one person with meat, milk and eggs each day requires 100 gallons of water per day, some analysts say.

■ It takes only 4.5 pounds of grain (compared to 16 pounds, as claimed by some vegetarian activists) to produce a pound of beef, industry spokespeople say. Further, 83 percent of cattle feed is not edible for humans.

■ Meat producers say that they've steadily increased the efficiency of their operations. A 3.5- to 4.5-pound chicken can now be produced in six to seven weeks, in sharp contrast to 16 weeks in 1935. Feed conversion is now less than 2 pounds of feed per pound of live chicken compared to more than 4 pounds of feed per pound of live chicken in the 1930s.

■ Increased efficiency has had a destructive impact, some argue. Over the last 50 years there has been a trend toward replacing traditional family farms with corporate-owned or contracted factorylike animal production systems. "Factory farms" confine huge numbers of animals in spaces designed for maximum productivity rather than for the animals' health and well-being.

■ Critics say that concentrating so many animals together breaks the ecological cycle and causes suffering and disease. Further, animal waste is transformed from valuable soil nutrients into hazardous waste, because there are simply too many animals for the surrounding land to accommodate.

■ Meat-producers maintain that inhumane practices are not only morally wrong, they're not economically sound. It's in the producers' own best interest to take proper care of their animals. Therefore, most producers are sensitive to the welfare of their livestock.

■ There are "natural" meat producers, who take great care to ensure the health and well-being of the animals they raise. The meat from these farms is often more expensive for the consumer, but many people feel that it's worth the price.



Our dietary needs will change throughout our lives. Choice, then, is an important component of healthy eating.

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Feeling Overwhelmed?

By CRAIG GREEN

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

The true path of life lies in the affairs of this world. ("The Gift of Rice," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 268)

Over the last three months, I have felt at the mercy of my surroundings. I have felt completely overwhelmed by everything. Work, activities, relationships, exercise (or lack of), finances, traffic and about anything else that I have come in contact with. It was so bad that even on the morning of my recent birthday, I was racked with anxiety.

I found myself questioning my actions, second-guessing my judgment and doubting my practice. Nothing that I had tried to accomplish seemed to be happening, nothing that I had chanted to resolve had been resolved.

The above passage is part of a letter responding to a believer who provided Nichiren Daishonin with various gifts. Items that the Daishonin needed for his survival. It is a simple letter, but one that touches on something important: The path to happiness lies in the affairs of this world; in other words, in daily life.

To have a victory in life, one must win in the midst of one's environment and despite one's weaknesses. And for me, that's where the real battle begins.

There is no one in history who has accomplished something great without going through tremendous personal struggles. There is no one who has made a change in the world without having to wage an all-consuming battle. You can't win if you don't fight.

The Daishonin was continually conspired against, his living conditions were often extreme, and those who supported him were often harassed. Yet he continued to encourage others and to speak out, even at the risk of his life.

My struggles, though they pale in comparison to those of the Daishonin, are the struggles that I need to go through now to win. No matter how overwhelming they may seem, no matter how much I want to run away and hide, if I want to win, I have to face what's in front of me. That I can't deny. W

WHAT A CONCEPT

ON THE BASIC IDEAS
OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM

By LISA JONES

STAFF WRITER

Buddhism teaches that the universe itself is compassion. In this sense, compassion goes beyond mere ethics or virtues; it predates social institutions and surpasses human emotion. Compassion is like a great field in which the flowers of wisdom grow. In light of the Lotus Sutra, wisdom generates compassion and vice versa.

SGI President Ikeda explains: "The universe gives life to all things, causing them to come into being, to change, and to repeatedly undergo the cycle of birth and death.... This universe is itself the entity of the Buddha." When we live our Buddhahood, we naturally express compassion. Some of us are like irrigation ditches, so to speak, or roaring rivers or parched stream beds, depending on how much we tap into and express compassion.

Strictly speaking, Nam-myoho-renge-

kyo is the crystallization of compassion, and chanting it to the Gohonzon is compassion's ultimate expression. Nichiren Daishonin writes, "If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity, for it has the beneficial power to open the blind eyes of every living being in the country of Japan, and it blocks off the road that leads to the hell of incessant suffering" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 4, p. 272).

On a practical level, compassion is concern for those who, in light of the karmic law of life, are acting now in ways that will contribute to their being weak or unhappy in the future. For example, the Daishonin urged his followers to speak out against authoritarianism, even though he knew that by doing so they would become targets of repressive violence.

Gandhi, too, urged his followers to stand firm even when attacked by soldiers. It may seem perverse that the Daishonin and Gandhi led their followers into harm's way. But both men understood that engaged resistance was the only way to eradicate greater future suffering and change the people's destiny.

In Japanese, the word for *compassion* is *jishi*. *Ji* means affection; it connotes true friendship and pure parental love. *Hi*

means to grieve; it connotes mercy, affection and grieving for others' suffering. In Buddhism, *jishi* means simply to take away suffering and give joy.

In terms of emotion, compassion is similar to unconditional love. But it is impartial and strictly accords with cause and effect, while love can be partisan and blind to causality. Compassion is primal and neutral. It's like temperature: It can be increased or decreased, but there's nothing objectively good, bad, right or wrong about it. When based on good-natured emotion rather than the Mystic Law, compassion can misguide people toward suffering instead of joy — in this case, it's referred to as the devil of mercy or shallow compassion.

Buddhists don't have a monopoly on compassion; all people can develop their capacity to express it by making a conscious effort to do so — and chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is arguably the most direct way. The first step, though, is to realize that no matter how compassionate we may think we are, we can and must manifest more compassion toward ourselves and others. The Daishonin exemplifies this spirit: "The individual sufferings of all people are ultimately my own" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 758).

Six in a series

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON FAITH

In This Lifetime vs. As We Are

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT LEADER

Q What is the difference between "attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime" and "attaining Buddhahood as we are"? How are these concepts related to each other?

A Both concepts stem from the Lotus Sutra and talk essentially about the same thing. But if we are to pinpoint one difference, attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime involves length of practice, while attaining Buddhahood as we are refers to the manner in which we reach enlightenment.

In the provisional teachings, lifetime after lifetime of austere practice was deemed necessary for bodhisattvas to attain Buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra offers a big contrast to this by elucidating the attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime.

Shakyamuni Buddha teaches here that because of the enormous beneficial power of the Law one can achieve enlightenment — in this lifetime — through believing it, practicing it and studying it.

Similarly, Nichiren Daishonin asserts that "all the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, if they practice Buddhism exactly as expounded by the Buddha, can attain Buddhahood in this lifetime without a single exception" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 416). "Practice Buddhism exactly" can be construed to mean to have faith in the Gohonzon and devote ourselves to practice for ourselves and others exactly as taught by the Daishonin.

Attaining Buddhahood as we are means we can reach enlightenment without changing our identity as common individuals. The pre-Lotus Sutra teachings regulate that one can attain Buddhahood only by changing his or her current identity into something else. A common person had to first "become a bodhisattva" before he or she could reach Buddhahood. Moreover, 52 stages of bodhisattva practice had to be fulfilled one by one on the way to Buddhahood. Naturally, in the course of such a long, austere practice, one would have to go through an identity transformation. (Also, in the Daishonin's Buddhism, the ten worlds signify 10 different life-conditions, while in the provisional teachings, they are characterized as different

beings, such as hungry spirits, animals, *asuras*, human beings, heavenly beings, voice-hearers, *pratyekabuddhas*, bodhisattvas and Buddhas.)

In the provisional teachings, therefore, one cannot attain Buddhahood as long as his or her identity is that of a common individual. But the Lotus Sutra expounds attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime; we *are* bodhisattvas and we *can* attain Buddhahood while still being common people.

Both these concepts show the great beneficial power of the Gohonzon in enabling us to attain Buddhahood as we are in this lifetime. And the key to attaining this lies in our sincere faith in and assiduous practice to the Gohonzon. Citing the Gosho passage "If you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but some inferior teaching" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 3), SGI President Ikeda says that "nothing is stronger than a powerful determination coupled with faith and practice. The Daishonin is telling us that the determination with which we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo reaches out to the entire universe and makes all things possible." W

JACQUELINE LEE, LONG BEACH, CALIF.

Chanting for My Mum

Jacqueline Lee transformed her troubled relationship with her mother — stricken with terminal cancer — to discover that even at the time of death, one can feel great joy.

I remember being very unhappy at home in England; my mother and I were constantly fighting. I couldn't wait to leave. I moved to California 20-odd years ago. I would call my mother once in a while and send her a birthday card. But she was no longer a major part of my life.

Eight years ago, I received a long distance call from my mother that I will always remember. Her voice was shaky and fearful. During a routine medical check-up her doctor had discovered something abnormal in her blood, she said. She had blood cancer, which produces abnormal protein cells that attack the bones and compromise the immune system. Without strong drug treatment, a specialist told her, she would die within a year. My mother begged me to come to England.

By this time I had been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for about 16 years, and I had developed confidence in my ability to encourage people who are struggling. But when I arrived in England, it seemed that no matter what I tried to do, I only made my mother more anxious and upset. All I could do was chant that somehow she would be OK, and somehow she would get the best help for her condition. I went back to California feeling very frustrated.

Soon my mother was referred to a hematologist who turned out to be one of the top specialists in this field in the world. He was truly compassionate and did not try any radical treatment with her; he just kept monitoring her blood count. This was the best treatment for my mother — no treatment.

At the time of her diagnosis, she was in her 70s. I just wanted her to enjoy her life. I didn't want her to go through the terrible pain that I have seen others with cancer go through. A fellow Buddhist enthusiastically encouraged me to send my mother daimoku to make her blood healthy. After this encouragement, I found that I

could easily chant — I really felt my daimoku was reaching my mother's blood. Her doctor would check her blood count every so often. The disease was still there, but it wasn't getting worse.

I started to seriously chant about my mother. I couldn't take her for granted; she wouldn't always be there. My attitude toward her gradually transformed. Instead of feeling guilty about the situation and our relationship, which would have been my usual response, I decided to take action. I started calling my mother more frequently — every week without fail. Our conversations became more intimate.

I had never really opened up to my mother before. While growing up, whatever I did was never good enough. I felt that if she knew my weaknesses she would use them to criticize me and put me down. Now I was slowly showing her my vulnerable side. Sometimes she would criticize me but it wasn't devastating.

We began to build bonds of trust. She would share things with me that I never knew. I saw her not just as my mother but as an amazing person. My respect for her grew, and I felt that she started to respect me, too. I would visit her in England every year and our relationship became very close.

I continued to chant for her to be happy and enjoy her life. I had never sincerely chanted about my mother's happiness like that before. It felt so good to truly care about her and not out of obligation. Even through all her negativity and criticism of me in the past, I realized that she truly cared about me; I was her daughter and all she wanted was my happiness.

The closer we got, the stronger my prayers for her became. I could see her life improve. For example, when she had a problem it would somehow turn around to her favor. She found a part-time job that she loved — which isn't easy when you're 70. And after that

business closed down, she found another job the same day.

After her 75th birthday, she complained of pain in her arm. Tests identified a malignant tumor. I flew to England to be with her while she underwent outpatient radiology treatment. She even agreed to chant with me a little bit each day, which was absolutely amazing, since she had always said that chanting didn't seem to do me any good.

I know that she saw my life change for the better, but she would not admit that Buddhist practice had anything to do with it. All my chanting hadn't helped me meet a husband, my mother would often say. She really wanted to see me married. The fact that she agreed to chant with me showed that she respected what I was doing — she respected me.

Each day, we would chant and then go to the hospital for treatment. She was supposed to have side effects, such as nausea and general weakness, but the complete opposite occurred. She had more energy than before, and we would go out shopping and have a big meal together. She told me it was not because of the chanting, that it was a coincidence. You just don't argue with your mum...well, not my mum anyway. The malignant tumor was soon gone.

One year, instead of visiting her in England, we went away together to the coast of Spain. This was the first time we had traveled together since I was a child. Initially, it was a bit of a disaster, but we had some special times together. We confided in each other about our deepest feelings. We even laughed together to the point of tears rolling down our cheeks. I will never forget that time.

And little did I know that this was where I would meet my future husband. He was on vacation as well. A year later we were married. This made my mother feel more at ease that I was not alone. My husband was such a great sup-



'Death is not the end,' says Jacqueline Lee (left), with her mother, Rosette.

port and comfort during this difficult time.

Last summer I visited England again. My mother was in the hospital. Evidently, the blood cancer was progressing and attacking her bones. Her doctor assured us that after chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment, she would recover. I read Nichiren Daishonin's "Reply to Kyo'o." This is a letter Nichiren Daishonin wrote to Shijo Kingo's young daughter who was very sick, on the verge of death. It reads: "Nam-myohorenge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?" And: "Kyo'o Gozen's misfortunes will change into fortune. Muster your faith...."

The more I would muster my faith and fight with daimoku, it seemed the sicker my mother got. I would leave the hospital intending to chant two or three hours, but I could hardly mouth the words — I was too tired, too discouraged. In the mornings, I would go to the hospital and do gongyo and chant in my mother's hospital room so she could hear the sound. That was the best I could do.

She was in so much pain — I had never seen her this way. Just like Kyo'o Gozen, her misfortune must change to fortune, I told myself. Deep inside, though, I was in despair. My mother was not getting better. The doctors assured me she would improve, but she was deteriorating. She began to lose control over her bodily functions. It was devastating to see my mother — this strong, vibrant, independent woman — in such a condition. Her pain was becoming unbearable for her and me.

I would always call my mother after I left the hospital just to say good night. One night, I called

and she told me how depressed she was. All I could say was, "Oh, Mum, you know, when I get depressed, I chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo and it makes me feel so much better!"

"OK," she said, "let's chant."

We chanted together over the phone. I was surprised. I had never heard her chant that way before — she would always say the words wrong, but this time her pronunciation was perfect and

her voice was strong and clear. That was the last time I would ever speak with my mother.

The next day, she fell into a deep sleep. She passed away peacefully a few days later.

I had been preparing for and dreading this moment since I first found out she had cancer. How would I handle it? Would the grief be overwhelming?

It is hard to explain. Through the fortune of this Buddhist practice and changing my relationship with my mum, I did not feel the deep pain of losing someone so close to me. Instead, I felt a deep sense of calm. As I chanted to the Gohonzon with my mother in my thoughts, I felt only joy. I saw that my prayer for her to triumph over this disease was achieved — but of course not in the way I had expected.

Instead of her death causing a void in my life, I felt that something was replenished. I was revitalized to continue on. I know deep in my heart that she also was revitalized. Death is not the end, and even at the time of death one can experience great joy.

My mother is always with me, and life goes on. ■

Instead of her death causing a void in my life, I felt that something was replenished. I was revitalized to continue on.

The 'Young Eagles' chapter concludes with Shin'ichi Yamamoto looking up at a star-filled sky and determining to 'create a whole galaxy of bright, shining young leaders for the Soka Gakkai's future...'

The New Human Revolution

By HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 5

Young Eagles

Translation of part 32 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.

In July 1966, Shin'ichi Yamamoto formed the Rising Tide Group, consisting mainly of the student division members who had participated in the 2nd class, which heard lectures on "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings." Those lectures continued until April 1967 — five years after the start of the first series in 1962. During those five years, Shin'ichi devoted himself to fostering the student division members.

The second series of lectures was published as *Lectures on "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,"* volume 2, on Oct. 12, 1967.

Shin'ichi gave top priority to these student division lectures despite his incredibly busy schedule during these years, because he believed that fostering the younger generation was the Soka Gakkai's most pressing imperative if it were to realize its grand vision for kosen-rufu.

A mighty river that flows for eternity — kosen-rufu is like this. Just as tens and hundreds of tributaries join to form a great river, a convergence of people of diverse talents is needed to achieve kosen-rufu. And no matter how broad

the river becomes, or how gentle and steady its flow, it must remain clear and fresh, never stopping, never stagnating.

Just as the true spirit of Buddhism had been handed down from Tsunesaburo Makiguchi to Josei Toda — the first and

ing pace day after day, as he was now, giving utterly of his life and energy — he might live.

Shin'ichi officially formed the Rising Tide Group during an outdoor training course for participants of the 2nd class.

This was held in Sengokubara, an area in the resort town Hakone.

Gazing up at the night sky, he said to the young members gathered around: "Look at the starry sky. You can't see the stars during the day, but once the sun goes down, they fill the night with their light. Each of them is a star like our sun. I want to create a whole galaxy of bright, shining young leaders for the Soka Gakkai's future...."

Shin'ichi put every ounce of his being into his student division lectures, driven by his determination to raise successors who would carry on the work of kosen-rufu in the future.

Nearly a century earlier, the great educator and reformer Yoshida Shoin

would flourish.

And he was not mistaken.

The young eagles spread their wings and soared high into the skies of a new era. Aside from a very few who abandoned their faith, the majority grew to play central roles in their chosen fields, to become the shining hope of the Soka Gakkai.

(This concludes the chapter "Young Eagles" and also volume 6 of *The New Human Revolution*.)

'Young Eagles' Chapter Discussion Questions:

1. In part 11 (Nov. 21, 1997, *World Tribune*), how would you respond to Shin'ichi's statements about why Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is meant for the world and could not be made into a national religion?
2. In part 27 (Feb. 20, *World Tribune*), Shin'ichi gave the participants in his lecture series inscribed copies of *The Three-fold Lotus Sutra*. What is his attitude in conducting the lectures? What do you feel are the main points of the lectures?
3. In part 28 (Feb. 27 *World Tribune*), what does Shin'ichi describe as the benefits and purpose of faith?



second Soka Gakkai presidents — and then to Shin'ichi Yamamoto, the movement's future depended entirely upon the cultivation of genuine disciples.

Also, well aware of his weak physical constitution, Shin'ichi wondered how long — working at such a demand-

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 high-

est 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.

A MESSAGE TO THE
SGI-USA WOMEN'S DIVISION

One Steady Step at a Time

Our heartfelt congratulations on your general meeting commemorating the Day of the SGI-USA Women's Division. We also congratulate you for your valiant strides along the straight path to happiness.

In the long course of life's journey, you only win true happiness on your own. Others cannot give you happiness. Rather, it is something you must build within your own hearts.

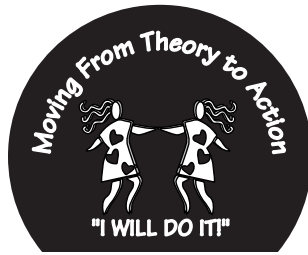
You may encounter stormy as well as snowy days. But with the Mystic Law, you can always gain the fundamental strength to cause the brilliant sun of hope to rise in the vast skies of your own hearts. Invoking the Mystic Law and spreading it afar, all of you, as queens of happiness, will enjoy lives that shine as bright as the sun.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken even a bit, demons will take advantage" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 242). Here he encourages all of you to grow stronger day by day and month after month, with patience and hope, while taking joy and pride in dedicating your lives to your own mission.

Each day, please take one step at a time in your steady efforts. In this way, you can forge an indestructible and undaunted state of happiness.

We ask each SGI-USA women's division member to please be firm in your resolve and move forward gallantly and cheerfully for the sake of your society, community and loved ones. We are praying from the bottom of our hearts for your excellent health and longevity. We wish you all great happiness.

February 1998
Kaneko and Daisaku Ikeda



Women 'I Will



Los Angeles #2 Region women meet at the World Peace Ikeda Auditorium.



Marin County, Calif., women participate in an arts and creativity workshop.



Refueling after their meeting for Skylake Area in Orlando, Fla.

en Vow Do It'

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

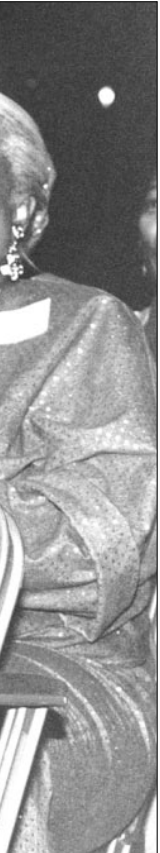


Photo by MAKOTO FUJII



Photo by PETER NELLHAUS

Women who have campaigned for human rights were part of the theme for this Denver area meeting.

Voices



Ginny Waters, Kansas City, Mo.

As the women's division meeting approached, I grew excited about making causes and refreshing my faith. The meeting was successful, yet that same afternoon, I faced one of my biggest challenges — a family reunion with my father, whom we had not seen in years. Secretly, I wanted to be alone. What should have been a joyful event turned into a badly planned, chaotic scene. The lower worlds reared their ugly heads! I found myself full of complaint.

Oh, no — was I an armchair Buddhist who only gave lip service to guidance? I hoped not. I had to set the example. I remembered reading guidance about how holding grudges only makes us suffer and, if we are going to move our lives forward, it is more enjoyable if we do so with pride and confidence. How could I turn theory into practice — by chanting for wisdom or by trying to "fix" my environment (i.e., my family)? I had to raise my life-condition first.

I told my father that we needed to look for the positive and praise and empathize with each family member. My changed attitude made me a better person to be around, too — less judgmental. Before my father left the family get-together, he commented on my efforts to improve myself.



Kathleen Ross, Columbia, Mo.

Taking full responsibility for our happiness and for all people's happiness implies the ability to respond. This means taking action in life, realizing our profound mission in thought, word and deed — our wonderful, creative adventure as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. We leap forth joyfully, prepared to fulfill the Buddha's intention to make all people equal to himself. Buddhism is about living a joyful existence as a human being every day. Our mission is to realize this joy in living while enabling everyone around us to establish a joyful life-condition, too.

Closing the gap means grasping the enormous potential of a common mortal to live powerfully, without fear, to contribute to others no matter what our circumstances, to transform our difficulties into value, to never give up and to feel faith coursing through our lives. Whenever we face the Gohonzon and chant like an arrow aimed at a target, we close the gap. Whenever we make one more effort to communicate with someone who causes us trouble, whenever we share SGI President Ikeda's guidance with one suffering person, whenever we teach another person how to chant, we are closing the gap between our deluded lesser selves and the vast life-condition of Buddhahood that is our birthright.



Yumi Shadley, Kansas City, Mo.

We have been taught that if we practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism correctly, we can overcome obstacles and accomplish any dream. As members, we have experienced this phenomenon and this is why we continue to practice. From my experience, I know that my actions affect myself, others and the movement for world peace. For me, the time for action and to take responsibility for my life and others is now. Moving from theory into action means taking responsibility for our own happiness, the happiness of other people, supporting members' dreams, nurturing youth and strengthening our families. The motto "I will do it" means that I will be the one to make it happen.

Today, for me to actualize the motto "I will do it" means that I will make every effort to ensure that the women's division is the first to fight on the side of the SGI-USA by following the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

How To Build Friendships

Home visits are the key to creating an organization of true friends.

By FRED M. ZAITSU
SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR

Over the last several months I've had the good fortune to visit many members in their homes. Home visits and person-to-person dialogue have always been cornerstones of our organization. As our schedules become increasingly hectic, though, many of us may have difficulty finding time to visit with members.

PRIME POINTS



By Fred M. Zaitso
SGI-USA
General Director

It has been said that a vibrant organization emphasizes visiting, while a religious institution holds meetings. In the case of an institution, the expectation is that people will seek it out and show up to worship at prescribed times and in prescribed ways. A vibrant organization, on the other hand — such as the SGI-USA — is inclusive, reciprocal and takes the initiative to build friendships with all people in the community.

When the SGI-USA holds large meetings, we pray that participants will refresh their determination to fulfill their dreams and that guests will be inspired to practice Buddhism. Once the meeting ends, though, the real work of kosen-rufu begins. Kosen-rufu is person to person, heart to heart. It doesn't happen just in auditoriums; it happens in living rooms and coffee shops, on bus benches and

subways — everywhere that people share the experience of simply being human.

It could be said that it's more significant to be in a person's life than in his or her living room. So I recommend flexibility regarding the term "home visit." It's important to be sensitive to members' circumstances — sometimes a home visit is not possible. So we must apply our creativity and sincere prayers to discover an opportunity for face-to-face dialogue — if only for a few minutes — at an appropriate time and place.

Also, talking with members one on one at the community center is no substitute for home visits. I find that I get a new perspective of — and develop deeper compassion for — a member when I'm in his or her home.

That being said, I'd like to offer a few points to keep in mind regarding home visits.

Encouragement is our purpose. Cherishing and caring for each person is the basic spirit of home visits. Such visits provide an opportunity to deepen our understanding of others and to talk in a relaxed, informal setting. There is no prescribed way to visit. Some people feel most comfortable chanting together first, then talking. Again, flexibility is important. I recommend an attitude of appreciation for the time that others spend with us, as well as an expectation that, with patience and prayer, our bonds with others will grow gradually deeper. As a result of our visit, the person should feel encouraged, which is our ultimate aim. Any other results, in-

cluding subscriptions to our publications, should result naturally when appropriate.

Home visits are more important than administrative meetings. Some members may feel swamped by planning meetings and administrative duties within the organization, and may have difficulty prioritizing their schedules. I don't suggest that we set numerical goals for ourselves such as "three visits per week." I do, however, suggest that we all expand our visits-to-meetings ratio. When your schedule of SGI-USA activities is 50 percent visits and 50 percent other meetings, I think that's a very vibrant schedule.

Be polite. I hope it goes without saying that we should always be respectful of others' homes and lives. Please use good etiquette: Don't snoop; be considerate of the person's family situation and time constraints; don't eat all their food; don't overstay your welcome. And even if a discussion becomes intense or emotional, always remain courteous.

Challenge your hesitation. Sometimes, the prospect of visiting is intimidating — visits require us to be open and vulnerable in a way. If you're visiting a member whom you don't know very well, you may also want to invite that member's district leader or other friend. Sometimes, dialogue flows more freely among three or four people during an initial visit. Often, people are waiting for someone else to take the initiative. So I suggest one motto for home visits: "Go." This isn't a command; it's a word of encouragement, invitation and reassurance.

Home visits are wonderful. I can't say that I remember many meetings from 10 years ago, but I vividly recall home visits from 20 years ago and more. Bonds are formed and many wonderful memories are made when we reach out to connect with others. So...go!

my utmost support. I am also praying from the bottom of my heart for all of you to live each day in excellent health and advance valiantly toward kosen-rufu.

May there be glory upon the youth division of the world! Long live the youth division of the world!

March 16
SGI President Ikeda

FOR WOMEN

A Matter of Determination, Not Time



By SYBIL SEPASSI
SAN DIEGO REGION WD LEADER

Encouraged to 'bring a friend,' Sybil Sepassi finds that sincere prayer opens the door to sharing the joys of Buddhism.

One of the goals of our women's division commemorative meetings this year was for everyone to bring a friend. This idea struck a chord in me: I realized that what was missing in my practice was actively sharing this Buddhism with others.

But working full time, raising two teenagers and participating in SGI-USA activities already seemed to completely fill my schedule. I wasn't sure how I could also squeeze propagation into my schedule.

I opened the Gosho in search of some direction or encouragement. I was inspired by a passage I read in "Reply to Shiji Shiro": "You can now expound to others even a phrase or sentence of the Lotus Sutra because of your close relationship to it in some past existence. You must realize this" [Citation?].

Instead of complaining about my lack of time to propagate Buddhism, I decided to chant to meet someone who was suffering and with whom I could share this great practice. Within a few days, a co-worker asked if we could take a walk on our lunch break. I had always wanted to get to know her and gladly agreed. As we walked around our building, she began to talk about a disturbing problem she was having with her supervisor.

I told her that whenever I have a difficult relationship with someone, I chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo for that person's happiness. One's

life-condition surely influences the environment in accord with Buddhism's teaching of the oneness of life and its environment. As a result, something always happens in that relationship to change for the better, I told her.

She asked, "How do you say those words again?"

A few days later, she popped her head into my office, her face beaming. "Guess what?" she said. "I chanted all weekend, and I feel great! And, by the way, the problem with my supervisor has resolved itself."

We've continued our walks and dialogues.

She is looking forward to attending a district discussion meeting and wants to learn more about how this practice works.

So, I now realize that it's not a matter of how much time I spend but rather how much determination I have to introduce people to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Doing so is not only a wonderful benefit, but a great privilege.

SGI President Ikeda recently said: "We are the busiest, but also the freest of individuals — free in the truest sense of the word. We are free to attend SGI meetings. We are free to talk to others about Buddhism. We are free to work for kosen-rufu. There is no greater happiness than this."

With the spirit of "I Will Do It," I am determined to make many more friends and express my care for them by sharing this Buddhism with them in a natural way.



THE
Third Stage
OF
LIFE

Sufferings Into Treasures

This is the fifth installment in this series. Participants are SGI President Ikeda, Seikyo Shimbun General Editorial Bureau Senior Director Osamu Matsuoka and Vice Director Katsusuke Sasaki.

MATSUOKA: Shinsaku Matsuura, a *Seikyo Shimbun* reporter, recently did a story on Kyokusui Yamazaki, the renowned *biwa* [Japanese lute] performer and composer who has been designated one of Japan's living national treasures, the first *biwa* performer to receive this honor. Ms. Yamazaki, 91, is a member of the Soka Gakkai arts division. Despite the unparalleled acclaim she has achieved, she continues to strive for perfection. "In art, you can never be satisfied," she says. "You have to keep learning until the day you die."

SASAKI: Ms. Yamazaki began learning the *biwa* under a very strict teacher when she was only 8. By the time she was in her teens, she had made a name for herself as a talented performer on the Chikuzen *biwa* and sparked great interest throughout Japan for this stringed instrument, which until then had been popular only in a small region of Kyushu. Her achievements as a musician are incomparable.

Ms. Yamazaki triumphed over many difficulties in the course of her long, successful career. She waged a painful battle with rheumatism, which deformed her right hand — the one she used to

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



Kyokusui Yamazaki, the renowned 'biwa' performer and composer.



Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

'As we confront old age for a much longer period of time, we are forced to come to a new understanding of it. We need to build a society that genuinely celebrates old age and supports long, productive lives.'

hold the plectrum and strike the *biwa* strings. She also devotedly nursed her husband, who suffered from a disability, becoming the sole breadwinner for her family.

IKEDA: Yes, I have heard her story. I am so happy that she is still healthy and active today.

MATSUOKA: Ms. Yamazaki's performances have been praised by knowledgeable critics as "shining like a jewel" and "a music illuminated by love." Some have even called her "a beacon for all those in the arts."

When she performed at an arts division meeting in Tokyo last year, it was so powerful that a hushed, reverent silence fell over the auditorium. Arts division members declared that her supremely accomplished singing and playing made them deeply reflect on their own art.

IKEDA: I personally will never forget the moving rendition she once gave of "The Great Hero of Kusunoki" in Kansai.

SASAKI: Ms. Yamazaki singled out that occasion, calling it

one of her most precious memories. She said that she would never forget how you came over to her afterward to express your delight and appreciation, warmly embracing her.

When she has her *biwa* in hand, she is an impressive presence. But members have said that at meetings she sits with quiet dignity toward the back and doesn't call attention to herself.

MATSUOKA: She's still very active, giving monthly lessons to her students and composing a new piece just about every year. She once said with a chuckle, "As I have aged, my voice has declined somewhat, but strangely enough, I keep coming up with ideas for one new composition after another!"

SASAKI: One of her students said that he learns something each time he hears her perform. He said: "Though she keeps saying she's gone as far as she can, I'm sure she'll keep reaching new heights of creativity until the day she dies. If that weren't the case, she wouldn't have all the students she does. Neither her technical skill nor

her commitment to her art show the slightest sign of decline."

IKEDA: The same was true of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda. To the very last — even on his deathbed — he urged us, his disciples, "You must never let up in your struggle against evil!" Having a great mentor is the greatest happiness one can experience.

MATSUOKA: I agree completely.

Apparently, the first thing in Ms. Yamazaki's schedule each morning is to pencil her eyebrows. She cares for her appearance so that she's always ready if a visitor arrives. She's still fully involved in life. Mr. Matsuura, our reporter, said that Ms. Yamazaki's skin was glowing and that she cut a strikingly handsome figure in a violet-colored kimono.

SASAKI: Ms. Yamazaki says that her most enjoyable hour of the day is when she shares a drink at dinner with her son and his family, with whom she now lives. She drinks two small glasses of beer, which tend to make her even more cheerful and talkative. And if there's

some of her favorite snack, fried chicken, to go along with the beer, why, she's in seventh heaven!

IKEDA: A happy family life certainly contributes to a long life. The role that family can play is great.

MATSUOKA: Ms. Yamazaki's granddaughter and disciple, Yoshie, says of her: "No matter how tired she is when she comes home, she never neglects to chant. She reads the newspaper every day, always looking for any piece of guidance or article by President Ikeda. I learn a great deal from her honest, simple faith." Ms. Yamazaki proudly shares how she prays daily for the good health of you and Mrs. Ikeda and for the development of the art of *biwa* playing, including the education of young *biwa* performers.

SASAKI: How wonderful! It would be ideal if everyone could continue pursuing until the very end, like Ms. Yamazaki, self-mastery — the perfection of his or her craft or work. But it isn't easy, is it?

MATSUOKA: Our readers have questions about that. "I find it hard to fill my days," writes Nagamasa Ogasawara, 83, from Hiroshima. Another reader, Masashi Shimmen, 46, from Kyoto, writes, "Why is it that, as I grow older, I have a harder time finding goals to strive for?"

IKEDA: I'm sure many people have encountered these difficulties. They are emblematic of the problems we face today.

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), famous for *Gulliver's Travels*, wrote in *Thoughts on Various Subjects*, "Every man desires to live long; but no man would be old." This statement can be interpreted in a variety of ways, but I tend to see it as a pointed warning. It's all very well to want to live

PLEASE SEE TREASURES, NEXT PAGE

HIGHLIGHTS
FROM THIS DIALOGUE

Everything depends upon your attitude, how you approach life. Do you look at old age as a period of decline ending in death, or a period in which you have the opportunity to attain your goals, to bring your life to a rewarding, satisfying completion? Is old age a descending path to oblivion or an ascending path to new heights?



The Daishonin describes the incredible difference that our fundamental approach to life can make. Discussing the secret, mystic expedient of the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, he says, "The term secret means strict, and that it [the law of causality] applies across the 3,000 realms" (Gosho Zenshu, p. 714). There is a world of difference in how we refer to old age, too — whether we view it as the "remaining years of our life" or the "third stage of our life." Remaining years sounds like some useless leftovers; the third stage, however, emphasizes the shining potential life still holds.

TREASURES, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

long, but we shouldn't lose sight of what it is that we seek in doing so.

MATSUOKA: Average life expectancy in Japan is at an all-time high. We have become a society of long lives. Now, we must decide how to spend these longer lives fruitfully.

As we confront old age for a much longer period of time, we are forced to come to a new understanding of it. We need to build a society that genuinely celebrates old age and supports long, productive lives.

SASAKI: In general, people have a negative attitude toward aging. Buddhism includes aging among the four sufferings — birth, old age, sickness and death

— and teaches that it is one of the fundamental causes of human suffering.

MATSUOKA: Yes. The rationale of Buddhism is to conquer the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death, which are symbolized by the story of Shakyamuni's first encounter with the four types of sufferings. That encounter motivated him to give up his royal status, leave his palace and seek enlightenment.

IKEDA: As you both have said, the goal of Buddhism is to solve the problems of birth, old age, sickness and death. But the heart of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism does not simply lie in transcending those. In his Orally Transmitted Teachings, the Daishonin states: "The four

sides [of the Treasure Tower] represent the four sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death. These four aspects of life adorn the tower of each of our lives" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 740). He thus elucidates a deeper understanding of those four sufferings, observing that they are transformed into treasures — treasures that add dignity and splendor to the tower of each of our lives, to the Treasure Tower of life itself.

MATSUOKA: In other words, we possess within us the mystic power to transform an apparently negative phenomenon such as growing old into something positive.

IKEDA: There is a saying that goes "To a fool, old age is a bitter winter; to a sage, it is a golden time." Everything depends upon your attitude, how you approach life.

Do you look at old age as a period of decline ending in death, or a period in which you have the opportunity to attain your goals, to bring your life to a rewarding, satisfying completion? Is old age a descending path to oblivion or an ascending path to new heights?

The same period of old age will be dramatically different for different people depending on their outlook — especially in terms of the richness and fulfillment they experience during those years.

SASAKI: In a letter we received from Kazuko Umehara, 67, a reader from Kyoto, there was the following valuable suggestion: "I try to convince everyone I know to catch themselves in daily conversation whenever they are about to use some expression that negates their potential. We need to banish any expression of defeat from our minds — for example, statements or thoughts such as: 'I can't do it.' 'I'm too old.' 'There's no point in my trying.' 'I'm past it.' 'It's too hard.'

"Instead, we should be affirming what we can still do, the great promise that we still

have, telling ourselves: 'I won't give up yet.' 'I'm still young.' 'I can still do it.' 'I've still got plenty of energy and vigor.' Just by changing the way we speak, we can change our pattern of behavior toward a positive direction."

MATSUOKA: I feel more positive just listening to Mrs. Umehara's letter!

IKEDA: The Daishonin describes the incredible difference that our fundamental approach to life can make. Discussing the secret, mystic expedient of the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, he says, "The term *secret* means strict, and that it [the law of causality] applies across the 3,000 realms" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 714). There is a world of difference in how we refer to old age, too — whether we view it as the "remaining years of our life" or the "third stage of our life." *Remaining years* sounds like some useless leftovers; *the third stage*, however, emphasizes the shining potential life still holds.

The great German author and thinker Goethe writes in *West-Eastern Divan*, "Joy of existence is great, / Joy at existence is greater." A life of purpose and commitment begins with setting goals.

I will never forget what former President Fernando Belaúnde Terry of Peru once said to me when I visited Peru....

SASAKI: That was when you were awarded the Order of the Sun of Peru in the Grade of Grand Cross [March 1984], wasn't it?

IKEDA: Yes. President Belaúnde was then 71. He had been elected in the first democratic vote after Peru was restored to civilian rule, and he was deeply loved by the Peruvians. "This is the last term I will serve as president," he said. "After that, I intend to devote my life to my field of specialty, architecture — to continue my studies and to contribute to my nation and humanity."

President Belaúnde stated firmly: "Living out my remaining years in idle retirement is not for me. Because I am determined to live this precious life even more fully, I don't give the slightest thought to retirement."

I hear that Mr. Belaúnde is still healthy and active today.

MATSUOKA: SGI of Peru General Director Carlos K. Shima

said that just recently Mr. Belaúnde viewed one of your photo anthologies and said: "I feel as if I am traveling the world with President Ikeda. I will never forget our meeting."

SASAKI: You also visited Peru more than two decades ago, I remember [March 1974]. You then proposed an educational exchange program with the oldest university in Latin America, the National University of San Marcos.

I can still see you standing in the hot sun, encouraging local SGI members working hard in their local communities. Because of your hectic schedule and the sweltering heat, you fell ill. The university rector, Dr. Juan de Dios Guevara Romero, paid a visit to your lodging to inquire after your health, as I recall. Over the years, you have contributed invaluable to friendly exchange between Peru and Japan.

MATSUOKA: Going back to what President Belaúnde said about not wanting an idle retirement but desiring to devote his entire life to serving humanity, I think that establishing a clear goal and then devoting your life to its realization is the best way to build a society in which long lives are productive, in which they contribute to the happiness of oneself and others alike.

IKEDA: Founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi discussed establishing a purpose in life:

Unless, from the very start, one sets the highest goal for one's life — no matter how lofty and hard to realize it may seem — one's life will be filled with the anxiety that comes from searching futilely in the dark. And it will weave capriciously in one direction, then another, with no rhyme or reason.

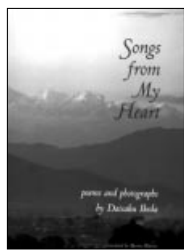
The Lotus Sutra also says, "Our wish is that in future ages / we may use our long lives to save sentient beings" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 239). This is a vow to live long in order to have more time to help other living beings.

The sweetness of a life well lived can only be savored when your life has a great purpose. That purpose, that goal, is your own. There is no need to compare yourself to others. It is important to choose your own goal and to move toward achieving it in your own way. **WJ**

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By HO GOKU

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY

THE FIRST STEP IN GLOBAL PEACE



In this essay series, SGI President Ikeda uses his pen name Ho Goku — as he does in The New Human Revolution — to write the story-behind-the-story. This series is published as "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution" in the Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

On Jan. 8, the first volume of *The New Human Revolution* was published [in Japanese], and it has received a very warm response, for which I am both appreciative and humbled. With profound gratitude to all his readers, Ho Goku is determined to keep writing with all his heart and being.



This volume describes my first overseas visit, which took place in October 1960. Today, some 16 million Japanese travel overseas every year, but back then there were severe restrictions on international travel, and it was relatively rare. According to official government statistics, in 1960 only 76,214 Japanese traveled overseas — excluding trips to Okinawa, which was then under United States administration.

I remember that when we applied for travel documentation, the officials seemed to be wondering what on earth the Soka Gakkai would want to do overseas.



On the morning of Oct. 2, Shin'ichi Yamamoto set off by taxi for Haneda Airport from his modest little home in Ota Ward. He waved good-bye cheerfully to those who came to see him off and said, "I am taking the first step toward world kosen-rufu." He sincerely hoped that fellow Bodhisattvas of the Earth would

continue after him and his party, taking subsequent steps.

Several days later on Oct. 5, the headline of the *Seikyo Shimbun* boldly proclaimed "The First Step Toward Worldwide Kosen-rufu!" This was the first time that the words *worldwide kosen-rufu* appeared in the paper's front-page headlines. Although it was a theme that was constantly spoken of, for some reason the editors were still hesitant to run it as a heading. The fact was, many people could not yet really conceive of our movement spreading around the world. The world outside Japan seemed very distant from their daily lives and concerns.



At 29, Shin'ichi wrote in his diary, "Sometimes I am gripped by the desire to cross the seas, fly through the air, and begin kosen-

rufu overseas without delay."

And finally that eagerly awaited moment to soar beyond Japan had come — the time to fulfill his vow to realize the call of his beloved mentor, Josei Toda, to take the Soka Gakkai's message to the world.

When he left Japan that day, Shin'ichi carried a photograph of President Toda in his breast pocket. It was a journey in pursuit of peace, the crystallization of the indivisible aspiration of mentor and disciple.



From start to finish, it was a new experience for all of us. There were many surprises and crises. Neither I nor my companions on the trip spoke English well. In those days, to make a long-distance telephone call, one would dial the operator and ask, "Could you give me — ?"

But none of us could master that short phrase clearly enough for an operator to understand.

Finally, Yasu Kashiwabara, Soka Gakkai women's division chief at the time, shouted out in joy: "I got through! I got through! You just have to say 'Kujukuri' before the telephone number!" (Kujukuri is the name of a well-known beach in Chiba, Japan, and apparently it was close enough in sound to "Could you give me — ?" to work.)

We also strove to save as much money as possible on our food, so that whatever funds we had could be put toward meeting with the members in each city we visited. Wherever we went, President Akiya — at that time, Soka Gakkai youth division chief — would find a Chinese restaurant for us where the food was cheap but nutritious and filling. We were all impressed with his keen "scouting" ability.

Looking back, those times have become wonderful golden memories.



A 24-day trip visiting nine cities in three countries. Nearly 25,000 miles traveled — enough to circle the globe.

Shin'ichi would gladly go to the ends of the earth, no effort too great or demanding, if it were to visit and encourage even one fellow member.

Shin'ichi was confident that, just as a river grows from one small spring, a mighty river for peace could grow from each such individual.



Since then, 38 years have come and gone. The seeds of the Mystic Law have spread to 128 nations and regions around the world, taken root and blossomed.

Signing the attendance book at the meeting in Guam at which the SGI was formally inaugurated on Jan. 26, 1975, Shin'ichi wrote as his nationality "World."

Shin'ichi holds high the banner of global citizenship passed to him by President Toda. There are no borders in his heart.



Our steps ring out with even greater vigor as we of the SGI stride confidently toward world peace, working to bring humanity closer together and scaling the mountain peak to the 21st century.

From SGI President Ikeda:

✧ To really inspire others, a leader must first make his or her life burn with passion and conviction. To inspire others to take action, one has to first thoroughly engage oneself. The Daishonin writes, "If the general loses heart, his soldiers will become cowards" (MW-3, 196). The organization, ultimately, is a reflection of its leaders' determination.

Leaders have to constantly ask themselves: "Am I really determined to win?" "Am I praying strongly enough?" "Am I brimming with joy?" "Am I satisfied with everything I did today?" This was the art of leadership that Shin'ichi had learned from President Toda. (Sept. 19, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 5)

✧ When your determination changes, everything else begins to move in the direction you desire. The moment you resolve to be victorious, every nerve and fiber in your being im-

**WORDS
TO THE WISE**

DETERMINATION

"Because the Han emperor believed without doubt in his retainer's words, the river froze over. And Li Kuang was able to pierce a rock with his arrow because he fully believed it to be the tiger which had killed his father. Faith is still more powerful in the world of Buddhism." ("The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 214)

mediately orient themselves toward your success. On the other hand, if you think, "This is never going to work out," at that instant, every cell in your being will be deflated, giving up the fight. Everything then will

move in the direction of failure.

I want you to understand the subtle workings of the mind. How you orient your mind, the kind of attitude you have, greatly influences both yourself and

your environment. The Buddhist principle of a single life-moment possessing 3,000 realms completely elucidates the true aspect of life's inner workings. Through the power of strong inner resolve, we can transform ourselves, those around us and the land where we live. Each of us has this tool, this "secret weapon." There is no greater treasure. (July 11, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 14)

✧ The moment we decide "It's no good, I can't do it," this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. From that instant, we negate any chance of succeeding. (Oct. 10, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 15)

✧ The moment you assume the attitude "There's no need to continue making effort. I can just take it easy and relax. I don't need to expand my activities or challenge myself any further" — from that instant, your downhill decline starts. (Dec. 19, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 13)

F N C C 研修會教材四月御書講義

開目抄(二)

池田SGI會長講解

日蓮，是日本國籍人之主師父母。一切天台宗人，是彼等之大怨敵也。...

【通解】

日蓮對日本國的人們而言，是「主師」，是「師」，是「父母」。一切天台宗人，是彼等之大怨敵也。...

無心追求佛道的人，無法脫離生死的苦惱。日蓮是「對日本國的人而言，日蓮是主，是師，是父母(親)」。...

「正義之人」境況。在我的心中鮮明地浮現報恩抄的一節：「日蓮慈悲廣大，南無妙法蓮華經，萬年之外，必流布至未來無盡。...

「遮斷無間地獄之道」，則拒絕不讓全人類淪落不幸，屬「主」之德。開目抄開端明言：「夫一切眾生敬者有三，所謂主、師、親是也」。...

領事者絕對的「責任感」。從中可看出「引導人們」。引導前往幸

地獄之道」。日蓮上人說：「道路之通塞，豈是所從之所能堪？」(開拓、封閉道路的事，畢竟不是家臣所能及！是主人應做的)...

創價學會作為日蓮佛法的真正傳承者，一心為世界開拓「和平之道」。二十幾年前，中俄對立、美蘇冷戰...

【通解】

創價學會作為日蓮佛法的真正傳承者，一心為世界開拓「和平之道」。二十幾年前，中俄對立、美蘇冷戰...

若再加以申述，則「我此土安穩」一創建和平、安穩的國土可謂「主之德」。教育是「師之德」。文化是陶冶人的心靈，所以相當於「親之德」...

大聖人身懷末法主師親三德，開闢了救濟全人類之道，是何其尊貴！師匠開闢的道路，將其延長、拓寬是弟子的使命。現在，這條道路已通往全世界。...

還有，這次的本文裡說：「天台宗的人是日本國人的大怨敵。」因為他們明知法華經是最高之法，卻不願與邪惡對抗，不僅如此，還與迫害大聖人的惡人為伍。...

牧口先生曾說：「日蓮大聖人在世當時的天台宗，就現今的日蓮宗當中而言，相當於「日蓮正宗」。...

誠如牧口先生所言，妨害廣宣流布這救濟民眾之聖業的風聲，是「民眾的大怨敵」。此事即證了開目抄之教示。...

教主釋尊被一切的外道罵為大惡人，天台大師被南三北七的十派人所憎恨，且被(日本的)得一責難說：「(天台是)斷不到三寸之舌者，毀佛釋尊的教法，過五尺之佛身者。...

【通解】

日蓮受尊府責難，被處流罪，天台宗、真言宗的僧侶必幸災樂禍，那是不知恥且奇怪的事。...

天台大師痛遭當時勢力強大的十宗所中傷。兩百年後，甚至被日本法相宗的僧侶得一(德)罵道：「多惡味啊！智公(天台)，你既誹謗釋尊一代的說法，又迷惑世間。...

「回歸法華經之心，回歸釋尊之心」之故。若沒有實際行動，就不會招來批評、中傷。...

反觀那些得意洋洋地批評、責難的人，雖自認罵的是天台、傳教，其實是在踐踏釋尊的「心」。...

更何況，以見正義受毀，「正義者」之大聖人被處流罪為喜的人，真是惡人。...

「受惡人之讀者，方為第一之恥」。此御文是牧口先生的座右銘。牧口先生即使受軍方權力迫害，或被宗門出賣，都一笑置之。...

「願諸君作為俊傑，投身末法濁世的法戰，以期獲得大聖人的稱讚。受惡人稱讚是智慧的恥辱，受大聖人的稱讚，纔是一生的榮譽」。...

【通解】

既說牧口先生、戶田先生的座右銘，所以這段御文也是創價學會的座右銘。實踐此御文，等於是永遠的學會精神。...

夫釋尊入娑婆，羅什入華，傳教入中國，提婆羅子捨身，藥王燒臂，上宮刺手之皮，釋迦菩薩賣身之肉，樂法以骨為筆。天台所云：「道時而已」。...

「回歸法華經之心，回歸釋尊之心」之故。若沒有實際行動，就不會招來批評、中傷。...

佛(為向一切眾生說說法華經)而生於娑婆世界；羅什三藏(為弘揚法華經)入秦(中國)；傳教大師(為尋求法華經深奧意義)遠渡中國。...

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佛(修行的方式)因時而異。(現今，流罪的我(大聖人)正是弘通符合時的佛法，所以我一定會成佛)日蓮的流罪，屬今世的小苦，不會為之悲歎。...

「佛法是依時而異」。然而，根本的軌道和精神是不變的，各日本著為法，為了民眾，奉獻一生。...

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「佛法是依時而異」。然而，根本的軌道和精神是不變的，各日本著為法，為了民眾，奉獻一生。...

各位在苦難、中傷的風暴中，開闢新的道路，弘揚大聖人的佛法，實在是擁有尊貴使命的大聖人。...

「日蓮之流罪，是今生之小苦，不足為嘆，後生得受大樂，斯足大悅。這是釋尊人類史、有氣魄的勝利大宣言。...

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Anything But Helpless

Cheri Honkala joined together with other destitute women to 'end poverty and survive in these tough times.' They formed the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, a group that, though unorthodox, has won the respect of many.

By FRED MAYER
PHILADELPHIA CORRESPONDENT

In this day and age, it is not uncommon to witness crises, but what happens when that tragedy is our own? Seven years ago, a group of women gathered together in the basement of a church in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia to confront their demons, to turn crisis into opportunity.

It started with one common question: How can we raise our children in this unforgiving environment? Amid the abandoned, dilapidated, former centers of industry at "C" and Indiana streets where they lived, welfare and drug dealing were the two main sources of income.

Cheri Honkala was one of these women, a woman whose divorce left her destitute and seeking help, though in actuality she was anything but helpless.

As a single mother, without a job and the resources to pursue further education, she vowed to devote her time to raising her son in an environment that appreciated and recognized the dignity of the low-income, unemployed and homeless residents in her area. She was determined to help not only herself but those around her meet the basic needs of shelter, clothing and food at a time when these things aren't guaranteed.

From her determination, and the unity of those seven women, the Kensington Welfare Rights Union was born. The organization now is affiliated with the National Welfare Rights Union, which Ms. Honkala co-chairs.

"We began organizing primarily for issues that impacted on children — fighting for a community center in the area, those kinds of things," says Ms. Honkala. "People call here and they don't know how they are going to pay their rent.... We receive no money from


the city, state or the federal government, so we have to be incredibly creative!"

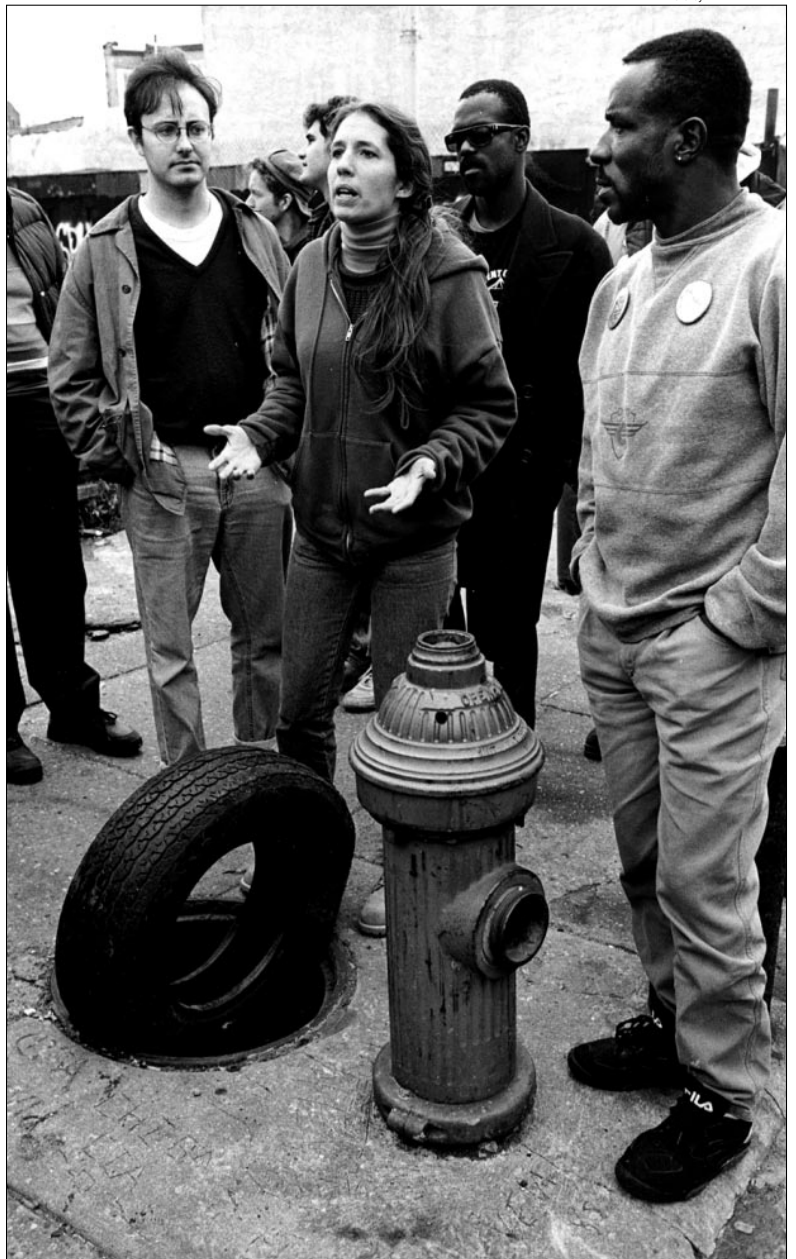
That creativity has led to actions called Projects of Survival, which provide for people's immediate needs. At first, the union served only the local Philadelphia community but now works statewide. "So we do things like take over abandoned houses and move homeless families into them. We identify where there is surplus food and do major food distribution," Ms. Honkala says.

The organization also has a Free Store, where people in need can pick up clothes and furniture, and a Human Rights House, where homeless families can live while learning about their rights and the workings of the government. They've also secured 450 properties for families who, by conventional standards, would have had to wait at least 10 years on a list for affordable housing.

Although its approach may seem unorthodox, the union has won the respect of community groups, social service professionals, legislators and public officials. In fact, many social workers refer people to Ms. Honkala out of what she terms "a moral choice," since it is against municipal government regulations to do so. Even representatives from other countries, such as Argentina, have expressed interest in forming a similar community movement, she said.

In the end, Cheri Honkala makes no apologies for the sometimes extreme lengths the movement will go to, as in the case of abandoned housing "takeovers," which involve homes owned by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. After all, she reasons, the purpose of government should be to serve people.

"We break the law," she said, "but I believe there is a higher law — humanity." 



Cheri Honkala organizing the poor to stand up for their rights in 1994.

'We are a multi-racial group of poor people who lead and speak for ourselves. It is imperative that we teach each other how to struggle and work together for our collective survival.'

— Cheri Honkala
Director, Kensington Welfare Rights Union