

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Just Let Go

I'm writing in response to Sean Grover's article "What To Do When Chanting Becomes a Chore?" (Feb. 5 *World Tribune*). It seems like Sean's conclusion is this: When you're having trouble focusing while chanting and want to make a breakthrough in your practice, chant harder. Sweat. Struggle. Beat down the resistance. However, I've had experiences that were just the opposite. One time I remember trying to chant harder, chant better, chant like I was "supposed to," but my practice was just misery. I made a huge breakthrough by just letting go, relaxing and not forcing anything. My inspiration, focus and determination came back naturally (after a generous amount of daimoku). I agree that it's important to really challenge ourselves in our practice, but it can also be very powerful just to let go and let it happen.

— CRAIG NIELSEN,
Corvallis, Ore.

Appreciation Overseas

I am in the U.S. Navy and I am currently stationed in Sasebo, Japan. I have been in and out of Sasebo, on a forward deployed ship, for about a year and four months. It was stressed to me that as soon as I got over here that I should try to connect with the organization. That has been easier said than done....

My initial reason for writing is to express sincere appreciation and gratitude for the numerous issues of the *World Tribune* that have been delivered to me. It is wonderful to be able to read about all the different experiences and diverse members.... As of about July, we will be transitioning from one ship to another.

— EDWARD A. WILLIAMS,
Sasebo, Japan

Truly From the Heart

Pam and Lauren Nelson (of Littleton, Colo.) had practiced in Chicago West for over 15 years before they moved to Colorado. Pam's experience regarding the tragedy at Columbine High School in the May 7 *World Tribune* was truly one from the heart and I want to thank her for her experience. We need more like that. They encourage so much self-reflection.

— DONNA DAVIS,
Woodstock, Ill.

Courage in Common

The April 30 *World Tribune* was a great expression of Fred Zaitso's editorial in the April issue of *Living Buddhism*: "Be Extraordinary Ordinary People." Nancy Kennedy's experience of perseverance was so inspiring. Cesare Civetta's great compassion for his broth-

er brought me to tears. Mark Allen Davis's success as a dancer was great, but his success as a human practicing this Buddhism is even greater. What they all have in common is courage.

And Herbie Hancock's conversation with Daisaku Ikeda felt as if I were there watching them talk. It's good for us to know that people who have achieved fame, people whom you might think would not need or want to continue chanting, still put their practice, for themselves and especially for others, first.

I am so proud of all of them, of all of us in the SGI. Extraordinary ordinary people, indeed.

— JEROME LUDWIG,
Chicago

A Beautiful Forum

Recently, as I was leaving school one morning, I was stopped by a sincere young man who wanted to know if I would like to go to church with him. I explained that I had been practicing Buddhism for 23 years and was very happy with my religion. What followed was a sincere dialogue about religion and he asked me many questions about Buddhism, giving me the opportunity to share our philosophy with him. He attempted to debate with me, but I was well versed enough in the Bible to disarm many of his arguments. He finally looked at me and said: "Well, what if Jesus is right and your Buddhism is wrong? When you die you're gonna be in a whole lotta trouble." I smiled with confidence and said: "You know I'm just not worried about that. I know if I live a life dedicated to creating value and touching the hearts of others that I will die a wonderful death."

Reading Cesare Civetta's experience in the April 30 *World Tribune* brought tears to my eyes and made me think of that conversation I had with the young man at school. When Cesare encouraged his brother that his daimoku would enable his death to be a "magnificent journey" I was reminded of the great beauty of our philosophy.... So many people struggle with the question of death, and like the young man who spoke to me, worry that they'll be "in a whole lotta trouble when they die" if they don't embrace a certain religion.

Our Buddhism does free us from the fear of death and enables us to encourage others so deeply at the moment of their passing. Thank you, Cesare, for sharing your experience! It is so beautiful to hear of your dedication and compassion for your brother.

I also want to thank the *World Tribune* for continuing to fill its pages with the voices of our wonderful members all over the country. Nancy Kennedy's experience reminded me that as I struggle to attend school full time (to obtain my teaching credential), work full time and raise two young children on my own that this is a path I am walking and I do need to just keep going to "see the full moon over the capital." LaVora Perry's "Perspective" on challenging obstacles is an article I want to share with my district members as they come to me with their struggles. Our *World Tribune* is a beautiful forum that I hope we will continue to fill with lots of experiences and thoughts on practice. I look forward to receiving my copy every week and open it the moment I get it so that I can find encouragement and enlightenment in the hearts of our precious members.

— CHARLOTTE MADLOCK,
San Diego

Challenging Arrogance

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The Feb. 19 *World Tribune* is of special interest to me for one, because it is my 10th anniversary of practice and two, because it is on my greatest challenge — arrogance. Since it arrived, I have been diligently studying it....

Most of all, on the issue of contribution, I made a vow to the Gohonzon to do all that I could to strengthen my *ichinen* like a pebble in the water for all of the United States so that the United States could become financially independent. That we look to the future for the storage and safety of the Nichiren Daishonin's teachings so that people who are looking for hope will know where to go. That the community centers are like lighthouses for the world and every time someone passes by one they feel something and are pulled in that direction. I hope that we all develop the *ichinen* to "ask not what kosen-rufu can do for you but what you can do for kosen-rufu." I pray that we don't think about benefits but about deepening our faith in the Gohonzon and today build as many community centers for the members who don't have and not think about what we don't have but what the other members need. I feel this is what will bring us joy and benefits.

— WANDA BOYD,
Los Angeles

I was very moved and impressed by the open letter written by Pam Nelson regarding her experience in Littleton, Colo. I find her praise of the community in which she lives to be a great example of having an open spirit to others that President Ikeda encourages. Her letter demonstrates how important it is to create deep and meaningful relationships with all the people around us.

— VIRGINIA FEINGOLD,
West Hollywood, Calif.