

**A NEW PROPAGATION MOVEMENT BASED ON EACH PERSON'S
HAPPINESS
BY JAMES HERRMANN, SGI-USA YOUNG MEN'S DIVISION LEADER**

The following words were given by SGI-USA YMD Leader James Herrmann at the June session of the Central Executive Committee held at the SGI Plaza in Los Angeles.

I really want to express my appreciation to all of you for this great opportunity to really challenge my life as the SGI-USA propagation leader. I really want to work to fulfill the mission SGI President has entrusted us with for American kosen-rufu — to widely spread and declare the correct understanding of this Buddhism here in our country. I will bet my life, to the very last ounce of energy that I have, to realize this.

I wanted to share with you my experience about doing shakubuku with my mother. In the early days of our practice, my mother would take me with her door-to-door in the largest apartment complexes we could find, and we would engage as many people in dialogue about Buddhism as possible. She would always encourage me that as soon as we were done, we'd go to McDonald's and get something to eat! As I watched my mother struggle in front of each of those people who opened their doors, and really try to convey the greatness of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism — English was not her native language — I was sometimes wondering: "Wow! Why is she really doing this?" Many people closed the door in her face, but I could tell that she really cared about them. And I started to care about them, too.

I can't deny, even in my early years, that after doing these kind of activities, I really felt different. I really felt great afterward. And it wasn't just because of McDonald's. There was some kind of change going on inside.

Shakubuku should always be based on our care and compassion for the person we are sincerely introducing to this Buddhism. That's why it changes us so much.

Although I think that in the past we were very successful at introducing many people to this practice, and even getting them to join, I think that sometimes our focus was based more on getting a result than helping someone become happy. Our new shakubuku movement is based on each person, not based on numbers.

Who do we introduce? I think that regardless of how wonderful people may appear on the outside, everyone experiences some sort of suffering or has some kind of goal in life that they want to achieve. However, in order to really explain the greatness of the Daishonin's Buddhism to them, we have to identify what their struggle is that they're having in life, and then we also need to find out what kind of goal they have.

When we know those things, we can positively share with them the greatness of this Buddhism, and how they can really overcome their suffering and achieve their goals. President Ikeda says in the June *Living Buddhism* that "no benefit can compare to the joy of dedicating one's life to kosen-rufu. No joy is greater than the joy of propagating the Mystic Law. Nothing is greater than the joy of seeing other people become happy as a result of our efforts and dialogue. And when we rejoice at others' happiness, our own lives become increasingly pure."

In thinking about this, I remembered those early days, and how things had changed after 1990. My mother changed from doing door-to-door shakubuku to really doing a different type of shakubuku. My mother is a widow now, and her English is getting better. She actually — after I left Texas and moved to Los Angeles — joined a gym. I never thought my

mother would join a gym. When I called and asked her why, she said: “For two reasons. One was to improve my health, and the other was to do shakubuku.” She so far has successfully introduced two people from her gym who are now practicing Buddhism.

I want to go over some points that we talked about at the Central Executive Committee meeting in June. I think, as leaders, that we should start speaking at meetings about the greatness of the Daishonin’s Buddhism and seizing every opportunity to do so. In *The Human Revolution*, volume 10, President Ikeda initiates a great shakubuku campaign in Osaka. He starts with the re-shakubuku of all the members and leaders; he told them about the greatness of the Daishonin’s Buddhism again. And that gave them confidence to go back into society and introduce others to this practice.

Also, as leaders, many of us give personal guidance. When giving personal guidance, I think we should reemphasize the importance of shakubuku. In general, I think our lack of attention to this basic component of our practice has resulted in many members whose inner focus is directed on themselves rather than on kosen-rufu.

The third point I want to share is that we should share our personal experiences of doing shakubuku. At the CEC, the new zone youth leaders shared our experiences of doing shakubuku — the good and the bad. The bottom line was that as youth we really have to use our voice. We have to use our voice to introduce others to this practice.

A New York leader was sharing his experience about using his voice. He was encouraged by a shakubuku champion that youth must use their voices. If you don’t feel that you can use your voice, begin by talking with a dog, this shakubuku champion says, and then work your way up to human beings. Anyhow, let’s not shakubuku dogs — let’s not be afraid to use our voices to introduce our friends in society.

SGI-USA has the goal of two new members per district this year, and we’re 25 percent toward that goal — but more than half the year is gone. How do we get back on track? First of all, we need to help and support each district in achieving a victory. I think that’s so important, because this goal of two shakubuku per district is one that we really want them to achieve. Again, I have to emphasize, this is not a numbers campaign but a way for the members in each district to be victorious.

Finally, I think that from now, within the next three months, if each district can succeed in doing one shakubuku, that will put us back on track by the end of September.

Again, I want to express my determination: I’ll definitely do my best, and if there’s anything I can do to support you in your efforts, please feel free to call me at the SGI Plaza.