



FORMALITIES

What do Buddhist formalities mean?

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FNCC

Upcoming conferences at SGI-USA's Florida retreat.

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Photo by JONATHAN WILSON



DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

It Takes Courage

In this discussion, President Ikeda explains that 'no matter how wonderful our dreams, how noble our ideals or how high our hopes, ultimately we need courage to make them a reality.'

YASUYUKI ITAKURA: Thank you so much for talking with us again today. We're all looking forward to hearing your thoughts on courage.

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA: Thank you for the opportunity and for your participation. Courage is very important. Whether or not we have courage has a crucial bearing on the direction our lives take. People who have courage are happy.

MICHIKO KANAZAWA: I think that everyone wants to have courage. The high school division members offer many examples of situations in which you wish to bravely take the initiative. For instance, when you know that a friend is making a terrible mistake but don't say anything because you're afraid it will destroy your relationship. Or being too faint-hearted to lend a helping hand when you see a disabled person in distress on the street. Or even something as simple as

'Youth, Scale the Mountain!'

SGI President Ikeda revises his well-known poem to youth.

In December 1981, SGI President Ikeda first wrote his poem "Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century!" with the intention of encouraging young people to look toward the new century. Now, with the new century almost upon us, President Ikeda has revised the poem and presented it again to the youth division.

In this issue, read his essay about how and why he wrote this poem (p. 5) and his new version of the poem (pp. 6-7).

*My beloved youth!
Courageously climb
The mountain of the 21st century,
Holding high the flag of truth of the Mystic Law,
And in so doing
Achieve a truly independent and satisfying life.*

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How To View Buddhist Formalities

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT SENIOR ADVISOR

In practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, it is important to put into perspective the issue of formality.

Essentially, Buddhism is the teaching that enables us to access our innate Buddhahood. And the purpose of Buddhist practice is to establish Buddhahood as our basic life-condition. The principle that makes this possible is known in Buddhism as the Law. Buddhist formalities are a means to support this objective of bringing forth our Buddhahood and to express our appreciation for having discovered the way to achieve it.

While the Law is not a human creation, formalities are. We might say that the Law was discovered, while formalities were created throughout Buddhist history.



Fundamental to our employment of Buddhist formalities is our heart — our spirit of appreciation and gratitude for the teacher of the Law (Buddha) who awakens us to its beneficial power. "What matters is one's heart" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 289) and "Faith alone is what really matters" (MW-1, 246) can be guidelines in our discussion of formalities in Buddhism.

Throughout Buddhist history, people's grateful hearts and minds have been expressed in their behavior of making offerings to the Buddha or to Buddhism. In keeping with this, here are some key points to remember in making traditional offerings to the Gohonzon.

WATER

Offering a cup of fresh water to the Gohonzon derives from the ancient Indian appreciation of the value of water —

India's hot climate made the refreshing and purifying qualities of water particularly precious and cherished. As a token of our sincerity in faith, we offer to the Gohonzon a cup of fresh, cool water each morning, and over the years, the custom of removing and discarding the water in the evening, usually before evening gongyo, developed.

EVERGREEN

An evergreen called *shikimi* has traditionally been used as an offering to the Gohonzon in Japan. Native to India, it was brought to Japan by Chin Chien-chan (688–763), a priest of the China's T'ang dynasty and founder of Japan's Ritsu (Precepts) school of Buddhism. *Shikimi* has long been regarded as Japan's most fragrant tree, and is used as an offering before Buddhist images. Tradition has it that this was because its shape resembled that of a blue lotus flower. Historically, *shikimi* was regarded as signifying vibrant life force and eternal purity. This description, however, is not mentioned anywhere in Nichiren Daishonin's writings, and the formality of using *shikimi* as an offering to the Gohonzon appears to have been established long after Nichiren Daishonin's passing.

As *shikimi* is not readily available in the United States, other types of greens — including artificial ones — have been used by SGI-USA members. The offering of evergreen to the Gohonzon has been done in the spirit of the following words of the Daishonin: "Whether you chant the Buddha's name, recite the sutra or merely offer flowers and incense, all your virtuous acts will implant benefits in your life. With this conviction you should put your faith into practice" (MW-1, 4), and the Lotus Sutra passage, "At once the Brahma kings...took the heavenly flowers and scattered them over the Buddha" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 123). The Lotus Sutra also speaks of erecting monuments of fragrant sandalwood and other plants to the Buddha after his passing.

SGI President Ikeda writes, "There is a concept in Buddhism known as *zuiho bini* — meaning that so long as one does not deviate from the essential teachings of the Daishonin's Buddhism, that is, faith in the Gohonzon, it is fine to make the formalities of Buddhism conform with the manners and customs of each area and with the convention of the times" (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 33). In any case, it is important to maintain the conviction that our sincere offerings to the Gohonzon and to Buddhism constitute "virtuous acts" that "will implant benefits and good fortune" in our lives. In this sense, even simple formalities such as the offering of evergreens, so long as they are grounded in sincerity, are one way in which we "put our faith into practice."

President Ikeda further says: "In case

no *shikimi* is available, you can offer other kinds of evergreen. Even artificial greens will do so long you offer them in sincerity."

While many Buddhist schools make offerings of flowers, the tradition of the SGI, adopted from the tradition of Nichiren Shoshu, has been not to do so. This arose from the symbolism of the evergreen, which suggests permanence and vitality — the eternal aspect of life that we strive to develop through Buddhist practice. Flowers, on the other hand, in withering quickly, imply life's transient and fleeting nature. Nevertheless, there is no reference to the rejection of flowers as an offering in the Daishonin's writings, and it can be assumed to be a custom that developed in later times. There is no doctrinal reason, therefore, to prohibit the offering of flowers.

CANDLES

Buddhist scriptures liken the offering of light to wisdom dispelling the darkness of ignorance. Candles are an offering of light. In Nichiren Daishonin's time, however, candles did not exist in Japan — the main source of light was the oil lantern. In fact, we find phrases in the Goshu such as "adding oil to a lantern" (*Goshu Zenshu*, p. 978) or "A lamp brightens with oil added to it" (*Goshu Zenshu*, p. 1562).

The significance of offerings of light is illustrated by such devoted acts as a poor woman's offering of lamp oil to the Buddha ["A poor woman cut off her hair and sold it to buy oil (for the Buddha), and not even the winds sweeping down from Mount Sumeru could extinguish the flame of the lamp fed by this oil" (MW-7, 259)] or Bodhisattva Medicine King's offering light by burning his elbow (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 282).

Traditionally, white candles have been used, but there is no doctrine requiring or forbidding the use of any particular color of candle. It remains a matter of personal preference. When choosing candles for meeting places, however, it might be reasonable to consider the preferences of others who might be attending as well. Very brightly colored or gaudy candles could conceivably distract some people from focusing comfortably on the Gohonzon. And where there may be a fire hazard, it is advisable not to use candles. Today, many members use electric candles in place of regular candles. Whether we choose natural or electric candles, what matters is that our offerings are not made for formality's sake but out of our intent to brighten and thus honor the area before the Buddha (Gohonzon).

INCENSE

Incense represents an offering of fragrance. As a fragrance, incense was cherished in hot and humid climates to

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dispel odors and to provide a pleasant atmosphere.

As with all offerings, the offering of incense to the Buddha is an expression of gratitude — it is not a requirement. If one is allergic to or dislikes the smell of incense, it is completely acceptable not to offer it. Also, “less smoke” varieties have been available for some time. For those concerned about the potentially negative health effects of inhaling excessive smoke, it is naturally advisable to avoid burning candles or incense in a confined or inadequately ventilated space.

Some Buddhist schools burn incense by standing it upright. Our tradition has been to burn the incense by lying it horizontally. This too is not essentially a doctrinal issue, though some doctrinal explanations were added in later years by the priesthood.

On special commemorative occasions and for memorial services, it is traditional to offer three pinches of powdered incense, though often one pinch is offered (particularly when many people are present to make such an offering). The three pinches of incense is said to signify the three kinds of action by which karma is created — thoughts, words and deeds.

THE BELL

Ring the bell is the offering of sound. For this reason, it is best to try to create a pleasant sound by striking the bell. One should therefore avoid striking the bell too hard. There is no mention in the Daishonin’s writings of a specific manner or number of times for striking the bell, though such things were traditionally stressed by the priesthood.

President Toda once stated: “Ring the bell during gongyo is an act of giving comfort to the Buddha. Therefore, the bell should not be rung in an unruly manner.... We also ring the bell as a signal to others when chanting with a group of people.”

CRANES

The rounded crane was adopted by Nichiren Shoshu during the Edo Period (some 300 years ago) as a symbol of that school to be used in official business dealing with the Tokugawa shogunate government. In more recent years, two metallic crane-capped accessories patterned after the sake bottles have been placed in front of the Gohonzon. The significance of this, of course, is the symbolic offering of sake (though today we generally don’t fill these decorative bottles with anything) to the Gohonzon, not the offering of the crane mark. As an expression of their rejection of the error and ill intentions of the current Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, some members have discarded these crane-capped bottles and replaced them with similar bottle-shaped accessories topped with the Soka Gakkai’s eight-petal lotus symbol. In either case, these accessories have no doctrinal meaning, and are simply intended



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

Buddhist formalities can conform with the manners and customs of each area and with the convention of the times as long as they promote faith in the Gohonzon.

to decorate and dignify the altar. It is not essential that they be used.

FOOD AND LIQUOR

In Japan, a cup of cooked rice is often placed briefly before the Gohonzon as an offering during mealtime, and *mochi* cakes — made from a sticky rice paste — are offered on New Year’s Day. In the “New Year’s Goshō” Nichiren Daishonin mentions the offering of *mochi* cakes. Rice has long been the main staple of Japan and much of Asia, and it is therefore natural that it has developed as a Buddhist offering.

Fresh fruit is also popular as a food offering among members around the world. This may be because whole fruit is not as perishable as other foods.

On New Year’s Day and other significant dates, it has also been customary in Japan to offer two large bottles of sake. As the 29th high priest, Nichiu, states in his work “On Formalities,” “Since sincerity is expressed through the giving of sake in secular society in this country, sincerity in Buddhism can also be expressed through the offering of sake.”

As with all the offerings mentioned thus far, offerings of food or drink are significant when made out of sincerity. They are not absolutely necessary, and when done, the choice of food or drink can be a matter of cultural or personal preference.

As we have seen, various Buddhist formalities concerning offerings have derived from a mix of Indian, Chinese and Japanese cultures. Since they are essentially culturally based, they have evolved, and will continue to evolve, over time and according to local customs.

INSIDE THE ALTAR

So as not to diminish the importance of our concentration on the Gohonzon, the supreme object of devotion, it is advisable that the altar environment always be kept neat and clean. Therefore it is best not to place unnecessary items on or within the altar. However, it is understandable that someone may want to place something close to the heart — such as a picture of a loved one, for example — near the altar to serve as a clear

reminder for directing one’s prayers.

PRAYER BEADS

Prayer beads are a traditional Buddhist accessory. It is not known what kind of prayer beads Nichiren Daishonin used. While a great deal of meaning later attached to the various components of the prayer beads, they are essentially no more than tools to assist us

in our Buddhist practice.

Regarding whether to rub the beads while chanting, again, there is no clear doctrine concerning this. Because Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism should not be restricted by rigid formalities, it would be incorrect to say that we cannot rub our prayer beads. But we should consider that frequent or overly vigorous rubbing of the beads can be a nervous habit that ultimately distracts from our concentrated prayer. The Bodhisattva Universal Worthy (Fugen) Sutra, considered an epilogue to the Lotus Sutra, reads, “Sit upright and ponder the true reality (Gohonzon).” In order to ponder this reality with utmost clarity, and to find the greatest satisfaction in our prayer, it is best to sit calmly without excessive motion while chanting.

Since we employ the prayer beads as part of our Buddhist practice, it is preferable to treat them respectfully. If and when they wear out or break, however, it is all right to dispose of them. We can do the same with the old sutras books that we will not use again.

OTHER FORMALITIES

Regarding the other formalities referred to in guidance given in the early days of SGI-USA, we can consider many of them culturally based. In this respect, we can usually apply the principle of *zuiho bini* — the adjustment of non-essential aspects of Buddhist formality or practice to suit a given culture or condition.

Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism was brought to this country by courageous practitioners who immigrated from Japan. This point should be eternally acknowledged. However, it is also important to acknowledge that these pioneers of our organization brought with them some formalities that were natural within the context of their own culture, but need not be strictly applied while practicing Buddhism in America.

It should be noted, however, that to simply disregard or reject formalities outright may be akin to “throwing the baby out with the bath water.” When we observe formalities as an expression of a sincere heart, it can lead to positive results in our lives. Formalities can be a means to express our appreciation to the

Gohonzon. By simply rejecting formalities out of hand, we may be slighting the sincerity that is associated with them, and this could undermine our spirit of faith and practice as well as our growth. On the other hand, insisting on rigid adherence to formality while leaving no room for spontaneity does little to enhance our Buddhist practice.

In any case, the substance of our Buddhist practice lies always in challenging ourselves to develop our innate Buddhahood, not in religious adherence to ritual and ceremony — particularly those not practiced by the Daishonin, but introduced later on.

And naturally, the elevated state of life we achieve through Buddhist practice should find tangible expression as acts of sincerity and appreciation. In this vein, the quality of our offerings and actual proof can clearly reflect the condition of our faith.

President Ikeda once referred to the relationship between Buddhist teachings and formalities: “The ultimate teaching in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism means chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon. In other words, propagating Buddhism and studying it is of primary significance in the practice of faith. All other matters belong to the realm of formality, which can change according to the condition of the time. Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and its correct way of practice can be convincing to any person in modern times. Since Nichiren Daishonin is forever the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, he would not propound a teaching that makes no sense to future generations.”

The formalities of making offerings to the Gohonzon should therefore be made easily understandable to those living in the country where the Daishonin’s Buddhism is being spread.


Reference materials used for this article: January and February 1994 issues of The Daibyakureng, the Soka Gakkai’s study journal.

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1999 FNCC Conference Schedule (May — June 1999)

Month	Dates	Conference
May	13-16	Thai/Cambodian Language Conference Attending leaders include — Ted Morino, Joe Firoved, Sachiko Nakabayashi *This will be the first FNCC conference ever held in Thai and Cambodian.
May	20-23	Theme Conference: Enhancing Our Relationships Through Buddhism Attending leaders include — Bert Kawamoto, Rita Risom
June	3-6	Theme Conference: Understanding and Sharing Buddhism in Modern America Attending leaders include — Eugene Hirahara, Margie Hall
June	17-20	Women's Division Conference (district leaders and up) Attending leaders include — Wendy Clark, Linda Johnson, Teresa Hauber
June	24-27	Conference on Parenting (Boys and Girls Group Coordinators) Attending leaders — To be announced

Basic conference participant information: Participants arrive at the FNCC on Thursday afternoon and depart on Sunday evening. Conference duration will be four days and three nights. Participation is open to members and leaders, as noted.

Conference participant package price is \$375.00 per person, which includes accommodations (double occupancy room), meals, ground transportation (airport transfers and bus tour), conference materials and etc. (Price is subject to change without prior notice).

Language Conferences — These conferences are intended to provide members with the opportunity to study Nichiren Daishonin's teachings and President Ikeda's guidance, discuss organizational direction and Buddhist practice in the United States, and share experiences and develop friendships in their native language.

Conference on Parenting — This conference focuses on the Buddhist perspective of raising children. Study material will include President Ikeda's guidance on parenting. Workshops on a variety of topics will be presented, and discussions on the raising of children in the SGI organization will be conducted. Experienced parenting professionals will be presenting. Participation is open to all members, leaders and Boys and Girls Group coordinators.

Theme Conferences — A number of conferences with varied themes are scheduled. Each conference will include lectures and discussion on the Buddhist perspective of the specific conference theme. Study material will include Goshō passages and President Ikeda's speeches. There will also be ample opportunities for dialogue, question and answer, and group discussion.

• **Enhancing Our Relationships Through Buddhism** — Each of us experience different kinds of relationships, which may include relationships with our parents, spouse, children, partners, friends, co-workers, and fellow SGI-USA members. This conference is intended to refresh our attitude and spirit to create better relationships for ourselves and for others through Buddhism.

• **Understanding and Sharing Buddhism in Modern America** — This conference will focus on understanding Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in the context of such traditional Western religious concepts as the belief in God, salvation, sin, etc. This conference is intended to strengthen our understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and enhance our ability to share it with others in our predominantly Christian society.

Photo by JONATHAN WILSON



Developing friendships occurs naturally amidst the beautiful environs of the Florida and Nature Culture Center.

Culture Festival Details Announced

At the recent Central Executive Conference in Santa Monica, Calif., SGI-USA Youth Division Leader Ed Feasel announced new details of the 1st SGI-USA Youth Grand Culture Festival, which will be held in Los Angeles this fall. The festival will feature 1,500-1,700 youth performers, he explained, with 1,200-1,300 coming from the Southern California Zone and 300-400 from the Northwestern Zone.

For each of the other regions in SGI-USA, the plan is to invite 60-80 youth and 40-60 men's and women's division members as event spectators. Additional activities are being proposed to take place in

Los Angeles in conjunction with the festival: exchange meetings between nationwide participants and Southern California members, divisional meetings and a visit to the new Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, campus.

The youth division successfully completed its Kosen-rufu Day introductory meetings last month and is now focused on young men's and young women's division general meetings, scheduled for July, and the national culture festival. Mr. Feasel said that "this national gathering, with four-divisional representation from every corner of the country, will mark the departure for SGI-USA

into the 21st century and represents our continued commitment to fostering capable youth. The culture festival itself will express the determination of the youth to assume full responsibility for advancing the kosen-rufu movement into the 21st century."

The festival will also commemorate 10 years of "the new SGI-USA" that began with SGI President Ikeda's 1990 visit to the United States, and the 40th anniversary, next year, of President Ikeda's first trip overseas, also to the United States, in 1960.

— JEFF FARR

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA



A POEM INFUSED WITH MY PRAYER

'I was suddenly seized by the thought "Now the time has come for me to present the youth with new guidelines,"' President Ikeda writes, as he explains the state of things that led him in 1981 to write the poem 'Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century!'

How wonderful it is to advance, living each day to the fullest, with our Soka family, our fellow members in faith! Together let us rejoice on our victory again today. Those who possess a vibrant, untrammelled spirit are truly champions of freedom.

.....

February 1979 — just over two decades ago — I set off for India on a journey of kosen-rufu from Kagoshima Airport in Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands. I was determined to realize the westward transmission of Buddhism that Nichiren Daishonin had prophesied in his writings. And I began that deeply meaningful endeavor from Kyushu.

.....

A little more than two months later, I stepped down as Soka Gakkai president and became honorary president. The next time I called on Kyushu was on my return from another journey of exchange with Asian neighbors — my fifth visit to China, in April 1980. At that time, our Kyushu members were buffeted by the crosswinds of all sorts of despicable plots and schemes, as were members in other parts of Japan. In this storm of persecution, I was not allowed to give speeches or guidance freely at our meetings. The attacks on me and the Soka Gakkai were an insane performance orchestrated by unscrupulous priests and several corrupt ex-Gakkai members in league with them. Their actions only proved their essential lack of human decency.

.....

All the trials we have encountered accord perfectly with the Daishonin's teachings. The Daishonin writes, "The three obstacles and four devils will invariably appear, and the wise will rejoice while the foolish will retreat" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 244). Refusing to be intimidated, I rose up on my own and began to give guidance once more to our members. I launched a new struggle.

After arriving in Fukuoka from Nagasaki, I called out to my comrades: "No matter how harsh the winds or how turbulent the seas, do not forget kosen-rufu! Do not let the banner of propagation fall! Do not extinguish the flame of faith!"

The Kyushu members re-

sponded to my intrepid call to hold fast to our cause and strove with all their might, encouraging each other to keep fighting for justice.

.....

On Dec. 8, 1981, I finally visited Oita in northeastern Kyushu, where the members had long been waiting to see me. It was my first visit in 13 years. The Oita members had also undergone indescribably bitter suffering, all because of the malicious schemes and attacks of self-serving priests, who had betrayed the Daishonin's teachings.

These priests formed an unholy alliance aimed at controlling and destroying the Soka Gakkai, and they unleashed their hateful intrigues and cruel abuse in Oita, too. But our admirable Oita members were absolutely determined to protect their beloved Gakkai at all costs, and they bravely pursued the path of kosen-rufu. Although a number of cowardly individuals pitifully revealed themselves for what they were, in the end our members won.

The youth division's activities in this effort to uphold the truth were especially noteworthy. In the face of all kinds of persecution, they kept the banner of justice aloft and saw the struggle through to a triumphant finish.

Youth — youth are the key! Crucial are the youth who will carry on the work of kosen-rufu.

These events took place in the year that marked the 30th anniversary of the youth division's establishment and the publication of the "Precepts for Youth" of my mentor, Josei Toda.

At that anniversary, I was suddenly seized by the thought "Now the time has come for me to present the youth with new guidelines."

On the third evening of my visit to Oita, Dec. 10 — a day I will never forget — an Oita youth division leaders meeting was to be held. Before the meeting began, I

was in the caretaker's office at the Oita Peace Community Center. A powerful fighting spirit, fueled by a myriad of emotions, already blazed in my heart. The youth whom I loved so dearly were waiting for me.

Youth division representatives told me that they wanted to have a new poem to inspire the members as they set off on their resolute march into the 21st century.

I responded to their seeking spirit: "All right! Let's do it!" In a flash, the tiny six-mat room was transformed into a poet's battleground.

"Why do I climb mountains? / Because they are there!"

For 40 minutes, words poured from my heart like an unstoppable torrent, like an eruption of burning flames.

With intense concentration, pencils working furiously, five young men and women gamely tried to keep up with me and take down my words as I spoke.

After they had copied a clean version, I made a number of revisions. But before they could recopy it, the time for the meeting arrived.

The poem was presented in this version, still filled with the red marks of last-minute corrections. That was the birth of "Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century!"

The entire poem is infused with my fervent prayer:

You must win, no matter what,

Where you are right now!

You must never let your faith Be destroyed!

Buddhism is a struggle to be victorious. It is a battle between the Buddha and devilish forces, a war between good and evil.

That is why I constantly stress the powerful mission that the youth have — the mission to lead

humanity and bring peace of mind and security to all, based on their ability to clearly see through devilish functions and defeat evil and injustice.

My heart filled with a thousand hopes, I called upon the youth:

May 3, 2001 —

Let us make that the glorious day

That we together reach the summit!

Please remember

That this day will decide

The outcome of our struggle

In the second chapter of kosen-rufu.

That profoundly significant time is fast approaching.

I am confident that today, too, my young disciples are advancing toward that goal with a bright, vibrant spirit, joining hands with new friends and comrades along the way in fresh unity, making each and every day one of supreme value.

Shortly before that memorable Oita youth division meeting, I had been notified by the World Art and Culture Academy of its decision to bestow upon me the title of Poet Laureate. "Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century!" was the first long poem I composed after receiving the news.

Because I had to race against the clock to finish it in time, I did not have the opportunity to contemplate or weigh my words with the care and thought I would have liked, so I hope you will forgive me for now having taken the liberty to slightly revise the poem.

.....

On a cold, windy day during that 1981 visit to Oita, I stood with the youth at the famous ruins of the Taketa Clan's Oka Castle, in southwestern Oita. Together we sang a rousing rendition of the

beloved Japanese song "Moon Over the Castle Ruins." The youth's eyes sparkled, and their hearts blazed with passion. I sang at the top of my voice with these heroes of the people, these heroes who had borne relentless storms and had triumphed. These young people, standing straight and proud, their faces radiating trust and openness, together made a deep, silent pledge of eternal, solemn commitment.

With their lofty spirit, vibrant and fresh as the new day's dawn, they rose high above the raucous, slander-spewing rabble. With their clarion call, they set in motion a powerful tide that spurred all of Kyushu to action. A great roaring tidal wave of joyous victory cheers spread from Oita to Kumamoto, Fukuoka, the rest of Kyushu and eventually all of Japan and the entire world.

Every area of Kyushu won — Saga, Miyazaki, Nagasaki and Kagoshima. Our Kyushu members have proudly built an invincible fortress of justice, a brilliant palace of the people's triumph.

Today in Kyushu, we have a strong, determined force under the tried and tested leadership of such capable individuals as Kyushu General Leader Akira Yoshihashi and Kyushu Leader Takeshi Yamamoto, who have fought hard and striven to protect our members through countless onslaughts. I behold with deep respect and admiration the towering citadel our members have built in Kyushu.

.....

The 21st century — the goal that we set back on that distant day — is now dawning. The summit of May 3, 2001, is right before our eyes. Let us, you and I, reach it together and there raise the Soka Gakkai's tri-color flag of victory, glory and happiness!

An Asian Youth Peace and Culture Festival, at which 100,000 young people will sing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," is scheduled to be held in Kyushu in that momentous year.

Kyushu members: Savoring the sunlight of happiness, with a strong pledge to advance our movement, let us once again embark from Kyushu's great summit of victory on a new journey as emissaries of Buddhism with a supremely noble mission!

This series is published as "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution"

Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen

Wishing to present the youth division with new guidelines for the 21st century, SGI President Ikeda recently revised his 1981 poem "Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century!"

"Why do I climb mountains?
Because they are there!"
So declared a famous mountaineer.

We are about to scale the summit
Of the mountain of the 21st century,
The mountain of kosen-rufu!

My beloved youth!
Courageously climb
The mountain of the 21st century,
Holding high the flag of truth of the
Mystic Law,
And in so doing
Achieve a truly independent and
satisfying life.

To this end,
You must ascend,
Step by step,
And one by one,
The mountains, large and small,
That confront you each day.
For the value of a deeply fulfilling
youth
Can be found only in the lives
Of those who strive to conquer
The treacherous mountains of life and
society!

Only by pursuing this path
That you have deeply resolved to
follow
Can you develop with quiet strength
A self as inexpressibly vast and
boundless
As an infinite field,
And thereby lead a life of unshakable
confidence!

Youth, who are my disciples!
Live, live, and live on —
For the cause of the Great Law,
Eternal, absolute and indestructible!
To accomplish the noble mission
For which you were born!
To ring the bell of peace in the world
And raise the flag of justice in society
—
Goals which are our creed!

The sun rises each day —
It rises majestically
On spring mornings when cherry
blossoms bloom,
On days of blistering summer heat,
In the autumn of red-gold leaves,
And despite blizzards and stormy
skies.
We should emulate its strength!
My friends, heirs to the future,
Live a youth in which
The shining sun of the Great Law
Rises moment to moment
Within your hearts!

My young friends!
Youth is synonymous with the sun.
Embracing that sun which shines
With unlimited potential,
Please win in every aspect of your
life,
Today and every day!

It is more than 700 years
Since the Buddhism of the sun rose.
Now the great river of propagation
Has spread widely throughout the
world,
True to the principle of
"The farther the source, the longer
the stream"!

A half-century has passed
Since the founding in 1951
Of our youth division for kosen-rufu,
Courageous and full of conviction,
Holding high the banner
Of the Buddhism of the sun.
At that time some 260 youth —
Gallant young men
And pure-hearted young women —
Gathered with an indomitable spirit.
Over the course of five decades,
The river they created has flowed on,
Its waters sometimes crashing into
rocks,
Sometimes rising in heavy rains,
Sometimes falling under scorching
heat.
Yet today it has grown
Into a great rushing torrent 5 million
strong!
The presidents who succeeded
President Toda
Were all from the youth division.
Please remember this!

No one can stop
The momentous flow of this river!
It will surge on toward the vast ocean
Growing ever deeper,
Ever wider along the way,
Leading the times,
Unimpeded by any force of authority
Or any dark obstruction!

Thanks to the brave and vigorous
Propagation efforts of the youth,
Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism of
the sun
Has come to shine beyond Japan
To illuminate the entire world.
This mighty river of propagation of
the Mystic Law
Now flows through 128 countries.
As the world's foremost philosophy,
It flows jubilantly and eternally,
For peace,
For the dignity of life,
Imparting every possible compassion.

It has always been the youth
Who have led the way in these
efforts!

The Daishonin states,
"If Nichiren's compassion is truly
great and encompassing,
Nam-myoho-enge-kyo will spread
For 10,000 years and more, for all
eternity"!

In our harmonious movement
Of compassion and philosophy,
Committed to protecting religious
freedom,
There are no class distinctions,
No national boundaries!
Ours is a movement dedicated to
helping each person
Realize the mission, rights and
happiness
That are inalienably theirs!

We absolutely oppose violence!
We absolutely oppose war!
Based upon this great Buddhism,
We expand the circle of mutual
understanding
Beyond borders,
Beyond ideological differences,
Creating a momentum for peace and
culture.
Because every human being
Has a right to be happy!

I am waiting — no, I am praying
With all my heart for your growth.
Because I know that your growth is
the only way
Kosen-rufu will be accomplished.
Therefore I say to you:
Never forget that gongyo and
daimoku
Are the driving force for your ascent
Of the mountain of the 21st century.

As the Daishonin states,
"If you cannot get across a river 10-
feet wide,
How can you cross one that is
A hundred- or 200-feet wide?"
You must win, no matter what,
Where you are right now!
No one can beat a person
Who has chanted daimoku
With all their might —
For daimoku is the very heart
Of the Daishonin's Buddhism!
My young friends!
Remember the spirit expressed
In the above passage!
And take action based on it,
Courageously and wholeheartedly!

Never lose hope,
No matter how painful your situation!
Hope is infinite strength.
For having hope is faith!

Human beings, as innate value-
creators,
Have the ability to tap hope from
within.

Though sometimes sadly
You may suffer setbacks
In the course of life,
You must never let your faith
Be destroyed!
If your faith is invincible,
Then deeply satisfying proof of
victory
Will definitely be yours one day!
That proof will be revealed
In society for all to see,
For you embrace the Buddhism
Of actual *ichinen sanzen*!

My young friends who will live in the
new century!
Grow into leaders of great wisdom,
And never forget to always walk
Together with the people,
For the people are sovereign!
The history of the world has always
clearly shown
The ordinary people to be wise!

As long as we have the people's
support,
And as long as we practice this faith,
Our movement will create a history
Of even more limitless advancement!

Therefore, my young friends,
Take pride in having to shoulder
many burdens,
Become guides in life
Of good citizenship for others!
And make your highest honor
Being youthful philosophers of
action!

We know
That the new century hopes
And waits in expectation
For such outstanding young leaders.
People devoid of faith or philosophy
Are like ships without a compass!
The times are already moving,
Moment by moment,
From an age of materialism
To an age of spirituality,
And from an age of spirituality
To an age of life.
People have begun to realize
That only in life itself
Can we find the value
Of true human happiness.
Today what matters
Is not popularity, fame or wealth!
Inherently wise,
The people respect and long for
Leaders of integrity and character!

In this age of the people,
True leaders are those
Who win the people's trust.
We are all equal;
No one is superior or inferior.
My young friends,
I hope each of you
Will become leaders of the new

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Who
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Living
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Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century!

century,
Who day and night
Are in contact with the people,
Living among them,
Cultivating warm human relations,
Sharing their concerns,
And empathizing with their struggles!

I have faith in you!
And place high expectations upon
you!
For without you,
Kosen-rufu cannot be achieved!

Enduring all kinds of persecutions,
I, too, as one of the disciples of Josei
Toda,
Whom I chose as my mentor in life,
Have striven to advance the cause of
the people,
Giving my all to the struggle for
kosen-rufu,
The goal I pledged with my mentor to
achieve!
I assert here
That all false, groundless charges
against me
Will be clearly judged by history!

For the victory flag of human
revolution
Will fly forever high in the sky
When we stand as towering
individuals,
Resolute in our determination,
Surmounting all persecution,
No matter what authority or power
May seek to oppress us!

My friends!
I absolutely implore you —
Never be ignoble!
Never be cowards!
Never be traitors!
For the hearts of such people,
No matter how high-sounding their
rhetoric,
Are base and degenerate,
Ruled by the worlds of Hunger and
Animality.

Young leaders!
Develop penetrating insight
So that at all times
You may clearly perceive the essence
Of various problems and incidents
That confront us!
And rigorously denounce
The plots and schemes
That lie at their root,
Designed to disrupt our efforts
To propagate Buddhism.

Youth, champions of the future!
Be wise!
Be revolutionaries!
Do not be fools!
Do not be deceived!
Be people of discernment and

wisdom!
These are the requisites of faith —
As the Daishonin states,
“When the skies are clear, the ground
is illuminated....”

Buddhism at its essence
Is ultimately a struggle between
Happiness and unhappiness,
Good and evil,
The Buddha and devilish forces!
Please recognize this deeply and
strongly!

My young friends,
I hope that you will victoriously
Move beyond those mournful
comrades
Who abandoned their faith,
And associate with people of seeking
spirit
Who reveal the Treasure Tower in
their lives,
And that you will continue to strive
single-mindedly
To promote our great Buddhist
movement.

To lead a truly fulfilled
And meaningful life,
A profound philosophy
And strong faith in it
Are indispensable!
Make your greatest source of pride
Embracing this noble Buddhism of
the sun
And living out your youth with
passion and joy!
For this is the essence of youth!

The mountain of the 21st century is
near!
Already within sight,
The new century belongs to you!
It is your dawn!
It is your time to shine!
It is the grand stage
On which to give full play to your
potential
And further solidify our movement!

May 3, 2001 —
Let us make that the glorious day
That we together reach the summit!
Please remember
That this day will decide
The outcome of our struggle
In the second chapter of kosen-rufu.
My young friends of profound
mission!
Until that day,
Press on with your assiduous
Buddhist practice
With a light and cheerful step!
Please give your all each day,
In good health and high spirits!
All of your hard work is for you,
For the people,

For friends who are suffering —
Be confident that this is the path
Of a youth dedicated to good!
And create a magnificent personal
history,
Unforgettable and forever engraved in
your life!
Brave and vigorous practice
Is the only way to achieve this!
When you are faced with suffering
Or feel deadlocked,
Have courage, dauntless courage,
And remember that you have
comrades
You can rely on and who rely on you!
Your seniors in faith everywhere
Are looking forward to your success!
Your dear fellow members recognize
your efforts!
And such comrades exist all over the
world!
In any event, chant daimoku
To win over yourself!
Do not spare your voice!
And do not hesitate to speak out for
justice
With the force of a lion’s roar!

Remember, too,
That all of your actions and
endeavors
Are unmistakably witnessed by the
original Buddha
Who surveys the three existences of
life —
Past, present and future.
The original Buddha also promises
That the Buddhist gods will definitely
protect you,
The heroes of kosen-rufu.
This is faith!

Do not be afraid of a few insults
And the scornful criticisms of others!
Such travails are nothing
Compared to those of Shakyamuni,
Much less the great persecutions
That befell the Daishonin!
As proof that we live in accord
With the Daishonin’s teachings,
It is only natural that we should
encounter
The buffeting winds of obstacles.
We should regard this
As the Gakkai’s unsurpassed honor.

My noble young successors!
Cherish your worthy parents,
Place importance on actual society,
And realize with pride
That the Buddhist principle
Of lotus flowers blooming in muddy
water
Applies to the swamp-like reality of
society
In which we conduct our daily
struggles!
Life in the real world is complicated
And full of contradictions.

However I call on you, young
successors,
To build, with great dignity and
confidence,
A magnificent palace within your
own life!
Know that infinite happiness and peace
Reside in the depths of your being!
Sometimes wait and endure!
Sometimes strike out boldly to score
a stunning victory!
Today will never come again,
So advance resolutely each day,
Moving ever forward.
That is the life of a Bodhisattva of the
Earth.

Faith means
To fear nothing!
To make yourself eternally a victor!
To take action and thereby
Become a person of outstanding
humanity
Who can link people, society and
Buddhism together!
Society is harsh —
Do not be complacent,
Do not let yourself be swept away
By society’s ever-changing tides!
Remember that you are the
protagonists,
Proudly writing your own history!
Do not be led astray by society’s
superficial phenomena!
If you allow yourself to be swayed by
the eight winds,
By others’ praise or censure,
You will have let yourself be sadly
defeated.
Dear friends, please be victors!

My young disciples,
Whose growth I pray for unceasingly!
Now once more
Solidly unite in your efforts
And continue on this great unending
path!
Advance cheerfully and spiritedly,
Singing well-loved Gakkai songs —
Sometimes “Song of Crimson,”
Sometimes “Song of Indomitable
Dignity”!
Countless young successors
Are following in your footsteps.
Working together side by side,
Let us climb the invincible mountain
Of the 21st century!

And when we reach the summit
Of that mountain,
The world that unfolds before us
Will all be yours.
There is no higher path
Than dedicating one’s youth, one’s life,
To the joyous and fulfilling work
Of propagating Buddhism.
Confident of this,
I entrust everything to you!

EXPERIENCE — VERELETT P. ALLEN, LOS ANGELES

Off the Dole and Teaching New Roles

By focusing on the Buddhist basics of faith, practice and study, Verelett Allen got off of welfare. Now she's active in the community empowering other women to do the same by training them to break into nontraditional occupations in the workforce.

As a single mother of three, I've seen my share of hardships. Even though I had graduated from high school and attended a year of college, at 22 I had no marketable job skills. I continued to work in a low-paying job and received a supplement check and food stamps from welfare. I felt I had made a mess of my life, and it was over. It seemed as though I was going to live this way for the rest of my life. I was a nothing, and a nobody.

During this time I was also involved in a relationship in which I was being cheated on. This was the last straw, nothing was going right for me. I concluded that everything my mother and family said about me was true — I would never amount to anything. So I got a gun and I decided to end my relationship.

For some strange reason I decided to stop by my co-worker's house — who was a Buddhist — because we were good friends. He introduced me to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 1973, but my immediate response to him was "I don't believe in that stuff" — by *stuff*, I was referring to religion. He still insisted that I needed to chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo for the happiness and well-being of my three small children and myself. I did not take him up on his offer — not until that night.

I showed him the gun and told him what I was planning to do. I was in tears. My friend asked me to sit and chant with him. I refused. An hour later, he had convinced me to chant for my children, since I was about to make them motherless. After chanting for 30 minutes, he convinced me to attend a meeting with him the next day. I didn't recognize the feeling that I experienced while chanting then, but today I can say it was calm and peaceful. I started to attend meetings regularly, and I received my Gohonzon on Oct. 19, 1975. I have had the great fortune of having sincere, caring members to help me seek out SGI President Ikeda's



Verelett Allen (2nd from right), as one of the six women honorees, celebrating the 25th anniversary of Title IX with President Clinton at the White House on June 17, 1997. (L-r) Richard W. Riley, U.S. Dept. Secretary of Education; Anne Jefferson, high school student regarded as the #1 young scientist in the U.S. for 1997; Nelba Chavez, administrator for the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services; Jackie Joyner-Kersey, track star; Sally Ride, astronaut; Verelett, coordinator of Non-Traditional Employment for Women Program; and Capt. Robin Forrester, Baltimore Fire Dept.

guidance, and to work hard at the basics: faith, practice and study.

My seniors in faith always encouraged me to never give up. I worked hard and attended classes whenever I could in electronics.

In 1980, I finished my training in electronics and passed the test to receive my Federal Communications Commission License. What a victory this was for me! I never thought I was capable of this, but the SGI members kept telling me that everything is possible with the Gohonzon. I realized that I was also starting to learn how to love myself. Now I love life, and I love people. This is what this practice has allowed me to see in myself.

I started a good paying job in 1981 as a radio communications technician for the mass transit system in Washington, D.C.

This was the most money I had ever made in my life. This also made my daughters happy. They saw the change in me because of my Buddhist practice, and began participating in SGI activities.

I thought my biggest challenge was over when I got that good job, but I realized it was just the beginning. My first day at work I found out that I was the only female among 16 men. They didn't exactly welcome me with open arms. In fact, they were guessing how long it would be before I left. I received no help in the beginning to "learn the ropes." Every day I went home angry and frustrated as I put up with the isolation that sometimes comes with being the only female in a man's occupation. I also performed work that was not my responsibility because I didn't know any better at the time. I wanted to quit, but

knew this was the best job I ever had. Besides, I had a family to take care of.

I went to my seniors in faith for support. I was encouraged to chant with appreciation for having such a good job that allowed me to provide for my family, and to chant to be able to recognize negative influences that would keep me from advancing. I chanted a lot, and made the determination not to be defeated. In his writings, Nichiren Daishonin says that a sword in the hands of a coward has no power.

Determined to win, I increased my efforts in SGI activities. I became a member of the stage crew where I was also the only female. My training in stage crew gave me a different insight into working in a male-dominated field. I realized that the men on the job probably had just as much fear of having me

around as I did being there. I was invading their space. One guy came forward to help me learn the radio system. Being the newest person besides myself, he felt that it was only natural that he help me get started.

I started thinking there must be other women who were going the same thing I was. Then I remembered the time I asked my district leader what was meant by having a mission. She told me to chant for my creativity to manifest itself. I had no idea what she was talking about then, but now it had meaning. I needed to share my work experience with other women, and I needed to hear theirs.

In 1987, along with a colleague who was also an SGI member, I formed Women's Work, Inc., a support group for women who worked in or were interested in working in nontraditional occupations. For three

years I taught myself how to research, and I learned all I could relating to women in nontraditional work. In 1990 the executive director of Wider Opportunities For Women, the training program for women that I graduated from in 1981, offered to assist me in sponsoring the first support group meeting.

In April 1991, I realized my dream. Women's Work had its first support group meeting. It was attended by nine women. We met once a month and the number of women attending grew with every meeting. We traveled to conferences nationwide to network with other women in these occupations. We volunteered in the community speaking to groups of women trying to get off welfare. We also spoke to teenage girls and boys about women in non-traditional occupations.

President Ikeda encourages us to seek out a mentor in our line of work, and I was fortunate to have such a person who taught me about consulting others on how to bring about positive solutions in the workplace. For this I am grateful to Cynthia Marano. We ended up with over 100 women who had attended our meetings.

In 1993 I was encouraged by another friend to apply for a part-time job training women in prevocational skills that would allow them to move on to skills training (computer repair, commercial driving, etc.) or apprenticeships (plumbing, carpentry, etc.). I was excited, so I applied. I didn't have a master's degree, which was a requirement. I felt I had no chance.

Again, my seniors in faith encouraged me not to give up. One leader said to chant to the Gohonzon to offer what was needed by those who could best benefit from it. At first I didn't understand what he meant. All I had to offer was that I was a single mother that had once been on welfare. I had not accomplished anything great. He then pointed out that I had raised three daughters who had attended college and one was in medical school, and I was working in the community trying to help other women get off welfare. He asked me how I accomplished this? I replied, "By working on my basics: faith, practice and study." He told me to continue and to have no fear.

After a few interviews and many references, I was hired as coordinator of the Non-Traditional Employment For Women

Program at the YWCA of the National Capital Area. This was definitely proof from my Buddhist practice. I designed a prevocational (work and life skills) curriculum, and started to build the foundation of a program that later became known as one of the most successful in the country for helping women to leave the welfare roles, and to dramatically change their lives. The women could relate to me because we shared similar experiences not only dealing with welfare, but also related to our children and families. I would say to them, "If I could do it so can you, and I'm here to show you how." I worked the two jobs for three years.

I reached a turning point in my life and my Buddhist practice in 1995. I received a national award for my work training women to be prepared for work. I was presented with the Individual Leadership Award from the National Commission On Working Women and Wider Opportunities For Women. When I received this award one of my daughters said that she was proud of me, but did I have to tell the world that we had been on welfare? I explained to her that I did. Because we had been. I knew through my experience how to help others trying to get off welfare. This was my mission.

In 1996 I attended the NGO Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China where over 30,000 women participated. Every workshop we attended, the cry was the same: women just want equal rights. I felt fortunate to be from the United States — some women risked execution in their country for attending the conference. I thought about President and Mrs. Ikeda and their travels around the world promoting peace through culture and education. They are truly great examples! President Ikeda shows that he has a natural ability to reach all kinds of people.

I received a call from the White House in June 1997 saying that I had been selected as one of the honorees to participate in the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Title IX. [In 1972, Congress passed the Educational Amendments. One section of this law, Title IX, prohibits discrimination against girls and women in federally-funded education, including in athletics programs.] I was one of six women selected who had broken down barriers in their pro-



Verelett with her two grandchildren, Camille, 10, and Isiah, 18 months.

fessions, to join President Clinton on stage — track star, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, astronaut, Sally Ride were among the six. In previous years, I had been fortunate to participate in women's events at the White House with both Vice President Al Gore and First Lady Hillary Rodham-Clinton — who I think is a remarkable woman. Now I was going to be able to participate in this great celebration with both the President and Mrs. Clinton. What a great opportunity!

While at the event, another woman being honored, Nelba Chavez, who is the administrator for U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, asked me if I would present a workshop at a national women's conference that was being sponsored by her agency in September 1997 in Arizona — all expenses paid. I accepted.

I presented a workshop on training women to enter non-traditional occupations that would pay them about 30% more than traditional occupations. After my workshop I was approached and asked about possibly sharing my curriculum with an organization in the Compton and Watts areas in California.

About a month later, I visited Shields For Families Project, Inc., an organization that deals with people that have substance abuse and alcohol problems. I met with one its founders and Executive Director, Kathryn

Icenhower. I was very impressed with Shields because it deals directly with the whole family and not just the person with problem. They believe that if a parent has a problem it affects the entire family, so there are also programs within Shields that address the needs of the other members. To me this really falls in line with my practice, because President Ikeda always talks about building beautiful families.

I accepted a consultant position to help Shields to set up a Vocational Services Center. Now I had three jobs! I remember when I didn't have one. I traveled between Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles for about three months. I was also setting up an additional program at the YWCA in Washington, D.C., to prepare women for work in highway construction.

After the second program got under way in Washington, D.C. I decided to move to Los Angeles. I knew there was a challenge there and I wanted to be a part of it. As Buddhists we are always encouraged to grow. I started teaching prevocational classes at Shields and there are women who, I'm happy to say, are working and training in areas such as auto mechanics, environmental positions, and electronics. They are changing their lives and their families! They are moving out of those low paying jobs that don't allow them to properly take care of their families.

I was presented with another challenge at Shields. The director asked me why wouldn't I consider offering the same training for the male clients? My immediate response was because guys already know about tools and stuff. She shared with me that the problems were not just gender-based, but economic. I was still not convinced.

I decided to chant about it. Nichiren Daishonin's teachings clarifies that everyone has the Buddha nature, and President Ikeda has always encouraged us to keep an open mind. So I went to the director and told her that I wasn't promising anything, but I would develop a survey, and present it to the men. Much to my astonishment the director was right. Some of the men didn't know what I took for granted they knew.

Further proof of the need to train men as well as women came when a couple of weeks later, a segment aired on *60 Minutes* on women in non-traditional occupations. The woman being interviewed was someone I had worked with on occasions concerning this issue. As I listened to her I realized a horrible truth. I have been in non-traditional work for over 25 years, and in essence she was saying that there were no significant changes made with regard to women working in, or entering these occupations. The remarks that the men made on the show were the same as they were 20 years ago. I thought, "This is not progress." Now the reasoning seemed more real to me why I had to teach prevocational classes to both men and women.

On Oct. 5, 1998, I started the first coed prevocational training class at Shields. The women and men not only learned skills that would prepare them for work or apprenticeships, they learned what they could contribute as men and women and about their differences in the work environment. It has been a wonderful learning experience for me, too. I love them all.

I feel proud to be part of the SGI, an organization, that since its beginning, has had the goal of showing compassion for all human beings. We are working through our individual Buddhist practice, to do our own human revolution and change the world. I can really see the growth that I have experienced. I will continue to work throughout my life to affect change in my family, work, and the community by taking responsibility in helping others. ❧

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'FRESH GROWTH'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 41-42

In New York, Shin'ichi Yamamoto encourages a newly appointed leader that 'life is short. How we use the time we have is extremely important.... Ultimately, the most important thing is working to help people attain absolute happiness and to realize world peace.'

Tomio Haruyama was a young man of great ability and promise. He had followed an elite course, graduating from the department of political science and economics at Japan's prestigious Waseda University. Then he had landed a position with one of Japan's top trading firms.

He joined the Soka Gakkai and started practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 1954, after seeing his parents, who had taken faith some time earlier, benefit from doing so. While he had come to recognize the power of chanting Nammyoho-enge-kyo through his own experience, he had held back from making an all-out effort to participate in Gakkai activities and lacked any real commitment to achieving the spread of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

He also had a tendency to be very blunt and stubborn, and was a bit of cynic. But Shin'ichi Yamamoto was confident that if Tomio could truly appreciate the significance of the Gakkai, he would go on to achieve great things.

Tomio was also extremely pragmatic in his thinking, and this too was an important quality when it came to propagating the Daishonin's Buddhism in society. The ability to speak one's mind was also indispensable in the United States. And through continued Buddhist practice, his stubbornness undoubtedly would come to shine in the form of unwavering conviction.

No one is perfect at the outset. The responsibility of a leader is to uncover each person's potential and work wholeheartedly to

help him or her become truly capable.

Tomio listened earnestly as Shin'ichi spoke: "If you fail to perceive the real nature of the Gakkai and treat the organization casually, you'll come to regret it deeply later. The Gakkai will develop all the more from this point on. Eventually, we will have members in every nation of the world.

"In the future," Shin'ichi went on, "we will also establish high schools and universities, as well as a non-profit foundation to conduct musical exchange with other countries. Based on the ideals of Buddhism, the Soka Gakkai's aim is to enable politics, education and art — all areas of human endeavor — to flourish and to build a society where people can achieve happiness, thereby creating lasting world peace.

"Life is short," he added. "How we use the time we have is extremely important. If we are consumed with gaining prestige, social status and wealth, then we will be left with only a great sense of emptiness in the end. Ultimately, the most important thing is working to help people attain absolute happiness and to realize world peace. When we dedicate ourselves to kosen-rufu, we lead the most valuable, meaningful of lives — lives of deep fulfillment and joy. That is the purpose of our Buddhist practice."

Shin'ichi spoke with great passion and energy. He was dead serious in his resolve. He knew that unless he could make Tomio understand the true essence of faith and awaken him to his mission right then and there, his wife, Emiko, would be unable to do her job fully as a leader, and the mem-

bers would suffer. Also, as the one responsible for recommending Tomio for leadership, Shin'ichi was resolved to make it his personal duty to encourage and inspire him to stand up in faith.

"Mr. Haruyama, I am confident that if I leave things in your hands, you will build a fine organization. Let's work together," Shin'ichi said, gazing steadily at Tomio.

Emiko also looked intently at her husband, sitting beside him.

His eyes shining, Tomio responded to Shin'ichi's words with a silent nod.

Shin'ichi continued: "Your becoming New York Chapter leader and the young men's division North America General Corps leader means that you have taken on the mission of working for the happiness of people throughout New York and throughout the United States. It's perfectly all right for you to start out by driving your wife to meetings in her capacity as North America General Chapter women's division leader, but I hope that you'll quickly learn how to encourage and guide everyone, becoming a great chapter leader yourself.

"Because of the nature of your job," Shin'ichi concluded, "there's no knowing when or where your company will transfer you next. That makes each day particularly critical. The first thing is to make this time in New York the most memorable in your personal history of contributing to kosen-rufu. I entrust New York to you. I entrust America to you."

Looking slightly tense, Haruyama acknowledged the great expectations that Shin'ichi placed in him, saying, "I understand."

Shin'ichi smiled, and a smile also appeared on Haruyama's thin face.

As Emiko watched this exchange, her eyes filled with tears of joy.

From that day on, the Haruyamas worked as a team. With Tomio driving, they traveled to Long Island, Boston and Washington, D.C., to encourage members. It was not uncommon for them to cover a couple hundred miles or more in a single day.

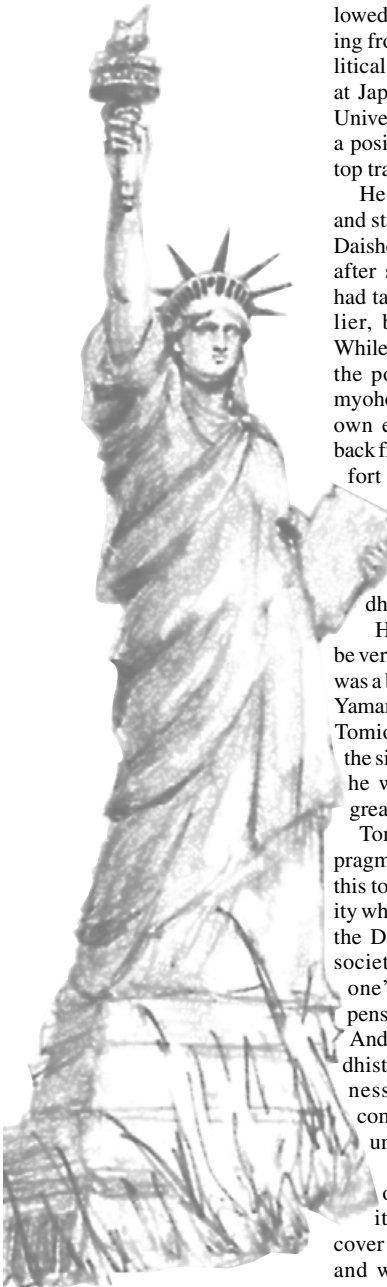
At first, when they met with members, Tomio just left all the talking to Emiko. He would simply contribute a word or two, like "Let's do our best!" But after a while, he began to share his own experience in faith and to give guidance and encouragement with great confidence.

After discussion meetings and other gatherings, while Emiko was encouraging the women, he would speak in English with the American husbands who drove their Japanese wives to and from the meetings. Most of the husbands were not yet members, and he tried to help them deepen their understanding of Buddhism.

Later, Tomio left the trading company to join the staff of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo and contributed to the development of the SGI.

(To be continued)

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1963. Illustration by Ken'ichiro Uchida.



DIALOGUE, FROM PAGE 1

being afraid to ask questions in class or after school.

ITAKURA: Or being too timid to offer an older person your seat on a bus or train.

One student noticed that a classmate wasn't at school any more. He wanted to phone him to find out if he were all right, but since they hung out in different groups, he just decided to let it go. When he later learned that the classmate had transferred to another school, he regretted not calling him when he had the chance.

These may seem like small things, but they cause the members a lot of heartache.

IKEDA: Others might think they're trifling concerns, but to those actually facing such issues they're very serious. Small things matter. What may look like a small act of courage is courage nevertheless. The important thing is to be willing to take a step forward.

As long as we're alive, we'll face all kinds of problems. But no matter what happens, we simply have to live with courage and press on, aiming always toward the future.

No one can escape the realities of daily life. We have to deal with life and its problems. Young people have their problems, just as adults have theirs.

Life and the world we live in is like a storm-tossed sea. We have to make our way through it, buffeted by all different kinds of experiences. There is no other way. This is part of our inescapable destiny as human beings.

ITAKURA: Being born in this world, we have a mission to live out our lives.

IKEDA: Everyone has their own hopes and dreams, their own way of life, their own ideals, their own joys, their own sufferings, their own pain and their own grief. No matter what happens, however, we have to get on with life. We have to keep moving, working toward realizing our ideals and dreams.

KANAZAWA: That's so true.

The loss of courage is the loss of everything.

IKEDA: But no matter how wonderful our dreams, how noble our ideals or how high our hopes, ul-



'People who have courage are happy.'

timately we need courage to make them a reality. We can come up with the greatest ideas or plans in the world or be filled with boundless compassion for others, but it will all come to nothing unless we have the courage to put it into action. Without action, it's as if it never existed.

ITAKURA: I see what you're saying. We may possess magnificent treasures inside us, but if we don't have the courage to reveal them, it's just like keeping them locked up in a safe, hidden and unknown to others.

IKEDA: That's why courage is the driving force or engine of our lives. Even activities such as studying and going to school require courage.

KANAZAWA: If courage is the engine of our lives, it follows that those with powerful engines will be at an advantage.

IKEDA: The courageous have the strength to forge ahead, calmly traversing life's ups and downs and advancing steadily toward the summit of their chosen goals and dreams. Courage is a powerful asset.

Those who lack courage stray from the correct path and succumb to apathy, negativity and destructive ways. They run away from hardship, seeking only a life of ease and comfort.

Consequently, those who lack courage cannot devote themselves to the happiness of others nor can they improve themselves or achieve anything important or lasting. It's as if their engine has suffered a malfunction.

ITAKURA: There's really nothing more important in life than courage, is there?

IKEDA: The German poet Goethe declared that the loss of possessions and reputation is an insignificant thing. You can always set out to restore them, whereas the loss of courage is the loss of everything.

In a poem titled "Zahme Xenien [VIII]," Goethe writes:

*Possessions lost — little lost!
 Just reflect on yourself
 And acquire new ones.
 Honor lost — much lost!
 Just gain a good reputation
 And people will change their minds.
 Courage lost — all lost!
 It would have been better
 never to have been born.*

If you summon your courage to challenge something, you'll never be left with regret. How sad it is to spend your life wishing, "If only I'd had a little more courage." Whatever the outcome may be, the important thing is to take a step forward on the path that you believe is right.

There's no need to worry about what others may think. Be true to yourself. It's your life, after all.

Part one of a discussion on courage among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division leaders Yasuyuki Itakura (Kansai young men's leader) and Michiko Kanazawa (young women's secretariat).

Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

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When in Los Angeles, visit the SGI-USA Visitor Center at the new SGI-USA Headquarters in Santa Monica. There you can enjoy an exhibit of SGI President Ikeda's photographs and view videos of SGI activities.

The Visitor Center, located at 606 Wilshire Boulevard (at 6th Street and Wilshire) is now open Monday-Friday, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. For more information, please call (310) 260-8978.

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MARCH 16 COMMEMORATED

Southeastern Virginia Youth Hold Festival

SEVA youth organize their first big event as they observe Kosen-rufu Day.

On March 13, at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., the Southeastern Virginia (SEVA) youth commemorated the promise made to the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, by President Ikeda and some 6,000 Soka Gakkai youth on March 16, 1958, to take responsibility for accomplishing kosen-rufu. The SEVA youth put together a festival that brought out each person's talent and passion for peace. It was the first big event they organized.

The last two months of preparation truly brought about great unity and harmony among everyone. The first planning phase and practice started out with about three to four people. "I remember seeing the questionable look in those members' eyes. At that moment I knew I had to stand up and work harder for their sake. I promised those youth



Photo by MIKE JONES

that day, that no matter what, the show must go on; and even if it only consisted of one performance, it would be a great success based on our passion and determination," said Lillian Lopez, SEVA area young women's leader.

There were 18 performances consisting of more than 24 members and several guest performers. The day was filled with the dynamic energy of youth and joy radiated from each participant's heart. From today onward we, the

SEVA youth, made a fresh determination to fight for kosen-rufu, keeping our mentor's words deeply engraved in our hearts.

—LILLIAN M. LOPEZ

A First for Ogden Youth

Ogden, Utah, youth had a successful commemorative meeting for the first time with nine youth participating. (Usually, we drive to Salt Lake City for meetings.) Women's division members supported with food and other refreshments and the one men's division member who attended led a roaring sutra recitation.

A short discussion meeting was held during which the youth studied guidance of SGI President Ikeda and then watched the movie *There's Something About Mary*. We had a great time and will be holding our next meeting on April 11. It is my goal to help put together some form of a musical band in the near future.

—CHRIS HOLT

Photo by MARTIN HOLT



A youth chorus (above) representing the four chapters (Hampton, Newport News, Virginia Beach and Northfolk) that comprise Southeastern Virginia Area sing 'Lean On Me.'

Amy Reeves (below) of Virginia Beach Chapter performs two original songs.

Photo by MIKE JONES



有志者事竟成

—從軍人變成藥劑師

劉灼棋

我出生於香港，十六歲時移民美國。一九七二年高中畢業，即入伍當兵。次年，駐紮韓國時，我結婚了，但是從開始，我們的婚姻就問題重重。我的太太李玉順深受癲癇症，以及嚴重的憂鬱症之苦。她的情緒變化無常，無法預測她下一分鐘會出現什麼行為，唯一的確定的事是我們會吵上，吵架是家常便飯。回來美國以後，到處求醫，並到教堂虔誠禮拜，但是問題更加惡化。一九七九年，我又被派駐韓國。由於堅守工作



Photo by SANDRA ELIOT

崗位，疏於注意太太的行動，她曾經數次企圖自殺。有一次，她從二樓窗口跳出去，導致背部骨折。算命先生說我們家中鬧鬼，於是我們搬到新公寓居住。第一天晚上，我聽到隔壁鄰居一群人好像在誦經，趕緊叫太太關上窗戶，以為是葬禮的聲音不吉利。第二天我太太和鄰居見面時，才得知是佛教徒的座談會，鄰居折伏了她時。

外面等。由於一名信徒的鼓勵，我成為座談會的一員，在房間後面。幾個月以後，我開始修行，每天勤行並且經常在家中舉行聚會。後來我們添了次女美蓮和兒子天賜，一九九二年我從服役二十年的軍中退休，在紐澤西州格羅維爾鎮定居。

退休後，在一家藥廠當警衛，同時申請郵局和州獄政局的工作。但是我真正的目標是成為藥劑師，因為父母和妻子都有健康問題，而且我兄弟姊妹中也有三人是藥劑師。我認為藥劑師可以幫助別人減輕病痛，也可以改善我的財務狀況。因此，我沒有接受郵局和獄政局的工作，一心盼望實現夢想，為廣宣流布展現實證。

池田會長曾經引述日蓮大聖人御書「法妙故人貴」說：「我希望SGI信徒能夠在SGI和社會當中，成為傑出的人才，表現出獨特的個性和風格。」

我決心發揮潛能，成為最優秀的人才，並且不畏艱辛，一定要達成目標。我向家人宣佈我要成為藥劑師，從此，我決心無論如何，非贏不可。

結婚七年後，長女麗芳出世，太太的病況也好轉，雖然我知道御本尊的力量，我還是不肯修行。一九八〇年，回到紐澤西，太太敬領御本尊。起初我只送她去參加座談會，自己在

在送出數件大學入學申請書以後，我才瞭解藥劑師之途遙遠。因為我只有二年制大學學位，而且沒有修過任何理工課程。我很失望，心想不可能在一九九三年九月進入藥學院就讀。然而，我太太鼓勵我不要放棄希望。修行佛法使我有力量繼續向前衝刺。只有一家紐約的藥學院願意和我談論入學之事，雖然他們也認為我

是瘋子，竟然敢申請入學。因為要達到入學的最低標準，我必需將四學期的高深科學和數學課程濃縮在一年內唸完。

我開始在藥廠上大夜班（全工），白天上學。這是我的時間表：工作、上學，在車上或圖書館睡覺，參加學會活動，閒暇時研習佛法。我真正的夢想是進入美國頂尖的費城藥學院。但是藥學院的人說，除非奇蹟出現，我不可能入學。我在御本尊前，再度堅定必勝的決意。一九九三年五月，學校來信通知入學希望渺茫。但是他們並沒有拒絕，我一再提醒自己，絕不放棄。當天晚上我將情況告訴我的老闆，經由他的介紹，我開始在一家藥房打工。我太太繼續唱題支持我，二星期後，無巧不成書，費城藥學院院長來藥房拿藥，老闆介紹我們認識。見面後，藥劑師幫我寫信要求學校破例錄取轉學生。九月入學的日子快到了，我焦急等候著，夫妻一起繼續唱題。紐約的藥學院來信通知我馬上註冊入學。就在我

起程前往紐約的前一刻，電話鈴響，原來是費城藥學院入學許可組問我是否還願意轉學就讀該學院三年級的課程，我大聲叫喊：願意，願意，我馬上來交學費訂金。我太高興了，擁抱妻兒，然後在家中手舞足蹈。我知道這是我的修行和妻子持續唱題的結果。

當然啦！困難並未了結，入學第一個月，二次考試不及格，必需辭去工作，全心全意唸書，由於退伍軍人獎助金不夠支付開銷，開始動用積蓄。當時我非常洩氣，但是我太太勸我不要擔心。我們一起唱題祈禱，通過考試，有足夠的錢應付日常費用，並且要幸福。我非常感謝太太玉順的鼓勵，沒有她，我不可能達成目標。我申請退伍軍人傷殘福利，結果被拒絕。然而，政策突然更改，我獲得全額的退伍軍人獎助金來支持唸大學的費用。此後二年，全家唱題祈求我的成功，結果通過所有的考試。

在此期間，我經常前往紐約照顧雙親，後來父親逝世，雖然我未能說服他唱題，但是我心中知道他看出我修行的力量，而家母當時就開始修行佛法了。

一九九五年五月，我擔任花園州地區的地區長，我擔心是否有足夠的時間完成學業，以及其他的任務，我唱題祈禱在一九九六年六月前畢業。在一九九五年十二月我畢業了，在來特愛德藥房擔任藥劑師，現在已升任經理，而且藥房離家僅十分鐘路程。

在修行十七年之後，我了解到御本尊為原點，任何事都變為可能的。我記得池田先生在德州達拉斯的指導：「每一個人都有權獲得幸福，也有獲得幸福的潛能，經由對御本尊唱題和採取行動，我們可以獲得幸福。」以日蓮大聖人的佛法為本，我決意在生活和社區中繼續進修研究課程，攻讀藥學博士。

（洪健地譯自一九九八年十二月十八日/廿五日World Tribune）

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新人間革命隨筆

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大關西的師弟精神

法國文豪羅曼·羅蘭吶喊：「歸根結底，人生就是戰鬥。一切權利屬於勝利者！」

大阪城，仰望巍然聳立的大阪城，彷彿看見常勝的英姿。出大阪站，乘計程車，駛近關西本部時，黃昏的遠方，大阪城最先映入眼簾。

心情寧靜的我，一看見大阪城堅強的信念，猶如飛瀑；湧起我多次奔赴關西法戰，這種夏日傍晚的景色，格外留在年輕的心中。

一九五六年，奉戶田先生之命，我第一次急赴大阪法戰。車站上，幾張熟悉的面孔在等候。高興的面孔，愉快的面孔，可親的面孔……

這些同志都勇於實踐使命，充實自己的人生。他們抱著無限的使命和熱望迎接我。滿懷喜悅、滿懷真情的人們啊。

人的溫暖的心，如豔陽似的心，這就是關西精神。

歡喜地握手，微笑中傳遞著廣宣流布的電流。

我辭去會長、改任名譽理事長的那個晚上（一九七九年四月二十四日），兩台汽車沿著深夜的高速公路向東京疾馳，車上坐的是關西青年們。並非受誰慫恿，只是一聽說我辭了會長就坐立不安，破門而出。

在車上不曾闔眼，第二天一大早趕到東京。和先到的會員會合，藤原武等草創金城會的六位英才氣喘吁吁地跑到我身邊。

「我們跟著池田先生奮鬥！」

那麼真誠，通宵達旦，在狂風暴雨的形勢下毅然決然地飛奔而來，那正義的呼喊，如雄鷹般的英姿，令我高興和安慰。

我將他們命名為「關西七勇士」。

這七位關西弟子仍屹立在廣布第一線，悠然指揮。

二十年前的那一天的事情至今猶令我感動不已。

當時，我對他們說：「特意從老遠趕來，非常感佩。絲毫不用擔心呀，沒什麼可怕的，因為我大義凜然。」

他們那天的英姿，至今仍留在我的心，永不消逝。

「有偉大的弟子是最可喜的事。」這是戶田先生經常掛在嘴上的話。

此刻，我在狂風暴雨和忍耐之中也有同感。那是暗無天日、狂風暴雨的日日夜夜。

我經銷有力地說：「對將來懷抱著希望，不因不安而動搖，這門的惡和尚勾結、被套上地獄鎖

鏈之徒。那是些被大家吐唾沫、飽受譴責和羞辱的惡黨。

我斷言：「一看著吧，正邪必然涇渭分明！」

大家都知道叛徒、退轉者的末路何等悲慘。

正法必然會受惡鬼鬼神侵擾。大聖人時代也有很多反叛者。日興上人時也有五老僧反叛。

流布正法的學會，面對群魔競起是必然的，這恰恰證明了學會的正義。

他們為什麼瘋狂了？人這東西是可怕的。

他們企圖以陰險的行動，把我們推進狂風暴雨之中，實我們於死地。

然而，有心的幹部凜然屹立，尤其是關西的同志紋絲不動。

無庸贅言，團結的關西在於現在的總關西長西口良山，還有S G I理事長和田榮一，以及關西長藤原武、第二關西長木村勝等，這是一支正義的軍隊。

從疲憊不堪的夥伴當中，勇敢

法取代的人生之寶。

我衷心希望賢明的各位，以溫暖及寬闊的心胸互相勉勵。彼此守護著。強盛的信心大地，並向正義大道前進。我最大的願望是各位以堅定正確的信心和異體同心的團結，守護著家人及友人，且帶給地區幸福和堅強的信賴感，像盛開的花卉般美麗。

我每天都送題目給各位，祈求最珍貴的各位及家人健康康地活躍著，請各位向今天不能前來參加的會友問候。

創價學會國際會長 池田大作

一九九九年三月四日

參加這次研修會的人數總計一百三十二人，包括海外和國內的幹部以及兩位遠自日本專程趕來為會友服務的大廚。

這四天三夜的課程包括抽籤研習、宗門問題、活動及體驗交流、和S G I U S A活動方針。除了活動方針以外，所有座談會都由來訪幹部負責以小組討論的方式舉行。他們對佛法有深刻的了解，在學會中經過多年嚴格的歷練。對美國的華人會友，他們流瀉著真誠的關懷。由於他們的支持，研修會的內容更加豐富充實。在他們的引導下，幾乎每位會友都有機會發表自己的意見或體驗。

課餘有遊大沼澤等團體活動，其餘閒暇時間會友們三五五聚在一起，或在湖邊，或在餐廳，或在宿舍客廳中，分享心得，互相鼓勵，甚至在洗手間都可聽到佛法或體驗。許多會友覺得在這短短的幾天中，他們的生命和信心

的中堅幹部閃電似地發出吶喊：「看穿企圖！回擊陰謀！」

隨著轟轟雷鳴，太陽在夜黑風高的彼方開始昇起。

在眾多友人即將遭難之際，救助的朝日開始放射光芒。

聖訓有云：「欲知未來果，見現在因。」

這一年（一九七九年）的七月十七日，關西同志盟誓：

關西是革命精神的原點！

關西是奔向二十一世紀世界的人材寶庫！

關西要帶動全國掀起信心的洪流。

關西堅定的站起來。師弟精神熊熊燃燒。進而開始了威風堂堂的挑戰。

在牧口先生殉難之日的十一月十八日，大阪、京都、兵庫、奈良、和歌山、滋賀、福井的廣宣鬥士聚集一堂，氣宇宣昂地召開「第一屆關西總會」。

他們推開大浪，衝破黑暗，成為「萬佛艦隊」，跨越逆捲的狂濤，以無數的信心和團結，高呼

一定要建立「永遠的都城」，幸福的帝王夢想的都城。輝煌的、永恆的、無冕的偉大民族在那裡等待。

蔑視那些崩潰的權威者流，一定建設三世永遠的人類勝利的寶座，勇敢的行動開始了。

這是廣宣流布的戰鬥，是人類宗教的誕生，是御本佛大聖人救濟人類的大佛法。

二〇〇二年是關西起步五十年。關西是折伏之王。

關西是廣宣流布的先驅。所以，關西是常勝的關西。

關西也是人類愛和異體同心的團結的模範天地。

那裡沒有權威，沒有社會階級，沒有貧富之差，大家平等，是具有一切生命力的庶民之都，是人類燦爛的歡喜之都。

大關西有人類理想的共和國，只有愉快明朗的真正的勝利者才能品味。我衷心的讚賞。

都充足了電，能夠面對任何困難。有許多會友將這片充滿池田先生的愛心的園地比喻為靈山淨土，耳朵聽見的都是佛法，眼睛看到的是一張張神采奕奕、親切友愛的臉，連古畫中描繪的仙境也沒這麼好。

感謝兩位大廚，餐餐都是豐盛的佳餚，龍蝦、螃蟹、雞鴨魚肉、蔬菜水果，甚至還以中藥熬補湯。有天下下午，池田先生還特別囑咐負責人為會友準備點心。

三月六日星期六晚上照例是同樂會。每區都有代表表演節目，歌唱、舞蹈、功夫無一不精彩。壓軸是男扮女裝、女扮男裝的「戲鳳」，他們的表演，令全場的會友捧腹大笑。最後，由紐約青年部會友帶頭大家跳舞，真正達到同樂的目的。

三月七日上午中林副理事長將結業證書頒發給每一位會友，並由會友發表研修會心得。中林先生也鼓勵大家回到所屬地區時，和未能參加的會友分享自己的喜悅和收穫。

三月七日午飯後，會友們依依不捨地互道珍重，各自踏上歸途。

今年八月五日至八日（原訂八月底，因故改為八月初）我們將再度舉行華語研修會，請踴躍報名參加，保證你的信心會有意想不到的成長。

華語研修會報導

三月四日羅德岱堡的天空一片碧藍，豔陽高照，和風煦煦。「佛羅里達自然和文化中心」草木青蔥翠綠，呈現著冬去春來的景緻。第二屆全美華語研修會再過幾個小時就要開始了。

早上十一時就有會友到達會場。在場等待迎接他們的有四位來自台灣的幹部：陳瑞琴、吳安妮、石明湖、李錦談，四位來自香港的幹部：鄭杏寶、胡惠娟、李錦榮、申寶來，以及美國創價學會副理事長中林正宏，婦人部秘書長財津太太。最令人感動的是海外的幹部都自費前來支持這項活動。

在享受了豐盛的晚餐後，研修會正式開幕。池田先生特別致贈意味深遠的賀詞，內容如下：

「這次盛大的、第二屆全美華語研修會，實在值得祝賀！無論如何，希望你們都快快樂樂地渡過有意義的研修會。為了美國的會友，而特別從香港及台灣趕來的幹部們，實在太感謝你們了。」

大聖人教示：「是以成佛之道，莫過於善知識。」這是告誡我們，就佛法觀點而言，親近善知識（善友）才是正確的成长之道。我們人生最高尚的善知識就是學會。無論什麼時候，同志彼此間的鼓勵，是無

的

的

제 2회 FNCC 한국어 연수회

지난 3월 11일부터 3월 14일까지 FNCC에서는 제 2회 한국어 연수회가 열렸습니다. 미전역에서 180명의 회원들이 참석해 주셨고 멀리 한국 불교회에서 김용환 부이사장, 김옥경 전국 부부인부장, 그리고 SGI-USA에서는 사썬끼 부이사장께서 참석해 주셨습니다. 이번 제 2회 한국어 연수회를 두 편의 수필과 몇 편의 경험담을 통하여 알아보겠습니다.

"한국어 연수회에 참석해 보세요"

수 필

- FNCC에서 -

지난 3월 11일부터 14일까지 FNCC 자연문화센터에서 열리고 있는 제 2회 한국어 연수회에 참석하기 위해 우리들은 로스엔젤레스 공항을 출발하였다. 마이애미 공항에 도착한 우리들 일행을 맞이하기 위해 3색기를 든 노부쿠니씨와 김남수씨가 마중 나와 있었다. 낯선 곳에서 우리의 회원을 보니 정말 반갑고 고맷다. 안내를 따라서 버스를 타고 연수센터로 향하는 나는 알 수 없는 긴장과 흥분을 느끼며 창밖의 색다른 플로리다 경치를 감상하였다. 30여분 후에 도착한 연수센터는 풀과 나무로 둘러싸여 있는 조용하고 아늑한 곳이었다. 곳곳에 은은한 가로등이 어둠을 밝혀주고 건물 한쪽길을 따라 만들어 놓은 호수는 물새들의 안정된 보금자리이며 휴식처였고 그 가운데 11층 높이의 분수가 조명을 받아 환상적인 모습으로 그 시원함을 뽐내 올리고 있었다. 로스엔젤레스의 건조한 기후와는 색다른 이곳의 자연은 회원들의 장기간 여행 피로를 말끔히 씻어주었다. 강당으로 들어간 우리는 간단한 출석체크와 저녁식사를 마치고 우정의 강당에서 행해진 연수회 개회식에 참석하였다.

개회식에서는 여러 간부들의 소개가 있었고 그때마다 일었던 박수소리는 어느덧 환희로 바뀌어 미전역에서 모여든 회원들은 벌써부터 하나가 되고 있었다. 12일 저녁에는 이케다 회장 선생님의 한국 방문 비데오와 김옥경 전국 부부인 부장님의 한국 불교회 활동 상황에 대한 보고가 있었다. 여러방면에 걸쳐 꾸준히 힘써온 지역사회 봉사활동은 이케다 회장 선생님과 한국 불교회에 대하여 새로운 이미지를 심어주

었고 각 지역마다 앞을 다투어 감사 현창이 줄을 잇고 있었다. 불과 40여년만에 민중의 희망으로서, 참된 봉사단체로서, 그리고 종교계의 왕으로서 그 위용을 떨치고 있는 한국 불교회의 저력은 과연 어디에서 비롯되는 것일까! 여기는 미국, 세계의 모든 민족과 그들의 문화가 한데 어울려 인간성의 증시될 21세기를 열어가는 세계 광선 유포의 중심지. 나는 스스로에게 물어본다. 매일매일의 생활에 승리하고 있는가! 어서 말씀대로, 선생님의 지도 말씀대로 실천하고 있는가!

연수 마지막 날, 회원들의 참여로 행해진 지역별 장기자랑에서는 부채춤, 삼고무, 화관무, 인도춤, 합창과 댄스, 그리고 바이올린 연주 등 다양한 공연이 이루어졌으며 공연이 끝난 후 회원들과 간부들 우리 모두는 손에 손을 잡고 노래와 춤을 추며 이번 연수회 성공을 자축하였다.

이번 연수회를 통하여 소중하게 기억될 것은 FNCC에 참석한 대부분의 회원들은 누군가 모르는 사람들과의 대화까지도 최선을 다해 들어주고 용기와 격려를 아끼지 않았다는 것이다. 정말 아름다운 FNCC만의 모습이라는 생각이 든다. 만약 누군가 신심의 새로운 전환기를 맞고 싶다면 나는 이렇게 말하고 싶다. "FNCC 한국어 연수회에 참석해 보세요"라고.

다음날, 석별의 아쉬움을 뒤로하고 숙명전환된 모습으로 다시 만나기로 기약하면서 비행기에 오랐다. 비행기 안에서 창밖을 내다보며 나는 결의했다. 다시 한번 FNCC 연수회에 참석하여 내 자신의 승리의 체험담을 발표하리라. (L. A.에서 박미경)

그래 바로 여기야! 생명의 고향은... 왜 FNCC에서의 햇빛은 더욱더 찬란하고 공기는 향기롭고 나뭇잎들은 저마다 행복하다고 말하는 것 같을까? 제 2회 연수회가 열리는 FNCC로 우리들 180명은 각자가 승리자인양 당당한 모습으로 자리를 함께하였습니다. 멀리 한국에서는 김용환 부이사장, 김옥경 부부인부장, 그리고 미국 SGI에서는 사썬끼 부이사장 또 L.A.에 사시는 조용완 부인부장께서도 참석해 주셨습니다.

3월 12일 오전 연수회에서는 고우니 부인어서를 배웠습니다. 그리고 오후에는 그림같은 호수를 배경으로 사제불이에 대하여 그룹토의가 있었습니다. 3월 13일 연수회에서는 중문문제를 공부하면서 아무리 사소한 일이라도 악을 용납해서는 안 된다는 것을 배웠습니다. 그리고 그날밤, 화려한 축제가 열렸던 그날밤, 워싱턴 D.C.의 삼고무, 한국 고전 무용 그리고 노래와 춤, 눈물이 날 정도로 서정적이고 아름답던 하와이 홀라춤.

모든 회원들은 흐르는 시간을 안타까워하며 다함께 손을 잡고 춤을 춘 일들은 영원히 잊을 수 없는 아름다운 추억으로서 저의 가슴에 새겨졌

습니다. 그리고 14일 아침. FNCC에서의 마지막 근행을 하였습니다. 미국에서 제일 크다는 그 불단은 마치 허공회 의식에서 열렸던 보탑처럼 보였습니다. 구원원초의 동지인 우리들은 감격과 환희의 눈물을 흘리면서 지용의 보살로써 살아갈 것을 맹세하며 각자가 맡은 사명의 땅으로 돌아갔습니다. 다음에 또 만나자고, 승리해서 만나자고... 3박 4일동안 한국말도 모르시면서 한번도 자리를 비우지 않으셨던 사썬끼 부이사장의 따뜻한 미소, 수고를 아끼지 않으셨던 한국 코디네이터 여러분, 총각김치 열무김치등 너무나 맛있던 한국음식들, 그리고 자원봉사로 식당일을 도와주셨던 여러분들께 감사드립니다.

이케다 회장님께서 스승이신 또다회장님의 꿈을 실현시키기 위하여 그분의 사전을 품에 안고 세계광선유포의 여정에 오르셨듯이 세계광선유포의 중심지인 미국에서 살고있는 우리들도 이케다 회장선생님의 제자로서 광포를 위한 거목이 되어갈 것을 다짐합니다. - 감사합니다. (뉴욕에서 김정숙)



FNCC에 참석하신 회원들의 경험담

아! 선생님의 마음은 저 태양이 세계를...

저는 1971년 한국에서 생활고로 입신, 지구담으로 꾸준한 신심활동에 면려하여 경제적으로 안정된 생활과 단란하고 화목한 과정을 만들 수 있었습니다. 그런데 지난 84년 온 가족이 뉴욕으로 이민을 와서 도착하는 날부터 지옥의 구덩이로 빠져들고 말았습니다. 꿈에 부풀어 있던 미국생활은 기대와는 달리 고난의 연속이었습니다. 아침 9시 반부터 밤 8시까지 가게를 보면서 남편은치에 제대로 한번 앉지도 못하고 집에 돌아오면 아들셋을 뒷바라지 하느라 수면부족으로 현기증과 구토에 시달리는 등 정말 지옥속을 헤매는 날들이었습니다. 그러자 차츰 신심은 형식적으로만 되가고 생명은 탁해져 그 모든 것을 나의 숙업이 아닌 남편의 책임으로 돌려 매일같이 남편을 원질했습니다. 마에 휩쓸린 생명은 남편뿐만 아니라 주위의 모든 사람들을 경시하고 심지어 신심 잘하고 있는 착한 며느리까지 미워하고 구박하며 악의 신, 구, 의, 삼업을 쌓았습니다. 보다 못한 남편은 재산을 다 팔테니 헤어지자며 이혼요구를 해왔지만 약한 마음에 뿌리

치고 부부갈등은 심해져 갔습니다. 그러던중 3월에 FNCC 한인 연수회가 개최된다는 소식을 듣고 반드시 지원하여 다녀와 나의 이 뼈들어진 생명을 바로 잡자고 결의창제에 도전했습니다. 그전에도 FNCC에 갈 수 있는 기회가 2번이나 있었지만 기원없이 돈만 있으면 가겠더라는 나태한 마음 때문에 가지 못했던 경험이 있기에 이번만큼은 반드시 필사적으로 기원하고 도전해서 가자라는 강한 각오로 진지하게 제목을 불러 나갔습니다. 마침내 FNCC에 도착하여 들어가는데 이케다 회장 선생님에 대한 감사의 마음이 생명으로 느껴지면서 눈물이 앞을 가렸습니다. 그 넓고 푸른 대지를 보면서 지금까지의 어둠 속에서 헤매이던 제 모습을 너무치고 발자욱 발자욱마다 느껴지는 회원을 위한 선생님의 우주와 같은 마음에 3박 4일 내내 참 많이 울었습니다. 전에는 선생님의 지도나 활동이 생명으로 와닿지 않고 스피치를 읽는 것도 지겨워 했는데 이제서야 사재불이 정신이 무엇인지 조금은 알 것 같았습니다. 호수 위로 붉은 저 태양이 떠오를 때 아침 근행을 하면서 "아! 선생님의 마음은 저 태양과 같이 세계를 비추듯 전세계의 민중을 향해 태양과 같이 비추고 있구나" 반면 닳겐은

수많은 사람들을 어둠 속으로 끌어들이며 불행하게 만들고 있구나라는 생각이 들면서 지금까지 남의 일처럼 생각되었던 중문문제도 더욱 열심히 공부할 수 있었습니다. 지금은 한 사람이라도 닳겐 때문에 불행하게 해서 안되겠다는 마음으로 중문문제의 해결을 위한 10 Billion Daimoku 캠페인에 모두가 동참할 수 있도록 제목하고 활동하고 있습니다. 연수회에 참석하신 한분한분의 체험담을 들으며 이 넓은 미국땅 곳곳에 흩어져 각자의 숙명을 이겨내고 사명을 다하는 자랑스러운 한국회원의 모습에 더욱 발심하게 되었고 어본존님에 대한 감사와 SGI회원으로서의 긍지가 느껴졌습니다. 이번 FNCC 한인 연수회는 미국 생활 15년동안 탁한 생명으로 괴로워하고 원질로만 생활하던 저의 잘못된 신심을 바로 잡을 수 있는 소중한 단련이었습니다. 끝으로 "부인부는 가정의 태양이다."라는 선생님의 지도를 생명에 새겨 나의 가정을 비추고 나아가 지역사회에서 신뢰를 쌓는 부인부가 될 것을 결의하며 뉴욕의 중문문제는 나의 기원으로 해결하겠다는 일념으로 "중문문제의 프로", "제목의 프로", "절복의 프로"가 되어 현장에서 승리해 나가겠습니다. (Brooklyn, New York, 이계숙)

FNCC에 참석하신 회원들의 경험담

이래의 체험담은 제 2회 FNCC 한국어 연수회에 참석하신 회원들의 경험담을 듣고 요약한 것입니다.

Washington D.C. 부인부 5명
작년 FNCC 참석 후 내년에는 우리도 무언가를 준비해서 발표하자라고 모두가 결의, 1년동안 학원에 다니면서 한국 전통무용인 삼고무를 배움. 목표를 세우고 투쟁하는 도중 서로가 서로를 원질하게 되는 마가 일어났으나 마를 간파하고나니까 이길 수 있었음. 한편 삼고무를 연기하기 위해서는 다수의 복이 필요한데 학원에서는 복을 대여하지 않아 \$5,000가량을 함께 공양하여 한국에서 직접 복을 사음. 복이 도착하기까지도 시간과 경비부담등 어려움이 있었으나 오로지 이체동심으로 기원하여 복이 3월 11일 도착. 이러한 일념으로 인해 삼고무는 마지막 밤 축제 하이라이트가 되어 재공연을 함. 이 공연은 모든 회원들과 간부의 찬사를 받음.

Washington D.C. 장인부
부인 혼자 오래 신심을 지속해오던 결혼 13년만에 올해 1월에 신심을 시작. 대대로 카톨릭교인 집안에서 자라 입신결정이 쉽지 않았지만 오랫동안 부인을 지켜보다 그 모습에 감동 용기있게 입신결정. 부인과 함께 FNCC에 참석. 많은 이들의 부러움을 받음.

California 부인부
80년 한국에서 입신 3개월 이후 도미. 회원을 만나지도 못하고 있던 중 교회에 나가자는 권유를 마다하고 자신은 남표호에게 교를 한다고 하니까 오히려 교회 다니는 분이 신심하는 일본분 소개. 두 갓난아이들 등에 업고 일본 회원을 찾아 하루종일 해냄. 그러한 일념으로 오늘날까지 신심을 지속해오고 있음. 혼자서 타국땅에서 두아이를 기르는 일이 쉽지 않았지만 어본존님이 계시기에 용기를 가지고 극복할 수 있었음. 두아이를 광포의 대인제로 기르겠다는 목표를 가지니까 힘이라고 제목도 많이 할 수 있었음. 지금은 어려움이 생기면 생길수록 '아, 내가 숙업벗구나'라는 확신이 생겨 즐거운 마음으로 신심. FNCC오기 전 착하던 아들이 갑자기 가출하였으나 꼭 아들을 돌아오게 하고 어떠한 일이 있어도 FNCC에 가겠다는 일념을 가지고 제목에 도전. 빠른 시일 내로 아들이 무사히 돌아와 깊은 대화를 나누는등 변동위약시킬 수 있었음.

Hawaii 부인부
FNCC오기 일주일 전 어머니가 수술을 받고 퇴원. 자기 힘든 상황에서 갈까말까 망설였으나 전지한 제목도전 이후 용기를 가지고 결정. 삼창도 제대로 안하던 아들이 자기가 범수를 올리겠다고 편안히 다녀오라고 격려. 어려움 속에서 FNCC에 오게되어 너무나 많은 것을 배우고 돌아감에 다시한번 어본존님께 감사.

South Carolina 부인부
오래 세월을 신심하면서 어려움도 고통도 많았으나 오직 제목으로 싸워서 하나하나씩 극복해왔음. 얼마전 심한 교통사고로 목숨을 잃을뻔함. 치아가 모두 부서지고 머리와 온몸에 상처가 심하는 등의 중상을 입었으나, 오로지 신심이란 죽는 순간까지 싸워 나아가는데서 참된 의미를 찾았다고 생각, 죽는 힘을 다해 제목을 불러나아갔다. 그래서 건강할 모습으로 FNCC 연수회에 오게 참석. 이러한 마음으로 지금까지 56번의 백만번 제목을 성공해냈음. 제목을 하면서 깨달은 것은 새롭게 백만번의 제목에 도전할 때마다 새로운 것을 느낄 수 있었고, 또한 새로운 문제(어려움)도 항상 함께 나타났다고. 그러한 어려움을 극복해서 지금 여기까지 올 수 있었던 것은 오직 제목의 힘이라고 확신. 오직 어본존님과 선생님께 감사.

이 외에도 기가막힌 기적과 같은 체험담을 하신 분들이 많았습니다. 그분들의 공통점은 어떠한 상황에서도 '이겨내겠다, 승리하겠다'라는 마음으로 끝까지 제목을 불러나갔다는 것입니다.

"끝으로 우리들이 싸움을 일으키는데 있어서 가장 중요한 것이 무엇인가를 말해주고자 합니다. 그것은 용기입니다. 아침에 일찍 일어나는 데에도, 근행을 하는 데에도 용기가 필요합니다. 또한 나쁜 것을 나쁘다고 잘라 말하는 데에도, 절복을 하는 데에도 용기가 필요하합니다. 인생도 광포도 모두가 용기의 두자로 결정되어 버립니다. 신심이란 용기의 이명(異名)입니다. 부디 용기를 가지고 자신의 약점을 극복하고 숙명을 이겨내 주십시오. 그리고 나는 이렇게 행복하다고 말할 수 있는 경계가 되어야 하지 않을까요? 그것이 도다 선생님의 염원입니다."

- 인간혁명 12권 선언중에서

한국어 페이지를 위한

안 내 말 씀

지금까지 월드 트리뷴에서는 스페니쉬어, 중국어 그리고 한국어 페이지를 매일 발간하였습니다. 금년 6월부터, 월드트리뷴에서는 구독자 중에서 원하시는 분야 한하여 외국어 페이지를 우송해드립니다. 만약 월드트리뷴을 구독하시면서 외국어 난을 받아 보시기를 원하신다면 아래의 신청서를 기입하신 후 다음의 주소로 보내 주십시오.

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** 각 지역의 리더 되시는 분들께서는 월드 트리뷴을 구독하시는 회원들 중 한분도 빠짐없이 한국어 페이지를 받아 보실 수 있도록 확인해 주셨으면 감사하겠습니다. **

* 영어로 쓰세요

Last Name (성) _____

First Name (이름) _____

Address (주소) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Area code & phone number (전화번호: 지역번호 포함) _____

월드 트리뷴 구독(ID) 번호: _____

* 이 번호는 월드트리뷴 첫 페이지에서 본인의 성명 바로 위에 적혀 있으며 9자리 숫자로 되어 있습니다.

아래 것 중 하나를 선택하십시오

스페니쉬어 한국어 중국어