



## DISCUSSION

President Ikeda on Rosa Parks in 'Discussions on Youth.'

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## YOUTH

The April edition of 'Seize the Day.'

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AP PHOTO/DAVID BRAUCHLI

## Soka Gakkai Donates Funds for Kosovar Refugee Relief

The Soka Gakkai Youth Peace Conference donated \$41,600 on April 9 to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees to help the agency provide emergency relief to the more than 620,000 people who have fled Kosovo. The funds will help provide food, water, health services, sanitation facilities and temporary shelter to refugees who have fled to neighboring Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Turkey.

"It is our sincere wish that this donation can help alleviate the suffering of displaced Kosovars," said YPC Chairperson Hiroki Nagano when presenting the funds to UNHCR Representative for Japan, Mr. Gary Troeller, in Tokyo. Mr. Nagano conveyed SGI members' heartfelt hope that the refugees will soon return home in safety and dignity.

Every year since 1973, the Soka Gakkai YPC has held annual fund-raising drives in support of refugees. In 1998, it donated \$286,885 for relief to refugees from Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia.

— CONGDON SMITH



An unidentified Kosovar boy comforts his younger brother, who cries for his father, March 31. The father did not leave Kosovo with them, as they traveled on a snowy road along the border to the nearby Yugoslav province of Montenegro.

# Furthering Our Commitment to Peace

### A Letter From SGI-USA General Director Fred Zaitso

Each day that the terrible conflict in Kosovo drags on, more and more of our members are asking important questions: What can they do about it? What is our religious organization doing about it?

What is our position?



As Buddhists, I believe we can each start by praying sincerely and as often as possible to the Gohonzon for the safety of all involved, and for a speedy end to the violence. At each meeting that I attend, I urge our members to do this.

The SGI Charter reminds us that one of our fundamental purposes is to contribute to peace, culture and education based on Buddhist respect for the sanctity of life. It commits us to challenging the global issues facing humankind through dialogue and practical efforts based on a steadfast commitment to nonviolence.

As SGI President Ikeda writes in his 1999 Peace Proposal, "Toward a Culture of Peace — A Cosmic View": "Ways of resolving international problems and conflicts peacefully must be devised if we are successfully to break with the culture of war.... We must always be extremely cautious in opting for military force as a solution.... In the final analysis, since they usually leave wounds that continue to fester, forcibly imposed 'hard power' solutions are not real solutions at all.... No matter how much we try to justify or rationalize them, as long as the opponent regards them as unfair, such measures will always lead to an intractable cycle of conflict or revenge. Instead of resorting to hard power solutions, we must first clarify the nature of the problem and then employ dialogue — the essence of 'soft power' to remove, one by one, the obstacles to solution."

The situation in Yugoslavia is complex and contradictory, and the seeds of current ethnic and religious conflicts were planted centuries ago. Contemporary political and military fac-

tors seem to complicate the search for solutions. But whatever our political views, it cannot be denied that violence perpetuates and deepens violence and hatred.

One thing of which we can be certain is that the root causes of these problems exist in the hearts and minds of human beings. Therefore the solutions lie with human beings. For us, the practice of faith is the driving force for the fundamental changes that must occur in the hearts and minds of each human being.

As Buddhists, we must try to ensure that our thoughts, conversations and actions are creative, inspired and positive, and that we never forget that all the people involved, on every side, are human beings with immense potential for good.

At times like this it is easy to feel powerless, overwhelmed by the scale and speed of events. Now we are challenged to use our Buddhist faith and practice so we can awaken the immense potential to initiate

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## A Serbian Young Woman Appeals for Peace

*In the April 2 SGI-UK Bulletin, Sasha Radoja, young women's leader for Gloucester Road District, Chelsea and South Kensington Chapter, appeals to all SGI members in the United Kingdom:*

With the bombing of Serbia, I cannot even begin to describe how I feel. As a Serbian who has been living in the UK for almost seven years, and SGI member for five years, I am trying to find ways to help my people and carry out my determination for kosen-rufu in the world. This is a decisive moment which must bring about fundamental change in the world.

Conflict cannot be resolved by conflict. I am chanting for the Yugoslav peoples' safety and process of profound human revolution in their lives that will bring about utmost humanity and desire to create value through peace. I am

also chanting for the awakening of the world in which we are not going to be governed by power, but by freedom and peaceful dialogue. We must turn a new page in the history of the world at the brink of a new century and turn poison into medicine.

I think I am grasping the concept of kosen-rufu at the most profound level and keeping close to SGI President Ikeda's heart. I can feel his support. I would welcome the support of SGI-UK members. I would like all of us to meet with our hearts instantaneously, to abandon small, almost self-obsessive, worries and open our hearts for the whole world. Only when we do that will we be committed to kosen-rufu. I want all of us to grow in our faith and take responsibility for the state of the world we live in. We do not only chant for kosen-rufu, we fight for kosen-rufu. We must make a difference. There is no other way. 

## Madison Hosts District Leaders Training Meeting



Photo by MICHIKO HOLIDAY and RUSS MACKIE

Leaders from the Madison, Wis., area attend their leaders conference, March 21.

"It was the best meeting I ever attended," said Mike Voves as he exited Monona Terrace's Hall of Fame. Mike's sentiments were echoed by many attendees of the Madison, Wis., district leaders training meeting.

On the morning of March 21, some had come prepared to endure the Buddhist austerity of reviewing the *SGI-USA Leadership Manual* paragraph by paragraph. That would have been really dry, according to Lillian Wilner, Madison Chapter women's division leader and central coordinator for the meeting. "We strove to come up with a relevant agenda based on what the district leaders wanted," she explained. "Then we chanted for the meeting to be fun and accessible."

And was it ever! After gongyo, there was a personality test in which people expressed an affinity for certain shapes. The choices were circle, square, triangle, rectangle and squiggle. Each shape meant a different type of personality, and

it was instantly gratifying that everyone was *not* the same shape.

"I'm a recovering triangle," quipped one district leader. "I think I'm two shapes," commented Jean Kovac, Wisconsin Area leader. Irene Mackie, game facilitator and vice women's division area leader, was quick to point out that "all different kinds of people are needed to effectively take care of the members and advance world peace."

After lunch, Tim Burnham, River West District leader, facilitated a session on improving communication. One of the most important points made is that communication is like an iceberg: If people don't strive to communicate on an intimate, meaningful level (the unseen part of the iceberg), then routine administrative communication (the visible part of the iceberg) does not occur or is ineffective.

— ELIZABETH THOMPSON

Photo by JEFF McDANIEL



Northern California study coordinators meet with Eugene Hirahara at the San Francisco Culture Center, March 13.

## San Francisco Study Coordinators Revitalize Themselves

How do you create a study movement that conveys revitalizing, empowering inner discoveries!? This was the theme of a study coordinators dialogue with Eugene Hirahara, SGI-USA Study Department leader, March 13 at the San Francisco Culture Center.

Study coordinators from all over Northern California brought their frustrations, their determination and their passion about the study of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with them in order to have a lively, spirited, getting-to-know-you afternoon. As the newly appointed Study Department leader, Mr. Hirahara will be holding meetings like this with study representatives around the nation, as will be the other national Study Department leaders.

— MARK WILLWERTH

## International Criminal Court Discussed at SUA, Calabasas

The Human Rights Lecture Series at Soka University of America, Calabasas, continued March 23 with the hosting of a panel discussion on

ous crimes of conduct being committed internationally: war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Mr. Schachter said that creating an ICC is "the next important step in developing human rights law" and suggested that atrocities of recent years in Yugoslavia and Rwanda point to the urgent need for the realization of this tribunal.



Photo by LISA HOLLIS

Marvin Schachter at SUA.

the proposed establishment of an International Criminal Court. The gathered experts from the Southern California Working Group on the ICC, led by Marvin Schachter, group chair, argued that this kind of international court would address the most seri-

ous crimes of conduct being committed internationally: war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. SGI President Ikeda has also advocated the formation of an ICC: In his 1998 Peace Proposal (in the May 1998 *Living Buddhism*), he says that he has been "eager to see such a court established as a pillar around which the 'international law of peace' can be enhanced and elaborated."

This ongoing lecture series organized by SUA, Calabasas, is focused on promoting peace, justice and social reform through education.

— JEFF FARR

# A Solution to Constant Wars

On the eve of the Caltech (Calif.) opening of the 'Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century' exhibition, Dr. Pauling's son, Linus Pauling Jr., reflects on his experiences with the SGI. He sees the philosophy of the SGI as a solution to war.

By DR. LINUS PAULING JR.

I found SGI President Daisaku Ikeda to be a most remarkable individual when I met him last year. I was particularly impressed by his capacity to reach into individuals and elicit the best that they were able to produce, even, perhaps, more than they had realized they could. I was a practicing psychiatrist for 35 years or so, and it was of course part of my job to reach into people and find out what positive attributes they had in order to help them learn how to use their assets for the improvement of their lives. President Ikeda is a philosopher, not a psychiatrist, but he has this capability. My father was a scientist, but I became a psychiatrist to study the unconscious human mind, which is invisible. Based on my experience, I know how difficult it is to touch the deep side of someone's mind and how hard it is to bring out good qualities that he or she hasn't recognized yet.

My father met President Ikeda in his later days and mentioned him to me on many occasions, but I was particularly struck by the fact that in my father's office, at

the time I started working there, which was late 1991, there was a stack of books: the book on peace published by President Ikeda and my father, *A Lifelong Quest for Peace*. I noticed that my father tended to pass out a copy of this book to distinguished visitors who came to see him, and I think that he had considerable pride in participating with President Ikeda in this book.

President Ikeda and my father were complementary in many ways. My father was not a deep philosopher; he was trained as a scientist. He depended very much on concrete information and felt uncomfortable dealing with individual human emotion. President Ikeda, on the other hand, is very comfortable dealing with abstractions. Where they came together was in their creative imaginations regarding the damage that could result to our society if things went wrong and what efforts should be made to improve the future.

My father, coming from his scientific background that dealt with facts and statistics, and President Ikeda with his philosophical training dealing with concepts, managed to come together, bringing these two viewpoints to a mu-



Dr. Linus Pauling Jr. visits Caltech, his father's alma mater, March 13. The 'Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century' exhibition will show at Caltech's Winnett Center from May 16 to June 19 (Wednesdays, 4:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.; Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; and Sundays, 12:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.)

tual understanding, an understanding that lay within each of them. I think that was very helpful to my father. I have some wish that he might have had that experience earlier in his life so that he could have directed himself towards a more philosophical approach. I know that my father did not have much regard for Sigmund Freud's ideas of the unconscious and felt uncomfortable when confronted with evidence that the unconscious was operating. It was difficult for him to look into himself, and I think that President Ikeda was able to make it comfortable for him to understand himself and reveal what he felt about these issues.

The national touring exhibition "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century" was well received on its first stop by audiences from throughout San Francisco and the Bay Area. I want to express my deep appreciation to President Ikeda, who proposed the organization of this exhibition, and to all SGI members, who fully supported this effort. The next showing, at the California Institute of Technology from May 16 to June 19, is going to be especially significant since it's the closing of a circle. It's my father's symbolic return to his alma mater, where he earned his Ph.D. and taught for four decades.

Through my contacts with SGI, a co-sponsor of this exhibition, I have learned something about its concepts and activities. Also, as I've been learning about the SGI, I've been very impressed by what the SGI has become under President Ikeda, particu-

larly the growth and the quality of the organization. I've been particularly amazed at the dedication of the volunteers. I understand that the San Francisco Culture Center, for example, only has three paid staff members; everyone else working there and everyone who worked on the exhibition in San Francisco was a volunteer. To have this degree of enthusiasm, loyalty and dedication is unusual in any organization. And I also think that the philosophy expressed by the SGI, which originated before President Ikeda but which has been greatly expanded by him, is very good and very constructive. If more people of the world were open to contemplation about life and the future of civilization, SGI would become even more popular than it is already.

I want to mention some points of the philosophy of the SGI that have impressed me. Human beings have a tendency to reject other people or other groups that are different as their enemies, which is a natural reaction as an inborn self-defense. Consequently, any society tends to be competitive and combative. This is the reason why our history is one of constant wars, filled with rupture and antipathy more than solidarity and harmony.

I can give another example of why things go wrong. Back in 1964, I marched with Martin Luther King Jr. and his supporters from Selma to Montgomery in Alabama. At the early part of the march, as we were walking out of the small town of Selma, out in front of the houses lining the road were the people who lived in those

houses. Most of the houses had Confederate flags out in front. This was a demonstration of the fact that these people were defending their right to see things differently from the marchers, despite the fact that the Civil War in America had occurred a hundred years earlier. There were children out there, too, and I saw one boy, 6 or 7 years old, dressed up in a military uniform with a wooden rifle. He was aiming this toy rifle at the marchers as we moved along in front of his house. I could see that these little Southern kids were being brought up to see people who thought differently and had different skin color as being enemies, enemies to be killed. A few days later, on the same road, a civil rights worker was killed by a rifle wielded by an adult, no doubt brought up just as the child I saw earlier.

I feel that in order to get away from this kind of happening and in order to counter the instinctive tendency to view people who are different as enemies, education must start very early. I have learned that this is a high priority of the SGI. I know that the SGI concept is basically that through inner understanding, inner realization, the inner sense of the value of one's own life and contribution, one can move forward and upward, that this is a precursor to acceptance of other people in our society. I admire that very much. However, 12 million SGI members in the world are not really enough. The number of people who can feel self-realized and through that come to accepting others must become a much, much larger number. The SGI has demonstrated how it can be done.

## LETTER, FROM PAGE 1

change we each possess. We can each find ways to express our desire for peace, to work for better understanding amongst different cultures, and to contribute to humanitarian needs.

Each member is free of course to do whatever they think is best. You have the right to voice your personal opinions in various ways. You may choose to contribute to organizations trying to respond to the plight of those directly caught up in the crisis. On an organizational level, as in the past, after thorough discussion with the leadership in your local area, you may arrange a cooperative effort with a reputable service organization.

Nichiren Daishonin's treatise "Rissho Ankoku Ron" states: "If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 38).

As Nichiren Daishonin wrote, the most fundamental action for all of us must be our prayers and faith. With this in mind, let's determine to pray and exert ourselves to develop further our SGI movement to establish a fortress of peace in each individual's life.

Fred Zaitzu  
SGI-USA General Director

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DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

# Courage Is What Makes Justice Possible

In part two of this discussion, President Ikeda says that 'if we are to do good, not only for ourselves but for humanity and the world, we need courage. This is the power that makes such actions possible...'

**MICHIKO KANAZAWA:** I want to share a student's story. In the winter of her first year in senior high school, the group she used to hang out with suddenly began to ignore her. She tried to talk to them about it, but they brushed her off. Even other classmates, who at first sympathized with her, began to turn on her. Malicious notes were passed to her in class. Friendless and alone, she was distraught, unable to fathom why no one liked or trusted her anymore.

She sought advice from one of her seniors in the high school division, who encouraged her: "Don't worry. This is a chance for you to grow. You have to beat this problem. Let's chant together and do our best!"

The student decided to grit her teeth and keep going to school, but it was really hard for her to be there. And she finally told her parents that she wanted to quit school. Her mother said that she could stay home from school for one day but only on the condition that she chant for 10 hours.

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA:** I'm sure her mother was probably even more pained by and concerned about this terrible predicament than the daughter.

**KANAZAWA:** Yes, I think so, too. When the student started chanting, she was feeling sorry for herself, thinking, "What did I do to deserve such suffering?" But as she kept chanting, a new feeling rose inside her —

the confidence that she had the power to make wonderful friends.

The next day she went back to school and put into action the challenge she had set for herself: greeting her classmates. She was extremely nervous when she opened the door to her classroom and said "Good morning," but she had faith that the day would come when they would respond. She persisted in her efforts.

**IKEDA:** Persevering on one's chosen path constitutes courage.

**KANAZAWA:** At first, no one returned her greeting. But she kept it up. By the beginning of her second year in high school, some of her classmates were responding, and today, everyone in her class does.

In fact, she's now become a sort of adviser to both her classmates and student division members who are having human relations problems, and she's doing very well. She says that she's glad that she didn't give up and let her problem defeat her, and she's determined to become a bright source of courage and hope to others, just as her senior was to her when she was suffering.

**IKEDA:** That's her declaration of victory. She really is to be congratulated. How happy her mother must be, too!

This student kept greeting her class-

mates. At first she was ignored, but she persevered. That's so admirable.

Sometimes people laugh at brave acts in the beginning. They may see an act of courage as strange or peculiar. But later, they recognize it for what it was.

The famous German philosopher and poet Schiller said, "Those who are strong when they stand alone possess true courage." I have treasured those words since I was young.

It is wrong to blindly follow the crowd. Going along with something — without any real thought, just because everyone is doing it — and being quite content with not having to make any decisions yourself, leads to mental laziness and apathy. And that's dangerous.

This tendency is one of the greatest faults of the Japanese. If everyone says that war is good, everyone rushes to war, without dissent or opposition. Even if they know it's madness. No one has the courage to stand up and speak out, to rise up and say, "War is wrong!" We Japanese tend to just drift along with the flow, to hop on the bandwagon of superficially grand causes or fashionable trends.

But we mustn't be led astray. We must never give up our commitment to peace, our desire to learn and our love for humanity. Putting those ideals into practice and spreading them among others is an act of courage.

It lies inside us. We have to summon courage forth from the depths of our lives. Taking refuge in strength of numbers is not courage but cowardice. It's fascism, not democracy. In a democracy, all individuals have to recognize that they are society's protagonists, and as such they have a responsibility to fulfill. There's too much self-interest and selfishness in Japan. There's too much blind following, too much willingness to go along with the crowd.

Only when people have the courage to stand up for justice — even if they are alone — can they lead the world in the direction of peace and good. When such courageous individuals join forces and unite in strong solidarity, they can change society.

But it all starts with you. You have to be courageous. The rest follows from that.

**Courage is identical to what is right.**

**YASUYUKI ITAKURA:** Talking about being brave enough to stand up for your beliefs reminds me of Rosa Parks.

**IKEDA:** Mrs. Parks is a cherished friend and the mother of the civil rights movement in the United States. She is a courageous person and, at the same time, very gentle. She is mild-mannered but possesses a will of iron.

**ITAKURA:** I believe that Mrs. Parks visited the SGI-USA Headquarters in Los Angeles in May 1998. She even sat for a photograph with junior high and high school division members.

**IKEDA:** I heard about that. Mrs. Parks has a great love for young people.

**KANAZAWA:** A translation of her book *Dear Mrs. Parks: A Dialogue with Today's Youth* has recently come out in Japan.

**ITAKURA:** She said to the American members of the junior high and high school divisions: "I am very happy to be here today, surrounded by people of such beautiful spirit and such wonderful affection. I hope to continue to do everything I can for young people. They are our future. I know that if Dr. Ikeda were here with us, he would be just as pleased at this gathering of young people as I am, because he believes in freedom and love for all people."

**IKEDA:** That was very kind of her to say. I, too, will do everything in my power for our young people, the leaders of the 21st century. Mrs. Parks has spent her life fighting against the discrimination and persecution of African Americans. She is indeed brave.

Racial discrimination was terrible in the 1950s. In those days, Mrs. Parks lived in Montgomery, Ala. [where such discrimination was entrenched]. "Colored" people were not allowed to sit with "white" people on the city buses. Even if they were seated in the colored section, the law required that they stand up and give their seats to white people when all the seats in the white section were filled.

**ITAKURA:** How horrible! Persecution and discrimination are absolutely wrong.

**IKEDA:** Then, one fated day — Dec. 1, 1955 — Mrs. Parks got on a bus to ride home from work. She sat down in the colored section, and the driver told her to give up her seat to a white person. It was only expected that she'd comply, since she was an African American, and those were the rules. Everyone had up to then, including Mrs. Parks.

But that day was different. She was fed up with being persecuted. "No," she said. She refused to give up her seat. That one word went on to have a tremendous effect on the civil rights movement and the dismantling of institutionalized discrimination.

**KANAZAWA:** What courage she had! I wonder where she found it?

**IKEDA:** In the book you just mentioned, Mrs. Park says: "I had no idea that history

## Arts Division Appointments

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Herbie Hancock



Wayne Shorter



Shunzo Ono

Musicians Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter were both recently appointed by the SGI-USA Central Personnel Committee as SGI-USA arts division senior advisors. This announcement was personally conveyed to Mr. Hancock by SGI President Ikeda when the two met the afternoon of April 13 at the Seikyo Shimibun Building. (Details of their dialogue will be published in next week's *World Tribune*.)

Shunzo Ono has also been appointed vice arts division director. Gary Murie and Kay Yoshikawa will continue to serve as vice arts division directors, all under the leadership of Arts Division Director Pascual Olivera.

The arts division, which is within the Culture Department, encourages professionals in the arts to contribute to peace and culture in the United States and the world.



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Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

was being made. I was just tired of giving in. Somehow, I felt that what I did was right by standing up to that bus driver. I did not think about the consequences. I knew that I could have been lynched, manhandled, or beaten when the police came. I chose not to move, because I was right" (p. 42).

**ITAKURA:** That's the crucial part: "Because I was right."

**IKEDA:** Mrs. Parks found the courage to speak out because she believed that she was right. She wasn't trying to go down in history or trying to show off or worrying what others thought. She did what she did because she believed it was the right thing.

That's courage. Courage is always identical to what is right, to justice. It comes from the wish to do what's right, the wish to build a just society, to be a good human being.

If we are to do good, not only for ourselves but for humanity and the world, we need courage. This is the power that makes such actions possible — actions that may not call attention to themselves but really shine with the brilliance of good.

Putting an end to school-yard bullying is also an act of courage. So is enduring hardships and surviving tough circumstances. And so is trying to live an honest, decent life, day after day.

By contrast, people who are lazy and apathetic or who have fallen into bad ways are products of not having the courage to challenge daily life. In our families and among our friends, we should clearly state our opinions so that things will move in a positive direction. Our willingness to proceed in that direction and help others do so is a very admirable form of courage.

No matter what anyone may say, you should always do what you believe is right. If you have the courage to do that, it's like having a magical weapon of unlimited powers. In Buddhism, we call such a person a bodhisattva or a Buddha.

**Bravado may seem like courage, but it has no moral grounding.**

**KANAZAWA:** Usually we think of courage as taking part in some wild adventure, performing some daredevil feat that no one else can. But we're talking about something different here, aren't we?

**ITAKURA:** There's also the idea that being a good fighter is the same as courage. On television and in comics and video games, the hero is almost always someone who knocks out his opponents. But that's just physical courage, brute courage.

**IKEDA:** That's very different from the courage that we're talking about. Such reckless bravado is always smug and self-centered. It gives no thought to others. It is high-handed, arrogant.

**ITAKURA:** Many politicians are like that.

**IKEDA:** That kind of bravado may seem like courage, but it has no moral ground-



Rosa Parks (center) sits for a photograph with junior high and high school division members at the SGI-USA Headquarters, May 1998.

ing. It's a wild, barbaric way to behave.

It lacks the intelligence, the consideration for others, the spirit of cooperation that are essential to all human beings. It is completely alien to what human beings should strive for.

**ITAKURA:** Just leaping into the fray without thinking is another kind of foolhardy bravado. Of course, it's also a mistake to worry so much about the consequences of your actions that you become a coward.

**IKEDA:** We can find courage in many different areas of human endeavor. There is the courage to take part in an adventure and the courage that is needed to excel in sports, but this is only one aspect of courage.

A more important kind of courage is that required to live a good life on a daily basis. For example, the courage to study hard, or the courage to form and sustain good, solid friendships.

This kind of courage we might even call perseverance, a virtue that directs our lives in a positive direction. This type of courage may not be flashy, but it is really the most important.

**KANAZAWA:** Courage isn't flashy — I'm going to remember that.

*Part two 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). Part one appeared in the April 16 issue. The conclusion will appear in an upcoming issue.*

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# the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

## 'FRESH GROWTH'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 2, PART 43

**In the conclusion of the 'Fresh Growth' chapter, Shin'ichi Yamamoto tells the New York members, as he departs for Europe, that 'there is nothing more foolish than contention and conflict among fellow human beings who inhabit the same tiny planet.'**

The next day, Jan. 15, was the day of Shin'ichi Yamamoto's departure for Europe. At 7:30 a.m., he was in Tomio Haruyama's car heading for the airport. Hiroshi Jujo and Nagayasu Masaki were accompanying Shin'ichi on the next leg of his overseas trip. The other leaders from Japan would split in two groups, traveling to different parts of the United States to encourage members.

Shin'ichi's party arrived at the airport shortly after 8:00, and Shin'ichi spent the time until boarding talking in the airport waiting area with the dozen or so members who had come to see him off.

Katsu Kiyohara exclaimed: "In Hawaii, we experienced summer heat; in Los Angeles, spring sunshine; and in New York, winter cold. It's only been

about a week since we left Japan, but I feel like a whole year has passed!"

Smiling, Shin'ichi said: "Ms. Kiyohara, spring also came to New York. Haven't many fresh sprouts emerged from the earth, nourished by the sunlight of the Mystic Law?"

"The very fact that we could experience spring, summer and winter in a week," he added, "also goes to show you how small the world has become. Travel will continue to get faster and more convenient, and one day it'll be possible to travel anywhere in the world in a day. However, though we may be much closer in terms of time, unless we grow closer in terms of our understanding of other nations and social systems, we can't have true communication and exchange among the world's people. And this is nowhere more crucial than in the rela-

tionship between the United States and the Soviet Union."

One of the women's division members asked, "Sensei, when will you come back to America again?"

"Very soon. In fact, I think I'll be meeting with President Kennedy in Washington next month," he answered. "Someone has relayed to me his request for a personal meeting. I want to meet with him, too, not wanting to see another situation arising like last year's Cuban Missile Crisis. Ultimately, the work of bridging the gulf among nations and social systems must start with bridging the gulf among people's hearts. I want to be such a bridge, spanning the spiritual gulf among people. There is nothing more foolish than contention and conflict among fellow human beings who inhabit the same tiny planet."

Shin'ichi's news that he would be meeting President Kennedy took the members by surprise. At that time, however, none of them could have guessed at the dreams for the future he cherished in his heart — a shining vision of a world linked by countless golden bridges of friendship and peace.

*This concludes "Fresh Growth," Chapter 2 of Volume 7 of The New Human Revolution. Chapter 3, "Early Spring," will begin in the May 7 issue.*

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

## Having a Selfless Determination

### EDITORIAL

**How can we develop the selfless determination to help other people? Courageously facing our own problems is the first step.**

By JEFF FARR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

There is so much we can learn in the SGI that we can't learn in school. What school, for instance, teaches us to have the spirit to help others selflessly?

I never learned this in college — I never even heard it in col-

lege, much less in high school, junior high or elementary school. It was in the SGI, studying Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with my fellow members, that I learned about having a selfless determination.

In this Buddhism, to be selfless means to consider others' struggles, others' sufferings, as our own, equal to our own. And then making this what defines us. Helping others becomes what we're about, how we spend our time, why we do the things we do, why we live the way we live.

Martin Luther King Jr. is a great example of someone who developed this kind of identity. He was focused to the very end of his days on human rights.

Once, he explained how he wanted to be remembered on his funeral day: "I'd like somebody to mention that day, that Martin Luther King Jr. tried to give his life serving others. I'd like for

somebody to say that day, that Martin Luther King Jr. tried to love somebody.... I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity."

An audio tape of him speaking these words was later played at his funeral. He had lived true to them throughout.

The Daishonin describes this way of life when he says that "the king makes the people his parents" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1554). Leaders, in other words, should put the people they serve first. And as Buddhists, we're all leaders. We all should revere our fellow human beings, always trying our best to accomplish *everyone's* happiness.

This selflessness, Buddhism teaches, is at once the one thing that can steer human history away from war, toward peace, and the key to our deepest, most lasting personal happiness. The Daishonin writes in "The Open-


ing of the Eyes" that "I, Nichiren, am the richest man in all of present-day Japan" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 151). He says so not because he was in the money, of course; through his selfless dedication to the people, he had witnessed many of his friends change their destinies. He knew that the whole world would eventually change due to the Buddhist practice that he had introduced. He thus had great hope. He thus *was* rich.

While selfless determination entails making others' sufferings our own, it's also having their joys as our own. This is what makes us richest in life.

How, though, can we best foster this selflessness in ourselves and experience this wealth? Isn't it a little difficult to just will ourselves to selflessness — especially when

we've got plenty of our own problems to deal with?

Actually, it's in facing our problems — in not cringing from whatever our current struggles are (no matter how nasty) — that we open our hearts to others and their problems. Courageously facing all personal difficulties with a strong Buddhist practice is indeed the first and unavoidable step toward selflessness. As SGI President Ikeda says, "If we act with courage, we find that our compassion for others grows deeper."

If we are well versed in the struggles that everyone must face — and if we seek our own happiness primarily in fighting against *all* human unhappiness, not just our own disappointments — we're on what the Daishonin calls the direct path to "true peace and comfort" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750). And we're bringing the whole world along with us. 

Spring is near. Though the snow still lies deep in the villages of the Tohoku Region, the footsteps of spring's approach can be heard, advancing softly but surely. In time with that song of hope, poetic inspiration rises in my heart, like a bubbling spring flowing forth without end.

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA



# WINTER MAKES SPRING BEAUTIFUL

*President Ikeda rejoices at the arrival of spring in this poetic essay to the members of the Tohoku Region in Japan. He reflects, 'It is overcoming the harshness of winter, be it in nature or in human life, that makes the spring so beautiful.'*

•••

Our fresh spirit soars once again today, bathed in the sun's glorious light. When our efforts blossom and we glow content with the honest sweat of our labors, a new music rings forth, and we look around us to see new flowers, new leaves, new saplings.

Tohoku is the perfect symbol of the drama of winter turning into spring in all its glory and triumph. The people and the land of Tohoku know best the harsh trials of winter and the sweet compassion of spring.

The lot of many, many people is dark and cheerless. But in the world of the Soka Gakkai, the fragrance of honest happiness that welcomes joy, determination and sincere effort pervades — here, there, and everywhere. The Mystic Law applies equally to all, whether king, farmer or invalid. In it, there is no sadness or loneliness, no false prosperity, no abyss of despair.

The Mystic Law is a happy spring song, always wafting gently over you. It is a new and beautiful palace of youth from which all darkness has been banished.

You stride across the silvery land. A cheerful wave from the windows of your simple homes, and those of your comrades along the way, is an unsurpassed source of delight. The essence of human existence, happiness, reverberates therein.

For us kosen-rufu champi-

ons, supreme leaders of the Mystic Law, the earth is an eternal treasure land. The cold seashore, too, is an everlasting realm of sunshine and light.

The stars we gaze upon on high appear to us as stars of invincible will. Their undying light shines in our hearts, with certainty, with sureness, with quiet tranquillity.

In the cold night sky, the dreamy first star twinkles brightly, and warm is the breeze of triumph and nobility of another day lived to the fullest.

Blow, storms, blow as you will!

Howl, blizzards, howl if you will!

My heart only leaps all the more in excitement.

Countless heavenly deities and Buddhas protect us.

Among us there are no differences of fame or rank, big or small.

We stand fearless, the noblest of Treasure Towers, dedicating our lives wholeheartedly to the Mystic Law.

Howling winds! It is useless to attack us. Better that you should see your own true nature.

The poison of your weakness, your delusion, your envy, your baseness of heart.

Buddhism stresses the importance of the present and the future.

From the moment we are

born in this world, we embark on the journey of a new life, a series of new beginnings.

Those who bravely triumph in each of those fresh departures will find themselves, at death, too, eternally victorious.

You must know of these invisible but unrelenting laws that bind you.

When seen in this light, all evil is nothing but arrogance, envy and foolishness.

It is no more than the last traces of dirty snow that melt under the sun's bright rays.

Know that there is nothing superior to the supreme, unparalleled Mystic Law, the wellspring of all happiness!

Bigots and do-nothings may chance upon this wellspring, but they cannot draw its waters. For they are like buckets full of holes.

Unnoticed by others, you willingly make your way along a solitary path through fields deep with snow to encourage a friend. That path leads to the palace of eternal joy and ease.

Our commitment to kosen-rufu, bathed in the light of unsurpassed goodness — absolute happiness — is manifested as a realm of ever-more brilliant victory.

•••••

When I think of our Tohoku members bravely weathering their long winter, I always want to fly to them and give them en-

couragement and support.

February is the month of President Toda's birth. If he were still alive, on Feb. 11, he would have been 99.

Every single day I spent with my mentor is a golden page of my life, a priceless honor.

I accompanied Mr. Toda to Tohoku many times.

In spring 45 years ago, I visited the ruins of Sendai Castle with him. I remember fondly the luminous vision of kosen-rufu he shared with me then.

•••••

"The Soka Gakkai will build its castle with talented and capable people!" he said to me. It was a dream he entrusted to me.

Sendai Castle was once known as the Castle of a Thousand Generations.

"Please build an indomitable castle of capable people here in Tohoku that will be a model for the Soka Gakkai for thousands and tens of thousands of generations to come!" — this was my beloved mentor's profound hope, his call to us, his final wish.

It is overcoming the harshness of winter, be it in nature or in human life, that makes the spring so beautiful.

An indestructible foundation is built by weathering hardships.

The foundation of Tohoku is approaching completion.

The cheers of triumph that resound through the citadel of Soka there warm my heart.

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**Publisher**  
Fred M. Zaltsu  
**Assistant Publisher**  
Greg Martin  
**Editor in Chief**  
Ted Morino  
tmorino@sgi-usa.org

**Managing Editor**  
Margie Hall  
mhall@sgi-usa.org  
**Associate Editor**  
Jeff Farr  
jfarr@sgi-usa.org

**Staff Writer**  
Stephanie Celano  
scelano@sgi-usa.org

**Contributing Writer**  
Terry Ellis

**Graphic Artist**  
Don Sanders  
dsanders@sgi-usa.org

**Contributing Artist**  
Ellen Brown

**Staff Translators**  
Jeff Kriger  
Shin Yatomi

**Contributing Photographers**  
Gregory Nakasuji  
Kirk Condyles  
Jonathan Wilson  
Dixon Hamby

**Photo Editor**  
Lisa Hollis  
lisahollis@earthlink.net

**Bureau Chiefs**  
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Hey, Kids!

## Enter the Name-Our-Press Contest!

We will soon be publishing books just for you: story books and books with games and puzzles; books to help you do gongyo and books that tell the stories of important people in Buddhism, plus lots of other books. And we need your ideas! Should we call our children's books

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EXPERIENCE — PARIS DAVIS, JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

## Still Going on the Opposite Side of 82

I am a few months on the opposite side of 82," opens Paris Davis as he shares with gratitude the milestones in his Buddhist practice. While growing up in Jacksonville, he played piano for fun. After high school, he used money saved for college to open a restaurant with his brother. The first barbecue place in segregated North Jacksonville, it became a howling success, a true social hangout. He saved enough money to select any college he wanted.

After a stint in the Army academy, he attended Howard University where he earned a degree in music education. "That was challenging for me because there were no music teachers in Jacksonville at that time doing what I was doing: working with children, getting them to learn something about music," Paris adds.

He decided to attend the University of Florida to be closer to his family. At that time, the university didn't accept black students, so instead they paid for his graduate school tuition at Teachers College, Columbia University. He started teaching music in Jacksonville in 1948.

Paris first learned of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism 27 years ago from letters and issues of the *World Tribune* his nephew Alonzo sent while stationed with the military in Germany.

After Alonzo's return to Jacksonville, Paris' brother, also Alonzo, became concerned about his son's involvement in Buddhism and association with people he didn't know. Paris explains: "My brother asked me to find out what this Buddhism was all about. He knew that I could talk with my nephew more easily than he could. Of course he would tell him what to do, but I was going to ask Alonzo about whatever he was into. My nephew talked to me very freely, and I thought, 'If Alonzo invites me to a meeting, I'll go and find out.' One Sunday morning, Alonzo asked me to go to a meeting."

At that time Paris was the minister of music at a church, and agreed to go provided he could be back in time to conduct his choir. He says: "I went to the meeting and was just overwhelmed by the

people, the attitude and the general atmosphere of this Buddhist meeting. I said I would like to go again." He started going regularly.

At one meeting George Reagan, a senior in faith, advised him to try chanting; if it didn't work, then he could stop. Paris decided to try it. George encouraged him to identify something he had tried to change in his life unsuccessfully — for Paris, it was quitting cigarettes.

After about six or seven months of chanting, Paris woke up one morning, after having a foreboding dream, bringing home to him the need to quit smoking. He resolved, "This is the day I'm going to stop." And from then on he never had a craving for cigarettes again. Paris adds, "I told the members, 'This proves to me that Buddhism works.'"

Several years later he had a major stroke. "I lost my speech, my equilibrium, just about everything," Paris elaborates. "I felt my feet were very firmly fixed on the ground with Buddhism, that nothing could happen to me, but I was mistaken. Buddhism doesn't prevent things from happening to you." His faith was a bit shaken.

"Mr. Reagan helped me through this," he says. "He is a great friend in faith. Also the practice of Buddhism had become clearer to me through my realization that everybody would have difficulties, that overcoming them brings about happiness.

"I prayed to understand my situation. I was moving my lips, reciting gongyo, but I couldn't hear any sound," Paris continues. "A nurse came into the room and asked me who was in there, and I moved my lips, 'Nobody.' The nurse said, 'There was a voice of a person making strange sounds in this room.'"

Paris realized it must be himself even though he couldn't hear the sounds. He explains, "When I began to get my speech back, I found out that the part of my brain that had acquired this new information with the Buddhist practice was not damaged, but I had no ability to discuss anything prior to that."

He adds: "To me that was a miracle. I had to learn how to speak English all over again, which proved to me that the Gohonzon



Paris at home in his backyard, Jacksonville, Fla.

was working and dispelled all doubt in my mind. I understood that Buddhism was actually working for me. So I learned how to speak again, regained my equilibrium and started ice skating again.

"The other most important thing was that burglar I found in my car...."

Once after shopping, Paris entered his car to find a person with a knife in the back seat. When he complained of hunger, Paris tried to take him to a fast food restaurant, which had already closed. After insisting Paris take him somewhere else, Paris suspected he would be killed.

He thought: "If I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die in my house where the Gohonzon is. We arrived, and I fixed him a sandwich. I had no fear because of the way he was behaving, except for the knife."

The burglar put his arm around Paris' neck. Assuring Paris he meant no harm, he tied his hands and feet, and told him to lie on his stomach. Paris explains: "He was moving around, and I said, 'Would you let me go to my prayer room and pray while you do whatever you're doing?'" Sure enough the assailant untied his feet and walked him to the Gohonzon room. Paris knelt down in front of the Gohonzon and started chanting, and the intruder wanted to know what those words meant.

"So I told him: 'I wish you would try chanting. You would probably change your mind about doing whatever you plan to do to me.' And the burglar said: 'I don't want to hurt you, as long as you just sit there and say your strange words, and don't bother about what I'm doing. I won't hurt you.'" So he began loading up Paris' car with stolen objects and apologized that he also needed to take the car.

Paris remembers asking, "Will

you chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo?" He explains that the burglar "struggled to say it and then promised the car would be returned if he wasn't reported. He left me chanting. I must have chanted about 25 or 30 minutes and the telephone rang. I didn't know whose voice it was when he said, 'I was at your house a little while ago, and I'm calling to let you know where your car is.'"

Paris went with another member to pick up the car, and the keys were hidden under a fender. "I drove back home because, of course, that was the end of it," he says. "It was so strange. I didn't get a scratch."

Paris had a second stroke, "but it was not as bad. I really had some very difficult times but the thing is, here I am!" he exclaims. "I have found in the past 24 years that Buddhism actually works for me, even when I had two strokes, and I never gave up even through these difficulties. My confidence in the practice was strengthened by overcoming these two critical illnesses and the burglar encounter."

Paris brims with gratitude as he shares his life: "I was never a selfish person, but the change in life-condition through practicing Buddhism made me happy, confident in whatever I needed to do to become a complete individual.

"Right now I feel I must do gongyo first thing in the morning to set this day right," he adds, "and enjoy this day to the fullest. I don't do anything without the support of my practice. I feel that whatever I do, I must do it to the best of my ability. Buddhism has caused me to feel this way. I feel that if I do what I am called upon to do with full dedication and enthusiasm, I'm going to be happy at my goal's end, and that is what keeps me

alive."

What did Paris' family think about his practicing Buddhism? "My mother understood at the time that I decided to become a Buddhist," he answers. "She said she could see a great change in me. My attitude about myself, and just in general, had changed. She said while she would not ever change from Christianity, it was all right for me because she felt that was good for me, and she couldn't find anything wrong with my practicing Buddhism. As a matter of fact, [although she never officially converted to this Buddhism] she chanted to the end of her life."

Wrapping up, Paris reflects: "Well, I can say, after all these years of practice, the greatest thing is feeling I have this power within me to change difficulties into benefits. Mr. Reagan helped to plant that in my mind after my first stroke. I thought the man was out of his mind — 'Bring on the problems!' I had enough of them. He was telling me in essence that when you have problems, it is the experience in overcoming them that brings about happiness. I will always remember Mr. Reagan, and that experience at the hospital. It helped me to understand how to use Buddhism in my life.

"I give my all to everything that I do in my life," he emphasizes, "attempting to show my appreciation for Buddhism. No matter what I do or attempt to do, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo precedes it. I don't do anything without being aware that I can achieve my goal whatever it is, no matter how small, through the support of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo."

Paris concludes: "I don't take life lightly. I think my life, through my practice, will be a happier one when I've reached my end than it would be if I didn't practice Buddhism. I used to give up, thinking that I can't do something; it's impossible. But my practice of Buddhism encourages me to move forward, and I eventually overcome the difficulty. My years of practicing Buddhism have been my happiest years."

Paris treasures his ability to live independently. He continues to amaze himself. What does he see as his most important challenge? At a recent meeting, Paris reflected in earnest on his deep desire to share this Buddhism with others, "so that they can feel the unlimited power I feel."

As told to Andy Bruck and Joan Edwards

Photo by ANDY BRUCK



By Ed Feasel,  
SGI-USA Youth  
Division Leader

## VICTORIOUS *March 16th*

This March 16, the youth of SGI-USA celebrated Kosen-rufu Day by sponsoring joyful and refreshing introductory meetings across the nation. The meetings were a great success. We had over 10,000 youth participants, nearly 4,000 guests, and together with the men's and women's division members who attended, we had over 16,000 people attend our March 16 meetings. On behalf of the youth, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the men's and women's divisions for their support. I have received reports from around the country about the great success of these meetings. The creativity and energy that went into the preparations is simply awesome and inspiring.

The youth division felt it was altogether fitting that we celebrate March 16 by holding introductory meetings. March 16 is the day when each of us reconfirms our determination to make steady efforts toward realizing kosen-rufu, and what better way to reconfirm this spirit than by sharing this Buddhism with our friends and family! With the great success of our meetings, it is important that we continue to follow up with the guests who attended and help them gain a deeper understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and the SGI.



...in Los Angeles...

In this next quarter, the entire organization will focus on May commemorative contributions. This is a great opportunity for each of us to support our SGI movement of peace, culture and education. In April, we will also have our SGI-USA Entrance Exam. While we engage in these activities with our goal of having 100 percent participation, I think it is crucial that we maintain the momentum we have established in our propagation efforts.

Our March 16 activity has definitely created an exciting energy and atmosphere for propagation. As youth, we have to be the ones to revive this spirit. The youth division is the key to creating this new momentum and we must not be mistaken in the slightest about this point. In *The New Human Revolution*, President Ikeda describes a scene where the Soka Gakkai had accomplished their goal of a 2 million membership six months earlier than they had planned. He writes:

In every region of Japan, the youth division members had led this advance. They were responsible for thirty to forty percent of the new membership each month, proving again that young people were the driving force for the fresh development of kosen-rufu. Indeed, this is an unchanging principle for the spread of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, pp. 192-93).

This is the mission of youth! With our hearts full of compassion, let's utilize our energy and passion to share this great Buddhism with those who are struggling

and suffering. Beginning with March 16, we have initiated a new rhythm of propagation throughout the SGI-USA. The question remains, however, what history will we leave behind from our youth? What greater history to leave behind than



March 16 meeting in Chicago...

the initiation of a whole new era of propagation: an era where the youth, holding high the banner of humanism, spread the great ideals of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to every corner of our country. In fact, this history of unprecedented propagation is precisely the history that President Ikeda left behind in every organization that he assumed responsibility for during his youth.

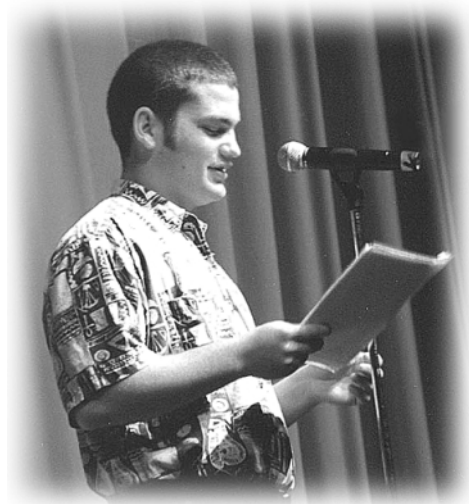
This spirit to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism for the sake of the people is also the path of mentor and disciple. In another chapter of *The New Human Revolution*, President Ikeda describes the scene where he finally is exonerated on all charges stemming from the Osaka incident, for which he went to jail. President Ikeda mentions how happy and proud his mentor, President Toda, must feel. At the end of the chapter, he writes:

The Daishonin writes "The lion fears no other beast, nor do its cubs" (MW-1, 241). To spread the Mystic Law is to follow the lion's path. Only those of dauntless courage, conviction and integrity can undertake the rigorous challenge of propagating the Daishonin's Buddhism. The path of the lion is also that of mentor and disciple, a path that can only be realized by disciples who make their mentor's spirit their own (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 5, p. 291).

Let's continue to follow the lion's path. For the sake of America, for the sake of the world, let's stand up as youth and increase the momentum that we have built this March 16. ♪



...and Taiko Drummers in San Francisco



Ryan Ehrenreich (pictured above) gave the following experience at San Francisco's March 16 meeting held at the Palace of Fine Arts.

I am 18 years old and have been around this Buddhist practice since I was 6. My mom has been practicing since then, but I did not actually start until I was 13. I come from a poor, single parent family. Money has always been a big struggle for us. Because of this, my mom always stressed the value of getting a high quality education in a field that is in demand. She sacrificed much of her time and money so my two brothers and I could attend private schools. However, one problem was that the only semi-affordable schools were Catholic. This brought many struggles.

Two things separated me from everyone else in my class — I was poor and Buddhist. Because of my financial situation and difference in religion, it seemed that many people saw me as inferior. I never felt like I quite fit in, and it was difficult to find even a few close friends at school. Whenever I invited classmates to my home, they'd ask why I lived in a mobile home instead of a "real" house or why I was *Buddhist* instead of Catholic. *None* of them saw the person I really was. They only saw what made me different.

I then became really introverted, which turned out to be somewhat of a benefit. It prompted me to focus all my efforts into studying more, striving for greater knowledge and academic excellence. But then this made it even harder for me to fit in with my classmates.

However, I felt the need to be accepted somewhere. This prompted me to attend SGI meetings on a regular basis. These meetings were the one place where I fit in and could meet other people my age that held similar values. I began to love going to meetings.

As I began chanting consistently, I never relaxed my thirst for knowledge. I realized that everything that seemed like an obstacle was really a benefit. Because my circumstances were so different from my classmates, my values were also very different. From then on, I never felt I needed to fit in by having the best clothes or the coolest shoes. I didn't really care if others thought I was cool. My only concern was whether or not I was using my talents to become a better person.

Soon I began to really appreciate certain aspects of my life, most importantly, my family: my mom would go without things she wanted so that money

# Ryan's EXPERIENCE

## Live True to Yourself

could be spent on my brothers and me. She always did this without complaining and measured her success by how happy her sons could become. I also appreciate my brothers. They were a constant source of encouragement. Although I felt out of place at school, I always felt quite secure at home because my family was so encouraging.

The support and encouragement that I received from my family and SGI members alike helped me to focus on one specific goal — to attend Stanford University. I knew that I would have to work especially hard in school, but this goal seemed impossible because of financial constraints. At that time during my sophomore year, my mom was paying about \$1,000 a year for my schooling alone and this was a great financial burden. I couldn't imagine how my family could handle over 30 times that amount! However I was determined that things would work out and chanted so that we could find a way to pay this amount. I was *not* about to let financial struggles get in the way of one of my greatest goals.

During the next couple of years, I continued to work hard, but I often worried about my family's financial state. It seemed there was less and less money coming in every month. This prompted my mom, who already chanted a tremendous amount, to really step up her chanting. She never gave up, no matter how insurmountable the problems seemed to become.

When I had to make the decision for myself whether I wanted to practice or not, the power of my mom's faith was truly beneficial in convincing me of the value of this Buddhism. I increased the time and consistency I put into my practice and knew that I could always take my problems to the

Gohonzon. This helped me tremendously in all aspects of my life.

Before I knew it, I was starting my senior year, the year in which I would apply to Stanford. However, my family's financial situation became tremendously difficult. We missed a rent payment and were evicted from the mobile home park where



Members and guests fill the main auditorium at the Palace of Fine Arts.

we lived. This required us to physically move our mobile home to a new location.

None of us had any extra time in our lives to engage in such a massive undertaking. My mom was working fulltime, my older brother, Ian, was getting ready for "his" freshman year at Stanford, and my younger brother, Kevan, was starting third grade. Since Stanford is on the quarter system, Ian did not have to be there until a few weeks after I started school and was able to do a lot of the work. However, I still had to miss days of school to help and began to fall behind in my studies and in preparing my Stanford application, which was almost due.

My priorities shifted from getting into Stanford to having a place to live. My practice waned, and I saw my grades drop. I was really struggling and had a negative attitude because of all the obstacles in my life that seemed to occur in this very short period of time. My mom saw that my practice was weak and strongly encouraged me to go to meetings — meetings that I really didn't think I had time for. She knew that without strong faith, I wouldn't get into Stanford or be successful in any aspect of my life. Although I grumbled about going, I really *did* appreciate these activities and saw what a great effect they had on my attitude. Because of the my mom's tremendous encouragement, I was able to change my attitude for the better and to do a quality job on my application, finishing it just in time.

Because of my change in attitude, I can now truly appreciate my life and the incredible fortune I have accumulated. Through my experience of moving, I saw the tremendous quality of the few friends that I made in high school — a dramatic change from how lonely I felt before. My friends were always emotionally supportive at school, and even helped out on the weekends with the big move.



Performance by Music Corps members.

(Continued on page D)

# YOUTH *Study* MAY

## "LETTER TO THE BROTHERS"

The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, pp. 131-48

### AS FEARLESS AS NICHIREN DAISHONIN

By Patricia Ford, Kansas City, Mo.



**Yet you must grit your teeth and never slacken in your faith. Be as fearless as Nichiren when he faced Hei no Saemon. (MW-1, 140)**

This letter to the Ikegami brothers was written from the depths of Nichiren Daishonin's heart to encourage them never to give up their faith.

Under the influence of Ryokan, leader of the Ritsu sect, the Ikegamis' father disowned the elder brother, Munenaka, for practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. The younger brother, Munenaga, then stood to inherit the father's wealth and social position. Thus the two brothers were being pitted against one another. Disownment in Japan was a serious matter in the 13th century. The elder son, Munenaka, would lose everything if he did not obey his father.

Here Nichiren Daishonin encourages the brothers to persevere no matter what, even in the face of family strife. He encourages them to have the kind of faith he had when he faced Hei no Saemon at Tatsunokuchi and was nearly beheaded.

Even when confronted with death, Nichiren Daishonin never recanted. Instead, he chanted and pushed ahead undaunted, triumphing in the end! By doing so, Nichiren Daishonin showed his disciples that through correct faith and practice, one could overcome any problem.

Fear is one of the greatest obstacles in our practice. Having the courage to chant and take action despite fear is a challenge we must all face at sometime in our lives. Hardships arise as a test of faith. Gandhi said: "Fear is not a disease of the body; fear kills the soul. If we let our spirit wither and die, we lose. And that only strengthens the hand of our would-be oppressors" (Jan. 8, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 9). When we have a problem, rather than backing away, this is the time to chant seriously. And what better time than now!

### FEEL UNAPPRECIATED? KEEP GOING!

By Mark Kaplan, San Francisco

**You two brothers are like the hermit and his disciple. If either of you gives up halfway, you will both fail to attain Buddhahood. You are like the two wings of a bird or two eyes of a man. (MW-1, 146)**

Have you ever felt like Shariputra, who, out of compassion, gouges out his own eyeball to help a demon? The demon sniffs the eyeball, throws it down and steps on it (MW-1, 137). You think, "What's the point?" "Could I really be on the right track here?" "Am I really helping anyone?"

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin encourages two brothers and their wives to unite in faith in the face of severe family circum-

### Did you know?

By Ulisse Gallo, Chicago

**It took Winston Churchill three years to finish the eighth grade because he had trouble learning English.**

**Ironically, years later, Oxford University asked him to give the address at their commencement ceremony. His address was only three words long: "Never Give Up" (from *Chicken Soup for the Surviving Soul*).**

**We never know the impact our individual victory will have in our own lives or on others. By not giving up in the eighth grade, Winston Churchill laid the foundation in his life that would eventually earn him the respect of the entire world.**

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**The Ritsu Sect was founded by Dosen, as he is commonly known in Japan, who lived from 595-667A.D. Its teachings are based on the Vinaya or monastic rules. The Vinaya is thought by many scholars to be one of the earliest teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha.**

stances. In his message to them, we can learn something about the importance of developing deep unity with other people in our SGI organization.

Although it is easy to become discouraged when our sincere efforts only seem to result in being misunderstood or unappreciated, President Ikeda reminds us that "All our efforts for kosen-rufu — even if they sometimes seem in vain, even if they are a struggle — have great meaning and value for our lives. They steer us in a positive direction. This is the power of faith" (March 5, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 4).

Unfortunately, Shariputra did not understand this wisdom and, though he continued practicing for himself, he stopped helping others. When we become discouraged with the SGI or someone in the organization, it is NOT the time to retreat. "You may hate this world, but you cannot escape" (MW-1, 139). Only by confronting your specific situation with courage and resolution can you change both your specific circumstances and the karma of the greater world. This was the message that Nichiren Daishonin wished to convey to the Ikegami brothers. This is our mission.

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin was determined to preserve unity in the brothers' family. Their father was determined to split the brothers apart, and their wives could easily have been discouraged or swayed themselves. Therefore, though the Daishonin could have written four different letters to each of the brothers and their wives, he addressed *all four* in one letter, doing everything he could to pull them together. That's why he says in this writing, "If either of you gives up halfway, you will both fail to attain Buddhahood."

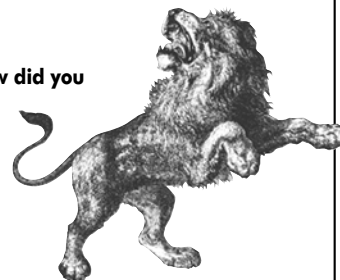
It is often said that the worst cause someone can make is destroying the unity of the believers. In our personal lives, too, the worst devil we can face is one that threatens our unity. When faced with personal conflict, if we simply complain or give up, we will not win and neither will other people involved. We are all on the same quest. By persevering in the face of conflict, our persecutor becomes a positive influence to help us grow. We grow, they grow, the entire organization grows.

If we want to grow as individuals and as an organization, I feel each one of us, especially young people, have to be prepared to be temporarily misunderstood or unappreciated. We sometimes come up with good ideas that are not always embraced immediately. But we must continue, gain the trust of those around us, and show what we mean, no matter how long it takes.

As President Ikeda writes, "[V]arious kinds of misunderstanding or resistance may be met with... But such is the destiny of those who introduce something new. It is by overcoming those negative forces... that the movement for kosen-rufu will be carried forth" (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, p. 76). "Only when one fights and wins over dire circumstances will his victory shine brilliantly in history" (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, p. 15). 🙏

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. Have you experienced a situation where you stopped practicing Buddhism? How did you handle it? How did you find the courage to continue?**
- 2. What role has fear played in your life? What is your experience when you used faith to defeat the fear in your life?**
- 3. What does unity mean to you? Why do you think Nichiren Daishonin cared whether or not the Ikegami family remained united?**
- 4. Can you think of an example, perhaps from your own life, where the power of uniting together to overcome a difficulty was proven?**



**SEND IN YOUR STUFF**  
Our youth publication is only as strong as what you bring us.

Poems, Articles, Picture stories  
Commentaries, Pulitzer Prize insight  
...whatever you got, get it to us.

**HOW?**  
Postal Mail:

SGI-USA  
Attn: Kim Stapchuk  
Seize the Day  
606 Wilshire Blvd.  
PO Box 1427  
Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427

Email: [seize@sgi-usa.org](mailto:seize@sgi-usa.org)

**MATERIAL REQUEST**



By Jimmy King,  
SGI-USA Jr. High/High School Division Leader

**H**ave you ever felt like a jellyfish just floating around and going in no particular direction? Did you feel so sad that you just wanted to shut everything out of your life so you couldn't feel any more pain? I have been there.

During my high school days, my father became very ill. Seeing my father in such a weak physical condition was very difficult. In my mind, I would pretend that he wasn't ill and that everything was fine. It was my way of coping with the situation.

One day I called up my mom after I had gone to the mall with one of my friends, and she told me to come home right away. When I got home, she told me that my dad had passed away. I just remember falling to my knees and crying. The day of the memorial service, all I wanted to do was be alone. For the next few months, I fell into a depression, not really talking to or seeing anyone. However, my close friends never gave up on me. Many of them didn't know what to say, but just knowing that they cared meant so much to me.

I then spoke to this person whom I respected and asked him for some advice about the way I was feeling. He encouraged me to think about my mother and try to be there for her. He also said: "When people go through tragedies or something painful in their lives, they can try to escape the pain. But, it will still be there if you don't confront the situation. You can challenge those circumstances by trying to grow from them and become a stronger person."

He also told me that this was really a great chance for me to develop my heart. At that time, I thought what he said was a bunch of bull. However, I understand now that he was telling me the truth. I was able to use this experience with my father as a source of inspiration. I started to chant to the Gohonzon to open up my heart. I realized that everything that occurs in life happens for a reason. It was up to me if I wanted to use it as a springboard or if I just wanted to fall off the earth.

Recently, President Ikeda said something that continues to encourage me: "View all hardships as the material that will enable you to develop a big heart and become individuals of depth and substance" (*Discussions on Youth*, vol. 1, p. 28).

Looking back, I totally believe this to be true. I think of all the heartaches, disappointments, joys and laughter that I have experienced and they have all made me into the person I am today. Because of this experience in particular, I realize how precious life is and how important each person's unique mission is. It has made me want to open up my life and help others. ♪

# Youth ESSAY CONTEST

Seize the Day is holding an essay contest. Any interested youth (writers or non-writers, younger or older) are encouraged to put their thoughts on paper and send them in. Since *Seize the Day* is a voice for the youth of SGI-USA, this contest serves as a call for youth to speak out. Express yourself!!

### Topics

- What is the mission of youth?
- What are the challenges for the coming century?
- What role will Buddhism play in the new millennium?
- Will Michael Jordan come out of retirement? (just kidding)

### Criteria:

The deadline for all entries is June 30, 1999. Essays must be typed, double-spaced, and between one and two pages in length. Please title your essay and write your name, age and region at the top. In addition, please include a picture of yourself. Make sure you have a copy of your essay since material will not be returned. Entries will be evaluated based on the following:

- persuasiveness
- organization
- content
- originality
- style

### Prizes:

The *Seize the Day* Essay Contest has two categories: student (age 12 to 18) and general (age 19 to 35). Each participant submitting an essay will receive an SGI-USA key chain. There will also be a Silver and Gold Prize awarded to one person from each of these two categories. They are: Gold — \$40 gift certificate to an SGI-USA Bookstore; and Silver — \$20 gift certificate to an SGI-USA Bookstore!

### Good luck!

REGARDING LAST YEAR'S CONTEST: Last year's contest will be merged with the current one. Since we've altered the selection process and improved the prize, we want to give last year's entries the opportunity to be included along with this one, thus we are reopening the submission box. Entries submitted for that contest will be included as current contenders (unless previous applicants wish to withdraw, and, if they so desire, enter a new essay; please notify us before June 30 if this is the case).



Ryan's Experience continued from page B

In addition, I have been able to keep my grades high and also score high on the SAT. These accomplishments took a lot of work (I got less than five hours of sleep as I struggled to maintain my grades). But I kept my nose to the grindstone with the determination not to begrudge my life.

All my struggles paid off! On Dec. 15 of last year, I received the reply from Stanford that I had been accepted! This was a major victory in itself, but a month after I received my letter of acceptance, I received my financial aid statement. I would only have to pay about \$1,500 per year! And I would receive \$2,000 a year in loans! The remainder of my tuition and room and board would be completely paid for! I had to pay *less than a tenth* of the total tuition cost.

Often, when everyone around you tells you that you cannot succeed, you start to believe it. However, if you have strong faith in the power of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and a strong determina-

tion, even if others say you can't succeed, you can attain your goal regardless of these negative influences. I am thankful for my family — especially my mom — because they inspired me to develop my faith and continue no matter what. Also, I am thankful that I belong to the SGI organization that constantly offers positive reinforcement. Now I know for sure that anyone can accomplish what they want if they have courage, determination and faith. As SGI President Ikeda states:

"It is trivial to worry about appearances and others' opinions or to complain that no one supports or understands you. Please live true to yourself, as you have every right to, and adorn your life with triumph, based on resolute prayer and action. Please become a person who powerfully activates the protective forces of the universe, the heavenly deities" (March 5, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 4). ♪



Stanford University, 1893