

## ESSAY

A six-story human pyramid was a turning point for kosen-rufu.

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## YOUTH

'Seize the Day' returns with a dialogue on home visits.

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# Linus Pauling Returns to Caltech

The 'Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century' exhibition opens at Caltech. Dr. Pauling left the campus 35 years ago — now, through this exhibition, he's come home.



Linda Pauling Kamb, daughter of Dr. Linus Pauling, meets with Los Angeles students who wrote their dreams for the future on paper doves. This wall of doves has become part of the 'Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century' exhibition in Los Angeles.

The late Dr. Linus Pauling, father of modern chemistry, recently returned to his alma mater, the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. When an opening reception for the "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century" exhibition was held May 14 at Caltech's Winnett Center, it was "the closing of a circle" in the eyes of Dr. Pauling's son Linus Jr.: After 35 years, his father had finally come back to the school where he completed his graduate studies, became an assistant professor at age 27 and continued teaching for 42 years.

Dr. Pauling Jr. emphasized at the opening that the exhibition's intention is to inspire

youth through the example of his father's courageous life. Los Angeles youth division members, who since February have been involved in planning this second showing of the exhibition, created a play based on what they learned from Pauling's life. *The Essential Bond*, produced by Cory Taylor and written by Shan Serafin, will be performed every weekend during the exhibition's run. Starring Julie Taylor as Pauling's stalwart wife, Ava Helen, and John Astin and Matthew Ashford as the elder and youthful Dr. Pauling, respectively, the play is being staged at Polytechnic School, which many



The Pauling exhibition will be at Caltech's Winnett Center until June 19.

Pauling family members have attended, just across the street from the exhibition site. *The Essential Bond* focuses on how Ava Helen led her husband to the path of peace and justice.

At the same time, middle and high school students throughout the Los Angeles area have become involved in the exhibition through a curriculum program, developed first by San Francisco educators, then by Southland educators, called Teach P.E.A.C.E. (Positive Educational Action for Creating Excellence). During the exhibition's run, more than 3,000 students who have studied

P.E.A.C.E. will visit the exhibition on field trips. The students have also written their future dreams on thousands of paper doves that have been added to the exhibition here.

Sponsored by the Pauling family, Oregon State University and the SGI, the exhibition is the result of a proposal SGI President Ikeda made to Dr. Pauling at their last meeting, in 1993. In a letter commending the Caltech showing, Vice President Al Gore thanks all the co-sponsors and says, "As we reach the end of the 20th century and approach a new millennium, it is appropriate to celebrate the life of a man

whose dedication and contributions to humankind impacted all our lives."

The exhibition will run through June 19 at Caltech. For exhibitions hours and showtimes for *The Essential Bond*, call (323) 938-8255. The exhibition also has a virtual version on the Internet (see [www.paulingexhibit.org](http://www.paulingexhibit.org)) and is next scheduled to show in Washington, D.C.

— JEFF FARR

See SGI President Ikeda's message for the opening of the Caltech exhibition, page 7.

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## D.C. Youth Attend National Youth Conference on HAP

April 9–11, six youth division members from Washington, D.C. Region attended the National Youth Conference on the Hague Appeal for Peace held at American University. The conference was sponsored by the World Federalist Association and the Center for Global Peace in order to promote the HAP Conference in the Netherlands. Attended by more than 150 youth from around the world, the D.C. conference featured workshops, lectures and breakout sessions that focused on how to further develop the roles of ordinary citizens and civil societies in the furthering of the international peace movement.

By participating in the youth conference, all of the youth division members walked away with a fresh, new determination to work for peace in their own lives and in society. In particular, one young women's division member, Sahana Dharmapuri, was inspired by participating in a panel discussion on local activism. She spoke about the advantages of using soft power to resolve conflict, stating: "You only have to touch one person's heart with the message of peace. The most effective way of getting your position across is through dialogue." Paul Schienle, a young men's division member from Arlington, Va., said that the conference inspired him to "jump-start my mission to practice international conflict resolution."

After the conference, the SGI delegates met to discuss what they could do to further the development of Washington, D.C. Region's participation. It was decided that study should form the basis of their efforts to promote and enhance each member's knowledge of Nichiren Daishonin's perspective on peace. In addition, each individual made a personal determination to further his or her role in the advancement of a global peaceful society.

— DAVID JORAY and  
CHELSEA HONDERICH

# Western Zone in Bloom

Photo by PETER NELLHAUS

The Western Zone kick-off meeting on April 19 was the centerpiece of a weekend-long First Western Zone Conference held in Denver amid springtime in the Rockies. The reggae song "I Can See Clearly Now," performed by the energetic Snowcapped Rocky Mountain Chorus, set the mood for two-and-a-half days of refreshing guidance and encouragement toward creating greater ties of friendship through dialogue and home visitations.

The new Western Zone is made up of the Rocky Mountain and Texas/Oklahoma regions. This kickoff marked the first time the Western Zone leaders were formally presented to the members: Brian Matsuo, men's division leader; Rita Risom, women's division leader; and Carol Goodwin, youth division leader.

Months before the conference took place, region and national leaders began to discuss a plan of action. In turn, region leaders held discussions with area lead-



Cherry trees blossom in front of the Denver Culture Center. More than 500 trees, which were planted by the Rocky Mountain Region members over the last 11 years, adorn the city.

ers to determine the best ways to encourage the members. The result was a conference with a variety of meetings — large and small — covering such topics as the temple issue, the May commemorative contribu-

tions and the development of districts. They were presented in the form of dialogues, performances and Q-and-A sessions; there were also opportunities for individual guidance. One member expressed it this way:

"The national leaders home visited the Denver and Colorado Springs area, and we've been energized! Our challenge now is to put what we learned into action."

— CRIS RISOM

## SEATTLE INCIDENT OVERVIEW — PART 3

By JEFF FARR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

After four years of the Seattle Incident trial, where is it going? When will it end? To be honest, it's hard to say at this point. It's possible that the trial will wrap up soon — just as it's possible that it will continue for years to come.

Complicated cases like this libel case, in which Nichiren Shoshu is suing the Soka Gakkai over coverage in Gakkai publications of Nikken's 1963 incident with prostitutes, can take several years to conclude under Japan's legal system, especially when you consider the possibility of appeals.

For now, the trial is slowly (by U.S. standards) proceeding forward. The latest evidence presented came from the Soka Gakkai side: At the March 16 court session, attorneys for the Soka Gakkai submitted another affidavit by a former Seattle police officer, Edwin Curtis Marion, linking Nikken to the incident. Mr. Marion, although not at the incident site

in downtown Seattle that night himself, remembers that immediately afterward his colleague Ronald Sprinkle, who was there, told him about the dispute between Nikken and the prostitutes.

In September and October 1996, Mr. Sprinkle traveled to Tokyo and testified as a defense witness. An affidavit from the other officer at the scene, Victor Mayhle, which corroborated Mrs. Hiroe Clow's and Mr. Sprinkle's accounts, was also submitted.

Basically, then, the Soka Gakkai side has offered two testimonies and two affidavits that link Nikken to the incident. This evidence seriously questions his testimony of what happened on March 19–20, 1963.

The most recent testimony in the case came from Soka Gakkai Vice President Isao Nozaki, who was first called in November 1998 by the Soka Gakkai as a defense witness to explain why the Soka Gakkai youth division newspaper, the *Soka Shimpō*, decided to cover the Seattle

Incident in the first place. He explained that the purpose was simply to show what Nikken was really like, that Nikken was not the holy man he was pretending to be.

Vice President Nozaki was cross-examined by Nikken's attorneys twice, on Dec. 21 and March 16, at which time they asked him about various peripheral issues, including the camera Nikken had with him the night in question, Mrs. Clow's husband's military records, where Nikken left the Gohonzon in Hawaii and the prayer beads that Nikken sent for Mrs. Clow's daughter's wedding.

We may not be able to predict how soon the trial will come to a close, but what's most important is that we continue to pray for the truth to be revealed through these court proceedings. Many of us have been doing so ever since the trial began, but we should be aware that we have not reached the end of this struggle yet. Like Mrs. Clow, we want the world to know that Nikken is not what he

claims to be. If Nikken loses this case, an important step toward this inevitability has been taken.

*Conclusion of a three-part series*

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EXPERIENCE — MARY McCONNELL, BUFFALO, NEW YORK

# The Inseparable Love Between a Father and Daughter

**'Buddhism teaches the inseparability of our lives; we all are connected at the deepest level,' says Mary McConnell. Over the past year, faced with her father's cancer and ensuing death, Mary came to terms with the reality of their relationship. 'There was still a distance between us. It was a source of pain that I needed to resolve.' In using his illness to challenge her Buddhist practice, she explains, 'I felt like I renewed our relationship — I was his little girl again. Every prayer to the Gohonzon for my father came true.'**

**M**y experience begins in April 1998. It was springtime in Buffalo — the sky blue, the sun shining, and all the flowers in full bloom. My life, too, was blossoming, filled with happiness and fulfillment I had never known before.

I had just married a wonderful man after years of unhappy relationships, including a previous marriage that ended in divorce and, at age 37, was expecting my first child. This was a child I had chanted for, and dreamed of having, for more than 10 years. After practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for more than 18 years, my cherished hope of having a happy family of my own had finally become a reality.

My bliss was suddenly shattered with a phone call from my parents, who told me my father had just been diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. It was stage IV cancer, the final stage of the disease.

It was inoperable. There were no treatments, not even chemotherapy, that could prevent the progression of the cancer. The only role of the doctors was to attempt to manage the pain, which would rapidly increase with time. The prognosis was that he had from two months to six months, at best, remaining to live. My father, who had always been in perfect health, who had always been a pillar of support for my family, and with whom I shared a closeness and respect that had sustained me throughout my life — to lose him was simply incomprehensible to me.

My relationship with my father has not always been a perfect one. When I was a child, I worshipped him; we were very close. However throughout my adolescence and early adulthood we drifted apart. My dad was multitalented; he was brilliant. I never felt I measured up to his expectations. He was also not an openly affectionate person. He had a close relationship with

my brother that I envied. I was jealous and I wanted so desperately to renew our closeness. Through my 18 years of Buddhist practice, our relationship became closer but there was still a distance between us. It was a source of pain that I needed to resolve.

My family and I were suddenly confronted with a heart-breaking and devastating situation. Two days after his diagnosis, my father was admitted to the hospital in excruciating pain. The cancer apparently had been growing for quite some time; it had spread from the lung throughout his bones, into his pelvis, vertebrae and rib cage. He had become completely immobilized and unable to even sit up or feed himself. Due to the fragility of his bones, he had unknowingly fractured his pelvis. Lying on his back, he screamed and cried out from the pain, despite being administered the highest doses of morphine. The members of my family, and my dad himself, believed he most likely



Tim and Mary McConnell, Buffalo, N.Y.



Mary's father, Dr. James McKinnon, and his granddaughter, Christine, 5 months, at his parents' home in Chapel Hill, N.C.

would never walk again, and possibly never leave the hospital and return home.

The night I received the news of my father's cancer, I spent crying and chanting in front of the Gohonzon. It would be the first of many nights — for I knew, only prayer to the Gohonzon could help my father. I reread one of my favorite passages from a letter Nichiren Daishonin wrote to Nichigen-nyo, a follower whose daughter, Kyo'o Gozen, was suffering from illness: "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?" and "Kyo'o Gozen's misfortune will change into fortune. Muster your faith and pray to this Gohonzon. Then what is there that cannot be achieved? You should believe the Lotus Sutra when it says, 'This sutra fulfills one's desires. It is the pond's cool, clear water that quenches thirst,' and 'They will have peace and security in this life and good circumstances in the next.'" (*The*

*Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp.119–20).

The only way this nightmare could be transformed was with the power of courageous prayer. I began to chant wholeheartedly for the pain my father was experiencing to subside, and for him to regain his strength. He received 15 days of inpatient radiation treatment in hope of alleviating some of the pain. The treatment had a remarkable effect; my father's pain immediately began to subside. Day by day, although he hadn't been able to eat for nearly a month, he began to regain his strength. I arrived at the hospital, having flown to North Carolina, where my parents live, to find my father leaving the hospital in a wheelchair, rolling joyfully down the hallway kissing all the nurses good-bye. He was so grateful to be going home.

Soon he was using a walker to get around the house, and was slowly regaining the 30 pounds he lost while in the  
see EXPERIENCE, pg 6

Photo by SUSAN McDONOUGH

Photo by RITA McKINNON

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA



# SIX STORIES HIGH AND FULL OF HOPE

*At a 1982 culture festival in Kansai, YMD members built a six-story human pyramid that touched the hearts of all Kansai members. 'The pyramid of youth that rose so bravely and so high into the bright skies of Kansai marked a momentous turning point,' President Ikeda remembers, 'opening the way for the Gakkai's unflinching counterattack against the threats and schemes of a corrupt priesthood.'*

*Eternal, boundless, undecay'd,  
A thought unseen....*

These are the words of the poet and revolutionary Lord Byron.



An unforgettable event took place 17 years ago, on March 22, 1982: The first, historic Kansai Youth Peace Culture Festival at the Nagai Track and Field Stadium in Osaka.

This festival, commemorating the 30th anniversary of the kosen-rufu movement in Kansai, began at 1:29 p.m. with a parade of 10,000 youth — all new Soka Gakkai members — marching into the stadium.

Then, at 2:48, after members of each division had thrilled the spectators with wonderful performances, 4,000 youth came dashing onto the field. They were the young men's division gymnastics team. They formed eight five-story human towers that together unfurled as beautifully as an eight-petal lotus flower.

Then, in the center of the field, a group of young men began to array themselves in a new formation. The eyes of all spectators — the eyes of all their fellow Kansai members — were upon them, looking on and praying for the success of this "tower of the people's triumph," a six-story human pyramid.

The 60 people forming the pyramid's base placed their arms over one another's shoulders. Twenty people forming the second layer climbed on top; 10 more climbed on top of them to form the third layer; then five more on top of them to form the fourth; another three climbed on top of them to form the fifth; and then, finally, one person climbed to the very top. All but those in the base were at this point in a

crouching position. Slowly, the second layer began to stand up.



For several years, the Soka Gakkai had been subjected to harsh criticism and abuse, which Nichiren Daishonin's writings predicted would befall those who practiced in exact accord with the Buddha's teachings. The attacks leveled against us were utterly false and baseless — they were nothing more than waves of malicious, destructive verbal violence.

Our Kansai members never quailed before these onslaughts of the three powerful enemies of Buddhism. In particular, the women's and young women's division members continued to exert themselves diligently in their Gakkai activities with the gentle smiles of heavenly emissaries. No matter how vile the slander and abuse directed at them, no matter how stabbing and heart-rending those verbal attacks, the Kansai members never forgot to act and speak out with dignity and courage.

These members, who had turned the rain-drenched Kansai Culture Festival of 1966 into a rousing success, were strong. And now the youth division, fearless and undaunted, burned with enthusiasm to create a truly outstanding gathering of youth in Kansai.

In November 1981, after a memorable guidance tour to Shikoku, I returned to Osaka to attend the Third Kansai General Meeting. At that time, our young Kansai members, hearts blazing and brilliant as the sun, told me that "we're going to make our culture festival an event that will let the world know that the Gakkai is here! And that our mentor is as vigorous as ever! A hundred thousand Kansai youth division members are waiting for you, Sensei!"

Right after the New Year of 1982, I went to snowbound Akita Prefecture to offer guidance and encouragement to our members, and there launched a battle against the three obstacles and four devils there. I threw myself into the forefront of the struggle, like a lion, determined to topple the malign forces that sought to destroy Buddhism. That initiative was a signal to all our members, inspiring them, too, to fight and speak out.

It was at the same time that our youthful Kansai members were beginning to practice for the culture festival, enduring the cold winter winds in Osaka Castle Park and other places. The group working on the six-story human pyramid often borrowed the gymnasium of Kansai Soka High School in Katano — but up to the day of the festival, they had only succeeded in making the pyramid once.

My eldest son, Hiromasa, then a teacher at the school, had been with them when they succeeded and shared their elation. "I will never forget that thrill and that moment in history as long as I live!" he declared.

Just before the culture festival, a gymnastics team member died of an illness. He was the best friend of the youth who was to stand at the very apex of the pyramid. Now, the pyramid had also become a memorial, a tribute to that young man who could not participate in the festival.



The evening of March 21, 1982, I arrived in Osaka. It was raining fiercely, and the first day of the festival had been canceled. I dropped in on the event-staff meeting to encourage and rally the young people, who I was sure must be disappointed. I told them that it was too much to expect to successfully achieve the six-story pyramid, a

feat requiring the greatest precision and concentration, two days in a row.

It was good that it had rained, I said. And I urged them to give us a high-spirited performance the next day.



Under clear blue skies, the six-story pyramid was formed on that historic, noble ground. Members in one section of the stands held up cards to spell out a colorful, giant "Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century!"

The fourth level of the pyramid rose. Slowly and surely, the fifth rose.

At 3:06 p.m., the young man alone on the top stood up and lifted his face to the heavens. He cried out the name of his deceased friend and shouted, "We did it!" Holding up both arms, he was a picture of life's boundless dignity.

At that instant, members in the stands, with their cards, spelled out in scarlet letters on a golden background, "The Kansai Spirit." The pyramid stood triumphantly against the cloudless blue skies of Ever-victorious Kansai as tumultuous cries of victory rang out.

At that instant, the sun of the Soka Gakkai shone with brilliant splendor! Cheers filled the air — a wave of voices heralding like trumpets, a chorus of enthusiastic approval.

The youth's mighty tower of victory and justice was magnificent, truly magnificent, rising high above those obsessed with personal fame and profit. It radiated the great light of hope. A very well-known non-Japanese guest at the event declared that the six-story human pyramid was most certainly a feat without parallel in the world.



When this stunning performance was finished, the tens of thousands of spectators and performers fell silent; everyone present had witnessed the shining glory of victors. Kansai Youth Division Leader Masato Onishi (now a Soka Gakkai vice president) came to the microphone: "My friends, a hundred thousand strong, disciples of President Ikeda from all over Kansai!" he began. With these opening words of a declaration for peace, a declaration infused with the pledge of a true disciple, ringing out, a solemn atmosphere enveloped the stadium.

"We vow to elevate the Buddhism of the Daishonin to the spirit of our age," he said, "to the spirit of the entire world and, based on the ideals of respect for the dignity of life and peace for all humankind, to advance our movement for lasting peace in accord with the principles of *rissho ankoku*."

I made closing remarks, in which, after expressing my thanks to the high priest and the distinguished guests, I called out to the youth: "Peace is the true wish of humanity. Surmounting all slander and abuse, we must con-

tinue to pre- trust this friends!"

As I reca- after the cul- a message f- immediately- famous for l- summoned

I was scho- in Kyoto an- plans and hu- ing Presider- ers with me.

The high- up with ang- demons of- shouted imp- division's v- dhism of the- our age, to t- He charged- suggest that- vated as th- could be ele-

And he l- wording of r- for attendi- "His Emine- I should hav- High Priest.

This was- nessing that- foolish and- to assert aut- Nikken was- less priest, - in the high p- by devilish- mind with je- us indignan- us laugh —

The Dais- demon who- his head spi- Major Writi- vol. 3, p. 19

The pyra- bravely an- skies of Kan- turning poi- Gakkai's u- against the- corrupt prie-

From tha- beginning i- with its ev- kosen-rufu, - alliance for- and we hea- summit of S-

When th- ters Build- the six-sto- boldly adora-

This seri- "Though- Human F- Seikyo S-

st precision  
ys in a row.  
ained, I said.  
; a high-spir-  
day.

tinue to press onward for peace. I en-  
trust this path to you, my young  
friends!"

•••••

As I recall, it was two or three days  
after the culture festival that I received  
a message from the head temple to go  
immediately there. The high priest, in-  
famous for his vindictive jealousy, had  
summoned me.

I was scheduled to visit our members  
in Kyoto and Shiga, but I changed my  
plans and hurried to the head temple, tak-  
ing President Akiya and other top lead-  
ers with me. That was March 25, 1982.

The high priest awaited us, as puffed  
up with anger as an *asura* (contentious  
demons of Indian mythology). He  
shouted imperiously about the youth  
division's vow to "elevate the Bud-  
dhism of the Daishonin to the spirit of  
our age, to the spirit of the entire world."  
He charged that it was disrespectful to  
suggest that something already as elev-  
ated as the Daishonin's Buddhism  
could be elevated further.

And he had complaints about the  
wording of my speech. In thanking him  
for attending, I had addressed him as  
"His Eminence Nikken Shonin," when  
I should have said "His Eminence, the  
High Priest."

This was all he had to say after wit-  
nessing that marvelous festival! How  
foolish and sad was his pathetic attempt  
to assert authority! With painful clarity,  
Nikken was revealing himself as a faith-  
less priest, who was cloaking himself  
in the high priest's robes, who was ruled  
by devilish forces, who had lost his  
mind with jealousy. This incident made  
us indignant. Its sheer absurdity made  
us laugh — but without mirth.

The Daishonin writes, "The *asura*  
demon who shot an arrow at the sun had  
his head split into seven pieces" (*The  
Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*,  
vol. 3, p. 195).

•••••

The pyramid of youth that rose so  
bravely and so high into the bright  
skies of Kansai marked a momentous  
turning point, opening the way for the  
Gakkai's unflinching counterattack  
against the threats and schemes of a  
corrupt priesthood.

From that day, from that moment,  
beginning in Ever-victorious Kansai  
with its ever-fresh commitment to  
kosen-rufu, the great advance of our  
alliance for justice and truth began —  
and we headed for the triumphant  
summit of Soka in the 21st century!

•••••

When the new Kansai Headquar-  
ters Building is completed, a statue of  
the six-story human pyramid will  
boldly adorn it.

This series is published as  
"Thoughts on *The New  
Human Revolution*" in the  
*Seikyo Shimbun*.



The six-story human pyramid from the 1982 Kansai Youth Peace Culture Festival. 'The youth's mighty tower of victory and justice was magnificent, truly magnificent, rising high above those obsessed with personal fame and profit. It radiated the great light of hope.'

# Life Is Always Ready To Start — A Perspective on Death

## PERSPECTIVE



By LAURIE MORRISON  
LAFAYETTE, CALIF.

During the month of February, I lost three significant individuals to death. My cousin, someone I loved deeply; an old, old friend who

used to be my “second” mother as a child, and my mother-in-law (for 32 years). Like so many people in my age bracket, late 50s, people are dying all of the time. It can be unsettling.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda says in his book *Unlocking the Mysteries of Birth and Death*, “We should be more concerned with how much we live, rather than how long we live.” That makes perfect sense, yet most of us like to be alive now, on this earth. So I search out the wisdom of Nichiren Daishonin through his writings, President Ikeda’s lectures and I chant. Still, it all seems like such a mystery.

Nichiren Daishonin said: “Life is the most precious of all treasures. Even one extra day of life is worth more than

ten million *ryo* of gold” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 230). I believe he refers to quality and the opportunity to change one’s karma. It also allows us to reach others. What keeps coming through is that what happens next is mysterious and what we need to do is live each day as if it were our last, to savor our lives and help others chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo.

Stephen Levine wrote a book, *Who Dies*. His ideas seem to support those of our mentor’s. One idea: “Death puts life in perspective. A great gift which if received in love and wisdom allows the clinging mind to dissolve so that nothing remains but the truth. And we become just the light entering the light” (p.

290). He quotes Walt Whitman: “All goes onward and outward, / Nothing collapses / And to die is different from / What anyone supposes / And luckier.”

In a sense, life is always ready to start. Just when it seems that things are dead within ourselves, things become alive once more. Perhaps our physical death is like our sleep and we reawaken. I put this idea of new beginning — *hon’ nin myo* — into haiku: Light on cold water / Running swiftly over stones; / Leaves gone, buds forming.

We are one with everything. We are here now and gone, but even though evidence is removed, we, or they were here. When the tree falls in the forest and we were not there to hear it fall, the effects

are still there. When we walk on a beach, the waves may come up and wash our footprints away, but we were there all the same. Life goes on. My poem: Rolling hills, vast sky, / Ocean beyond the horizon, / Footsteps washed away.

My understanding of life and death is that I really *know* nothing, but I expect that it is a great wonder. I hope that fear and narrow thought never bind up my mind. This understanding takes wisdom, not just learning. I like the idea that we must open up the treasures of the heart before we can expand our life. Another poem: Singing, chanting, flying / Dancing new steps / Across unknown time and space.

Thanks, it is just nice to share my thoughts. ☸

## EXPERIENCE

from page 3

hospital. A short time later, he discarded the walker and began taking daily walks all around the neighborhood.

The day of his diagnosis, I had made a promise to myself that, no matter what, he would live to see the birth of my daughter, nearly four months away, to be there to share this happiness that he, too, had waited a long time for. In late June, to the amazement of everyone, my mother and father got on a plane to fly home to Buffalo. On July 19, I gave birth to a healthy baby girl. My dad was there at the hospital to hold her in his arms, his face filled with joy. It was truly the happiest day of my life.

In the midst of challenging my father’s life-and-death situation, we were thrown into yet another crisis — my 3-week-old daughter was admitted to the intensive care unit due to the sudden onset of convulsions. The probable cause: a case of spinal meningitis. Fortunately she was discharged 10 days later in stable condition, but we were told by doctors that she could sustain permanent neurological or brain damage. Since that time I chanted every day for her health and development. Eight months later she is completely healthy, happy and medication-free.

My father is an internationally known scholar and author, and professor of musicology at the University of North Carolina. When he got sick, he was writing his fifth

## ‘Through illness and death, I have learned and continue to learn invaluable lessons. I’ve learned how precious it is to give, and receive, love from others, and how fortunate I am.’

book; the culmination of years of research. It was his dream to complete this final book. I chanted day after day that he could fulfill this dream. Despite his condition, he was able to work and write five to six hours a day for the following three months. He completed the final revisions of the book, which will be published by the University of California at Berkeley.

My family spent the summer months together, time with my father that we all cherished. We had a deepened appreciation and renewed love for each other, and believed how important it was to treasure every moment we spent together.

In the fall, my parents returned to North Carolina, and my dad resumed working part time at the University. My daughter, Christine, and I had spent many wonderful visits with them. I was blessed with this beautiful baby daughter who brought happiness to all our lives, especially to her grandfather. They shared a very special bond. My father cried each time we left to return to Buffalo. Only the promise that he would see Christine again gave us the strength to say good-bye.

In mid-January, a three-day conference was planned to be held at the University in

honor of my father’s retirement. Scholars and friends from as far away as Europe would be coming to honor him and his 40 years of accomplishments in his field. To still be present for the event, my dad would have to continue to outlast the predictions of all the doctors.

However, just two weeks before the conference, he re-fractured his pelvis and was bedridden. He became extremely weak and stopped eating, and seemed to be fading away. I began to chant, along with so many of my friends in the SGI, that somehow he would live to enjoy this celebration that meant so much to him, and which he so truly deserved.

At this time I received a long distance call from the hospice nurse who was caring for my father in his home. She told me: “I just saw your father. I was amazed to see him full of energy and enthusiasm, directing preparations for the conference from his bed. He told me, ‘Never give up!’ This is his motto, and I know he will never give up. It is an inspiration and a privilege to know your father.”

The conference was a tremendous event. Although my dad could not leave his bed, he watched everything on videotape, and also video-

taped himself to present to the lecturers and participants at the University. When my brother gave a speech in his honor, everyone was in tears. Nearly 100 people came to his bedside to see him, and he enjoyed every moment.

My father died peacefully, surrounded by family, on Feb. 23, ten months after being diagnosed with cancer. This has been a difficult time, yet one of unforgettable and treasured memories. My dad enjoyed a remarkable quality of life even in the final stage of his illness. He achieved all his personal and professional goals in the short time he had. My father was so loving and we communicated our deepest feelings and forgave past hurts and mistakes, which would otherwise have remained unspoken between us. I felt like I renewed our relationship — I was his little girl again. This was my greatest gift, and I have no regrets. I know my father was happy and proud of all that I had become. In moments of grief, it gives me solace and comfort that he loved his granddaughter and shared in the beginning of her life, and in the new life I am beginning as well.

Buddhism teaches the inseparability of our lives; we

all are connected at the deepest level. Because we share the same inner core of life force and Buddhahood, our prayers penetrate the lives of the people around us, activating their own healing life force. Every prayer to the Gohonzon for my father came true, from the practical prayers for relief of symptoms, the best doctors and care, and so forth, to the most profound prayers for his life to be prolonged until he accomplished what was important to him, and to experience a sense of completion and happiness in the final phase of life.

Through illness and death, I have learned and continue to learn invaluable lessons. I’ve learned how precious it is to give, and receive, love from others, and how fortunate I am. Although we experienced our share of ups and downs, my family now has a greater strength and closeness in our relationships.

I want to thank my husband, Tim, for his unending love and support and the members of SGI who were at my side throughout the past year, and prayed for my father and daughter as if they were members of their own family. Words do not adequately express my gratitude and appreciation for the support and friendship you gave to me and my family. I will continue striving in unity with all of you, and the SGI organization of which I am proud to be a part. ☸

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE

# Education To Revitalize Young People

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



The Los Angeles members' play 'The Essential Bond' tells the story of Dr. Pauling's life — and the big part his wife, Ava Helen, played in it. (Left to right) Julie Taylor as Ava Helen, Victor Lopez as Albert Einstein and Matt Ashford as Linus Pauling.

In his message to the Caltech opening of the 'Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century' exhibition, President Ikeda talks about the Columbine High School murders. 'The recent tragedy in Colorado has shocked and horrified educators, students and their parents throughout the world,' he says. 'We cannot turn our eyes from the underlying issues that gave rise to that heart-rending event.... Education that revitalizes the hearts and spirits of young people is essential.'

It is truly a great pleasure and honor to offer this message celebrating the opening of the exhibition "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century." In my mind's eye, I can picture the scene of this opening, held in the beautiful city of Pasadena, a city of culture and learning, under the brilliant Southern California sun.

Dr. Linus Pauling. The immortal name of this great man conjures the image of a towering peak, soaring above the vicissitudes of the 20th century. Like an Everest he stands, the heights of sublime wisdom supported by a broad-based humanity and warmth.

It is a particular joy to me that it has been possible to hold this exhibition, which portrays the full scope of Dr.

Pauling's life and achievements, here at this world-renowned center of learning, the California Institute of Technology, where Dr. Pauling taught and conducted research for 42 years.

It was my great privilege to know Dr. Pauling in his later years. Each time that we met, I was struck by his ever more youthful spirit, his determination to move forward without cease toward his goal of contributing to the peace and health of humankind.

At no point did he permit himself to be satisfied with his enormous accomplishments — like his being the only person to receive two unshared Nobel Prizes. On one occasion, he shared with me his desire to continue, through his research, to alleviate human suffering and contribute to world peace. He said that he felt compelled to do this, so long as our world continues to be filled with war and conflict.

I also vividly recall our meeting one year before his death, when he was already 92. At that time, he told me, with great enthusiasm, of his ongoing research into the use of vitamins in the treatment of heart disease. He said that he had just met with and recommended such treatment to three patients. His bright complexion and the sparkle in his eyes — the gleam of an uninterrupted pursuit of truth — were that of a young student far more than of a great scholar of advanced age.

The work of sharing this most full, extraordinary life with the people of the world is an act of education — education for humanity, education

for peace. And it was this belief that inspired me to first propose the organization of this exhibition. With the support of the distinguished members of the Advisory Committee and all those who participated in the planning and creation of this exhibition, we have succeeded in bringing into being an exhibition that would have satisfied Dr. Pauling. My heartfelt gratitude to all those who have made this exhibition possible.

As this century draws to a close, humanity is afflicted by a lack of clear vision regarding its most basic values. For this reason, I am certain that the message of this exhibition — which speaks so powerfully to those values — will continue to resonate in people's hearts.

In our discussions, Dr. Pauling and I were in complete agreement that we must make the coming 21st century an era of life, an era in which respect for the dignity and sanctity of human life takes precedence over all else. This is the core value that we must uphold. And it requires that we resolutely confront and oppose everything that undermines or destroys the value of life.

The work and struggles of Dr. Pauling, waged alongside his beloved partner and comrade, Mrs. Ava Helen Pauling, were committed to this ideal. Together they surmounted enormous challenges and difficulties. I believe that this message, the message of Dr. Pauling's humanity, is what this exhibition conveys, even more than his great talents and learning.

When we look at the world around us, we see continuing war, conflict and violence. In societies shadowed by the dark clouds of hatred and mistrust, there is increasing disregard for human life and an increasing readiness to view life as a means to an end.

The recent tragedy in Colorado has shocked and horrified educators, students and their parents throughout the world. We cannot turn our eyes from the underlying issues that gave rise to that heart-rending event. The war and violence that have been so pervasive in this century have implanted in the hearts, even of children, a callous disregard for the value of life. It is this devaluation of life that we must first confront and transform, as we enter the new century.

To this end, education that revitalizes the hearts and spirits of young people is essen-

tial. I sincerely hope that the message of this exhibition will reach many young people. For it is a message of the precious sanctity and dignity of life.

I express my sincere respect for the support extended by Caltech, which has enabled this exhibition to be held on this historic campus. Caltech President David Baltimore is renowned for his work in AIDS research, through which he seeks to resolve one of the major causes of human suffering in the world today. At the same time, he is dedicated to fostering an unbroken stream of young scientists. Under the leadership of President Baltimore, Caltech continues to forge ahead, seeking to understand those issues that will more directly impact humanity's future. I certainly hope that this exhibition will generate new waves of heightened public awareness, which will issue from this campus, supporting and strengthening efforts to create a new century of life.

I also want to express my gratitude to the many Los Angeles-area volunteers, who have so deeply understood and appreciated the significance of this exhibition and offered their unstinting support. In particular, I want to thank the young people who have created a play portraying the life of Dr. Pauling. Together with the brilliant actor John Astin, these young people have learned from the life of Dr. Pauling, who dedicated his enormous talent and knowledge to finding a fundamental solution for the human suffering. And they have sought to share that vision with their generation and the public. I cannot find words to express fully my respect and praise for their efforts. I can only imagine how delighted Dr. Pauling would be to witness this kind of spontaneous citizens' movement, generating an ever greater popular commitment to peace.

As one determined to carry on Dr. Pauling's legacy, I offer my pledge to work with all of you, without cease, for the realization of the ideals to which Dr. Pauling dedicated his life. I close by expressing my sincere prayers for the excellent health and well-being of all in attendance today.

May 14, 1999

Daisaku Ikeda  
SGI President

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Parenting Experience M. LaVora Perry, Cleveland

# Getting to the Root of Violence

**One morning after spanking her daughter, LaVora Perry 'recommitted,' as she says, 'to the premise that if I truly hope to raise happy kids who'll grow up to practice Buddhism and contribute to world peace, I'll have to be a good example for them.'**

The Saturday morning before Mother's Day, things were pretty intense at our house. Determined to be a fit dad and husband well into the new millennium, my husband was out on a morning walk while I was scrambling to get the kids — ages 3-and-a-half years, 2 years and 3 months, dressed and fed.

My 3-and-a-half-year-old girl had run frantic circles around her room instead of going straight to the bathroom, and for the umpteenth time proceeded to have a totally avoidable accident right on the floor. Then she had the misfortune of telling me "No," or moving too slowly, or doing *something* to tick off her already stressed out mom just one time too many, and I did what I'd sworn never to do. I spanked her. I spanked her while her younger brother, who's always being told not to hit anyone, looked on in confusion, as if to ask, "Why can you hit, Mom, when I can't?" I spanked her while another part of me observed the whole thing, asking: "What in the world are you doing, LaVora? What are you teaching your children with this horrid action?"

It was a blaring wake-up call for me. I had to chant for my kids, and to get my life in balance for the sake of my family and for the part I play in the entire human drama. I realized that subtly I'd lost

sight of the profundity of my mission as a parent.

I'd also stopped liking my daughter. She whined too much, was too mean to her brother, and was way too ready to disobey me. So the first thing I did was chant from the bottom of my life for my daughter's happiness, because as I sat before the Gohonzon, vowing never to hit my children again, it occurred to me that maybe she wasn't as happy as she could be. I also recommitted to the premise that if I truly hope to raise happy kids who'll grow up to practice Buddhism and contribute to world peace, I'll have to be a good example, I must be happy myself, and I must have genuine compassion for their lives — even when they do things I don't like. I realized that I'd lost that loving feeling for my own daughter. And I wanted it back.

After chanting and talking things over with my husband, some new ground rules for our family interactions were laid. These were needed, but even more importantly, I laid a new foundation within my own heart for my relationship with my daughter. I also reminded myself that although it would be convenient for me to have a child who always did exactly what she was told, cause and effect is no joke, and I was nowhere near

being such a child for my parents. Nor would I want to totally squelch my daughter's creative and independent spirit.

After chanting and taking action, I got immediate results!

I feel lighter, can laugh with my daughter again, and can simply enjoy her company. Even her whining doesn't bother me as much. And when discipline is needed, I dish it out sternly, but with care, not bitterness. She has responded by being a lot less cranky herself. That chanting about my relationship with my daughter has affected the way I see her reminds me of the passage from the Daishonin's writings, "Once you realize that your own life is the Mystic Law, you will realize that so are the lives of all others." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 5). I feel that through prayer, I activate my Buddha nature, which enables me to see the Buddha in my little girl, too.

The other day, our family was leaving the shopping mall where we'd celebrated my son's birthday in an indoor amusement park when we walked by a shoe store and heard a child crying hysterically. As I passed by, with my older daughter holding onto my shirt tail while I pushed the baby in a stroller, I saw a woman whipping a preschool-age

girl with a dress belt. Not seeing what had happened, my daughter asked, "Why's that girl crying, Mom?" "Because her mom hit her with a belt," I answered. "Remember I told you that some mommies hit their children when they don't do what they're told?" Before I actually *became* one of those mommies, I'd tell my daughter about spanking as a way of saying, "See how lucky you are to have a mommy like me?" Anyway, hearing of the little girl's distress, my daughter replied: "Her mommy shouldn't have hit her. That wasn't nice."

I was torn. On the one hand, I didn't know this woman at all, but on the other, here I was with my kid who was very clear in her mind about the injustice of the situation. How did I want her to remember this incident? What did I want her to learn from it? So I wheeled the stroller around, and the three of us went into the shoe store.

"Excuse me," I said to the woman. "Is that your daughter you were spanking?" It was. "Well, I know I don't know you, but I'm a mother, too. This is my daughter, and my baby girl is in the stroller. My husband's in the mall with our son. Last week, after vowing never to do so, I spanked my girl." Not knowing how she would react, I told the

woman my story. Ending with my belief that with the way violence is sweeping over our world — in Kosovo and other less-reported armed conflicts, in our own neighborhoods and homes — we must find new ways to teach our children to solve problems, because in the end, violence can only lead to death.

I saw tears form in the woman's eyes. We connected. Like me, she was a mother doing her best to raise a child, and harming that child was the last thing on earth she wanted to do.

Having children forces me to be braver than I may have been otherwise. Were it not for wanting to pass on my deepest held values to my children, I may not have dared approach a woman who could easily have responded in anger to my intrusion in her personal family business. But as it turned out, I came home and chanted for that mother and her daughter, wishing I'd have also told her about the Mystic Law, and praying that she and her family will come to practice Buddhism in this lifetime.

Realizing that the only way to get to the root of violence and create a truly peaceful world is by sharing Nam-myoho-renge-kyo far and wide from heart to heart, I now know more than ever that I've got a lifetime of work to do. WJ

Photo by CHARLISE LYLES



The Perry-Richardsons: Cedric and LaVora with Nia, 3-and-a-half years old, Jarod, 2, and Jahci, 3 months, at their home in Cleveland.

*YWD and YMD*

## SUMMER GENERAL MEETINGS

### thoughts ON HOME VISITS



### CELEBRATING FRIENDSHIP!!

By Renu Jiandani, SGI-USA Young Women's Division Leader

SGI President Ikeda writes in the "Long Journey" chapter of *The New Human Revolution*, "A poet once wrote 'Through man the human world will be conjoined.' Friendship brings people together; it links the world, building a golden bridge to peace."

Our March 16 gatherings were a total success. Many guests were able to attend and many youth were able to participate in creating these meetings. As young women, we would definitely like to continue with the spirit of propagation. Our focus for the next three months is to visit each and every one of our members and to continue to have our guests learn more about this practice and the SGI.

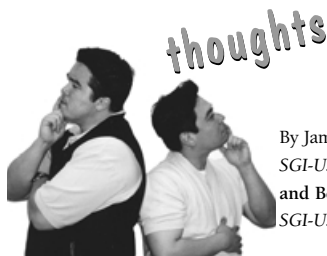
The purpose of our visits is to develop understanding of this practice in our young membership of the basics such as gongyo, daimoku, study, spirit of contribution and reading publications and to develop our further friendships and understanding of the greatness of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Please dialogue about how to involve all of our members in these activities.

President Ikeda states: "There may be times when a single word of encouragement can change someone's life. It can be more moving than 10,000 volumes of writings, and can keep a friend from retreating in faith to a life of hope and courage."

In July, we would like to culminate these efforts to celebrate the establishment of Young Women's Day in small celebration gatherings for all the YWD including Jr. High & High School Division, Student Division, Music Corps, Byakuren and all other activity groups. These activities can be small-scale simple gatherings to celebrate friendship and refresh our determination to work together to further spread the understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in America and of course kick off toward this fall's Grand Culture Festival.

In *Discussions on Youth*, volume 1, President Ikeda states, "In fact, the purest and most beautiful stream that can be found in human existence is friendship."

Let's create beautiful gatherings and celebrate our friendships as young women. ♪



By James Herrmann,  
SGI-USA Young Men's Leader  
and Bobby Debozi,  
SGI-USA Gajokai Leader

**Bobby:** Big Daddy James, now that winter is over and spring is here, I am totally looking forward to the warmer weather. Time to kick back, smell the roses, maybe start standing in line for the new *Star Wars* flick...

**James:** Yeah right, Bobby "D" – what about the YMD General Meetings coming up?

**Bobby:** Dude. That's all the way in July. I have plenty of time!

**James:** That may be so, but a wise man once said, "Plant your seeds early."

**Bobby:** Huh?

**James:** Haven't you heard the expression, "Success comes with preparation." This means prepare early! By starting now, we can make the cause for incredible meetings – meetings where lots of YMD are winning in their lives.

**Bobby:** Seriously, though... I have so much on my plate as it is – work, school, my district planning meeting, May contribution...

**James:** A key to the success of the YMD Meetings is home visits. The beauty of it is you can do it at any time. There is no set Gakkai Standard Time (GST) for visiting your members at their home (7–8:30 p.m.). You can do them when it's most natural for you and the other person. For example, we have a lot of guys who have insane schedules all around the country. Regardless of how busy they are though, they always begin their day with morning "G" (gongyo). Therefore, morning home visits before work to do gongyo together are very popular among the YMD in some areas. Home visits provide us opportunities to meet someone new in the organization, you know make a new friend, as well as visit our old friends. We can also check the spiritual health of our friends-in-faith and encourage those who are struggling.

**Bobby:** So true, my friend. Focusing on home visits toward our YMD General meetings can refresh our spirit to seek out our friends, rather than waiting for them to seek out our tired, *X-Files* watching, potato chip eating...

**James:** (interrupting) Speak for yourself! We can also create true friendships with our members and share their goals, dreams and struggles.

**Bobby:** Especially after such successful March 16th meetings. It's the perfect way to maintain those relationships with those who came out, including the guests.

**James:** The SGI's strength lies in the one-to-one connections created through home V's. After all, I've never been home visited by a priest. Have you?

**Bobby:** Come to think of it, NO... You know, it's kind of ironic that many young men's division leaders avoid doing home visits. The reason why may be that they just don't know how to do it, probably because they have never been visited themselves.

That basic one-to-one dialogue is the way leaders are fostered. Youth can learn how to truly care for their members by doing home visits or accompanying their leaders on home visits. Home V's are a highly underrated part of our practice.

**James:** Even as a leader, I end up getting inspired by home visits. I recently visited a young man who has been practicing for only two weeks. Prior to visiting him, I brushed up on my knowledge of the basics. When I met with him, he said: "I have been chanting for only two weeks and have changed my entire life. Man, when you chant for something, you HAVE to expect it to happen." I was blown away! I could only say, "Wow, that's right!" Long story short, I went prepared to encourage this guy, and instead he shook the core of my life!

**Bobby:** Whoa! There are so many YMD we don't see. It's not because they lack faith! They are out there fighting in society – challenging work, school or other projects – and maybe their schedules don't allow them to attend many meetings. It's through home visits that we can share President Ikeda's recent guidance, or give them opportunities to participate in the SGI through other channels, like the May contribution activity or subscribing to the publications.



"Shh... It's Bobby and James coming to visit us."



Illustrations on this page by Nico Aragon

(Continued on page B)

# Tom's EXPERIENCE

## A YOUNG MAN'S COMMITMENT

Tom DeSimone passed away on Feb. 4, 1999.

He was a great young man who always impressed me deeply. One day last July, I asked him, quite casually, what he felt he had learned from participating in Gajokai. I asked him this because he seemed to have an exemplary spirit for doing behind-the-scenes activities – always warm and friendly, even at the busiest moments, never complaining about doing the hard work of caring for the members.

It was just a question of which I expected an answer of only a few words. Instead, Tom furrowed his brow and said, "Let me think about this for a while." I came back later that evening, and said, "Well?" He looked at me again for a moment, and said: "It's too important a question for me to respond off-hand. Let me get back to you on this." A few days later, he handed me a two-page, typed reply to my question! I'd like to share with you all what he wrote... Ray Bokhour, New York



### "WHAT TRAINING HAVE I GOTTEN FROM DOING GAJOKAI?"

First, Gajokai is a faith activity, and I feel it must therefore be approached from this perspective. As a faith activity, it means I must believe that what I am doing during my shift is making a difference to our kosen-rufu movement. It is more than just checking IDs, smiling or locking and unlocking doors. It is an activity I do with my life. Just as I am committed to my practice, I must be committed to this activity. We cannot "hire" someone to do a faith activity like this (or any faith activity for that matter). When I sign up for a shift, people are counting on me to be there, on time and ready to fulfill my responsibilities.

By being there as a member of the Gajokai (or other behind-the-scenes groups, such as Byakuren, Soka Group, Reception or Bookstore volunteers), we are enabling the other members to move forward with our kosen-rufu movement. However, ensuring the safety of the members is our number-one responsibility; looking for potential hazards, watching for possible breaches in security and protecting the Gohonzon – all this allows the members to use the building for *tosos* (chanting sessions), planning and study meetings, etc. We are part of what they are doing at that moment, and we may not even be in the same room with them, but we are. We are the eyes, the ears and the hands of the building, all the while embracing the members and guests as they enter and exit the building.

Doing this can be a challenge. Balancing is the key. Making people feel welcome and using the building for its purpose while maintaining absolute safety takes, sometimes, a sleight of hand. Dealing with people when they are focused on their own particular meeting or activity can sometimes become demanding. No one wants to sound or be authoritarian. Each situation needs to be addressed, assessed and acted upon, sometimes in a matter of a few seconds. This is our training, which comes from watching the chief on duty and *chanting for our successful shift*. This is the essence of our activity and, as you might imagine, is extremely important.

The training I received from doing Gajokai, has also taught me to be tolerant of the members' needs. Strictness toward the Law and tolerance toward humanity – this should be our motto. Members are people. Members are doing their human revolution...as are we.



Tom DeSimone 1962–1999, New York

It's my responsibility as the Gajokai-on-duty to understand this.

There are occasionally moments of "stress." At these times, these crucial moments, the Gajokai has to pull up his Buddha nature and turn the situation around. This comes with training. TRAINING, WE SAY, FOR LIFE.

How true it is. What a benefit to bring this training home, to work or school and into our daily lives! When I first started doing Gajokai, we had sign-in sheets with space on the back for our determinations. This is currently not available, but I still would make a personal determination with each shift. Just like when we chant, we are determining and praying for something or someone. We manifest a direct cause and effect. I realized that when I did my Gajokai shift, I was making a cause and would determine a desired effect. This I feel should be stressed and reinstated. The activity connects our faith with the activity.

Finally, the training has helped me develop relationships with other members with whom I might not have otherwise had any contact. These relationships help me with my practice and have helped me develop my faith. Working with others in different capacities has truly and boldly solidified my mission to help move our kosen-rufu movement forward.

Thank you. ♪

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(Thoughts on Home Visits continued from page A)

**James:** ...Even encourage them to attend the Grand Culture Festival in the Fall!

**Bobby:** Home V's are a great way to prepare for the YMD General Meetings, but "Home Visitation Campaign" sounds so... '80s!

**James:** Let's leave that up to the local areas to decide what they want to call it and how they would like to promote it.

**Bobby:** That's best! I can't wait to report to President Ikeda about the great people I meet during my home visits! It's truly wonderful that every member can write to him directly and develop their own personal connection with him.

**James:** Definitely! The whole act of home visits goes right along with some of the basics of practice we have been polishing up on: propagation, study and practice. Backed up by sincere "D's" (daimoku), everyone is sure to win in their lives and the YMD General Meetings will be a celebration of those victories! Hey, when does that *Star Wars* movie come out, anyway?

**Bobby:** Never mind – I have my own saga to create. And it starts here and now!

**President Ikeda:** *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!*

(from the poem "Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century," April 16 World Tribune) ♪



# YOUTH *Study* JUNE

## "LETTER TO THE BROTHERS"

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

### PRACTICING WITH "GREAT SEEKING SPIRIT"

By Ulisse Gallo, Chicago

Cast off any thoughts you may have to the contrary. If you doubt that you committed slander in the past, you will not be able to withstand the minor sufferings of this life. Then, you might give in to your father's opposition and desert the Lotus Sutra against your will. Remember, that should this happen, you are certain to fall into the hell of incessant suffering and drag your parents into it as well, causing all of you indescribable grief. To grasp this requires a great seeking spirit. (MW-1, 138)

Victory is determined not only by chanting daimoku, but also in taking action. Action may involve reflecting on our problem, participating in activities or fulfilling our responsibilities at work or school. But sometimes, it's hard to know which action is appropriate for the situation. That's why, in this passage, Nichiren Daishonin reminds the Ikegami brothers that our practice demands "a great seeking spirit."

When facing an obstacle or problem, not knowing which action to take can lead to stagnation in our practice. Though we continue to chant and do activities, because we know they're the right things to do, for some reason, our determination (*ichinen*) may not be that strong and before we know it, we are "in the funk." This can happen to anyone, whether they've practiced for one month, one year, or even 20 years, as was the case with the Ikegami brothers.

After having maintained their faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism for so long, the brothers were probably very concerned that their father had taken such a drastic measure as disowning the eldest son, Munenaka. Both the brothers and their wives must have asked themselves, "Why me?" "Why now?" "Am I practicing correctly?" As human beings, it is natural to have doubts, but no matter how sincere we are, if we do not manifest the wisdom to take the correct action, we will be unable to put all our energy and effort into overcoming our problem.

Manifesting our infinite potential, our Buddha nature, can only happen if we have a seeking spirit — the spirit to seek out the answers through reading Nichiren Daishonin's writings, President Ikeda's speeches and receiving guidance from our seniors in faith. For the Ikegami brothers, the answer was in the Daishonin's explanation of the law of causality. He tells Munenaka and Munenaga that they are experiencing the effects of causes they had made in previous lifetimes. But instead of letting them blame their karma, the Daishonin explains that by understanding the true nature of their situation, they can see it as lessening their karmic retribution. The Daishonin strictly clarifies the matter by telling them to cast off any thoughts that they might have to the contrary and thus empowers them to take action. Through his guidance both the brothers and their wives were able to unite in faith in order to resolve this problem, demonstrating the principle of many in body, one in mind (*itai doshin*).

Of course, we're going to experience problems, and those problems may not feel like "minor sufferings," but by practicing correct-

### Did you know?

Abraham Lincoln lost eight elections, failed in business twice, suffered the loss of his fiancé and later his son and had a nervous breakdown in 1836.

In 1856, his party failed to nominate him as vice president — he received less than 100 votes. He ran for U.S. Senator in 1858 and was defeated again. Finally, in 1860, he was elected President of the United States. (*Chicken Soup for the Soul*, by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, 1993)

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The word *slander* is easy to understand, yet has many different shades of meaning. Here are a few different definitions to help us understand how this concept applies to our practice.

*slan • der* (n) 1. (Legal) A false or malicious statement or utterance intended to injure, defame, or cast detraction on someone or something. 2. (Buddhist) Denying the teachings of Buddhism, or criticizing those who practice Buddhism. 3. (According to Nichiren Daishonin in "Letter to the Brothers") "We, who now believe in the True Law, once committed the sin of persecuting its votary in the past..." (MW-1, 138). 4. (In reference to our practice) Denying the Buddha nature in ourselves, or denying that the people around us have the Buddha nature.

ly we learn that we can change our circumstances. Instead of feeling anxious that the next problem will be more difficult, through seeking and learning from others, we can understand the *why*, and not falter in our determination. If we develop the habit of chanting, studying and seeking guidance, we learn to pick ourselves up when we are temporarily knocked down by our immediate circumstances.

President Ikeda says that to chant daimoku requires courage. Studying also requires courage, as does going to our leaders for guidance. He also states that "if people follow only their own subjective opinions and personal whims, they will become divided, both in body and mind, and find themselves in a whirlpool of complaints, discontent, hatred and jealousy" (*Selected Lectures on the Goshu*, p. 156). By having a "great seeking spirit" like the Daishonin says, through chanting, studying and asking for guidance, we can take the appropriate action to overcome our problems. "The Buddha's lifeblood flows in the actions of people not those who act divisively or egotistically, but within the lives of those who chant daimoku and advance together toward the common goal of *kosen-rufu*" (*Selected Lectures*, p. 151). By taking the appropriate action, we can win over our situation. Our success then becomes the success of the members in our district, chapter and down the line until we become united in our successes, with the spirit of "many in body, one in mind" necessary to realize *kosen-rufu*.

### SNEAK ATTACK

By Mark Kaplan, San Francisco

As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge vying with one another to interfere.... Reverently make this teaching your own and transmit it as an axiom of faith for future generations (MW-1, 145).

Devils have a way of attacking in the least expected ways, at the least expected times — unless you're a Buddhist. As a Buddhist we have been trained to expect obstacles. Nichiren Daishonin repeats something like this in many of his writings, because, as was pointed out in the April 4 (p. 2) *World Tribune*, people quit when obstacles catch them by surprise.

But as prepared as we might be, the obstacle of the moment is guaranteed to be specially designed to confuse and stop us. This writing is full of examples of people who put out tremendous effort to follow the way, but compromised at a crucial moment because they were not masters of their minds, and lost sight of the big picture. As Nichiren writes to the Ikegami brothers: "This world is the province of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. He causes [people] to drink the wine of greed, anger and stupidity, and feeds them nothing but poisoned dishes that leave them prostrate on the ground of the three evil paths" (MW-1, 136). This "devil" will confuse your mind if he can.

In the end, the Daishonin says the only defense is courage and the attitude that "whatever trouble may occur, consider it as transitory as a dream and think only of the Lotus Sutra" (MW-1, 147). To me this means having the determination to go through anything for the sake of our convictions, to blast right through no matter how rocky the path gets, and not look for a short cut, because, inevitably, when we are about to break through, that short cut, that compromise, is a devil in disguise.

Applying this principle to this writing, the short cut for the younger brother would have been to pretend to abandon faith and inherit all the father's prestige and wealth.

The unexpected obstacle for the older brother was to suddenly have his father and (potentially) his brother turn against him after 20 years of practice. But both brothers persevered unflinchingly and everyone, including their father (and even including us today who are learning from their example), won in the end. ♪



## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does *slander* mean for you? What do you think it means when Nichiren Daishonin tells us never to doubt that we committed slander in the past?
2. Can you think of any examples of *seeking spirit* in your life? When has seeking a Buddhist perspective helped you in dealing with a situation?
3. Does it surprise you that obstacles appear when you are growing in your practice? What kinds of obstacles have you encountered? How did you recognize them as obstacles? Were you able to learn from your struggle with those obstacles?

# ESSAY CONTEST

*Reminder*

Last month *Seize the Day* opened its mailboxes for an essay contest. Any interested youth are encouraged to put their thoughts on paper and send them in.

**Topics** (choose one)

- What is the mission of youth?
- What are the challenges for the coming century?
- What role will Buddhism play in the new millennium?

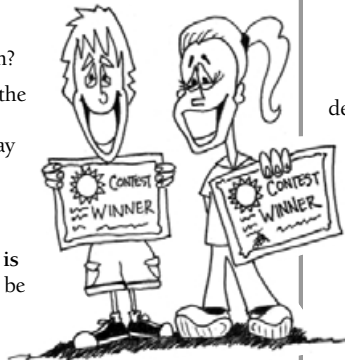
**Criteria**

The due date 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. See last month's announcement for more details. Entries will be evaluated on the following criteria:

*persuasiveness, content, style, organization, originality*

**Prizes**

The *Seize the Day* Essay contest has two categories: student (age 12 to 18) and general (age 19 to 35). There will be a Silver and Gold Prize awarded to one person from each of those two categories. They are Gold – \$40 SGI-USA Book Store gift certificate and Silver – \$20 SGI-USA Book Store Gift Certificate. ♣



# 'Student Waves'

## Links SGI-USA Students

At the beginning of last year, the national student division leaders were wondering how we could better connect with all the student members nationwide. We found that students move around a lot — changing apartments, transferring schools, studying overseas, traveling for research. They were all over the place and hard to keep track of.

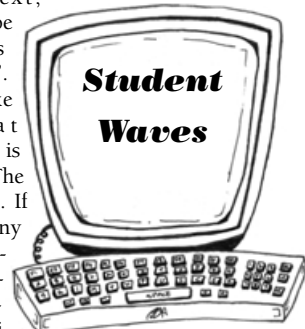
E-mail was one answer. Most students use e-mail and check it wherever they are. Of course, we wanted to talk to everyone in person, but we realized that e-mail would help us reach out to many students we were not in touch with yet. Arch Asawa, the SGI-USA vice student division leader, came up with the idea of a weekly student division e-mailer, and *Student Waves* was born. The name *Student Waves* came from Francesco Miniati, the Midwest Region student division leader, who explained that *Student Waves* means each student making his or her own waves and their many waves interacting together. The content primarily focuses on three areas: excerpts of the newest guidance of SGI President Ikeda from the *World Tribune*, news of student division activities across the country and reports on the latest developments in the temple



Jeff Farr and Valerie Thomas, SGI-USA Student Division Leaders

issue.

We've now published more than 60 issues of *Student Waves*. If you're interested in subscribing — even if you're not a student division member — here's how to do it: 1) From your own e-mail account, open a new message; 2) Use the following address in the "To" box: ListManager@sgi-usa.org; 3) In the body of the message text, type: Subscribe Studentwaves "Your Name". Please make sure that Studentwaves is one word! The service is free. If you have any problems subscribing, e-mail us at studentdiv@sgi-usa.org. ♣



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### UNDERSTANDING COLUMBINE BY SGI-USA JR. HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL DIVISION LEADERS

# A Buddhist Perspective on the Colorado Shootings

By Jimmy King, SGI-USA Jr. High & High School Div. Ldr.; Jomo Thorne and Bobbie Stemple, SGI-USA Jr. High School Div. Ldrs.; Steve Mortan and Nobuko Kobayashi, SGI-USA High School Div. Ldrs.; & Shan Serafin, SGI-USA Vice High School Div. Ldr.

April shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., have gripped our country in a way that few recent events have. That a couple of high school students would plan and carry out a two-man war against their own classmates is tragic and frightening.

In the wake of this tragedy, we have been forced to reflect on our society and the values we uphold. Do we have too many guns? What influence does popular culture have on our youth? What role should parents play in their children's lives?

It can be difficult to understand how we should view these events as Buddhists. The factors that contributed to this tragedy are too complex for simple interpretation. But, there are a couple of observations worth making at this time.

For one, it is futile to spend all of our energy looking for an easy scapegoat for the tragedy. Sure, the gunmen need to be held accountable for their actions. Sure, easy access to guns continually proves to be tragic. But, Buddhism regards all phenomena as interrelated. The principle of *engi* (dependent origination) holds that nothing exists in isolation. As President Ikeda says, "Each individual existence

functions to bring into being the environment which in turn sustains all other existences." We can then say the shootings in Colorado occurred because we have collectively created an environment where tragedies like this are possible.

The Littleton shootings demonstrate what can happen when youth lack a sense of mission and a sound life philosophy. In his recent poem to the YWD, President Ikeda writes:

"In my heart burns an immortal flame of philosophy shines the light of my lifelong mission resides a great purpose!"

Those who pray deeply with a firm and unshakable conviction in faith are liberated from the fear and anxiety of being cast adrift in the darkness!

From President Ikeda's example we can see that having a sense of mission gives us the strength to overcome any suffering.

The Littleton shootings show us how isolated many of today's teenagers feel. There were abundant signs that the Colorado gunmen were in agony and disposed to violence, signs present long before April 20. Yet, very few people around the two young men seemed to apprehend the issue. Without good friends and family around to provide support and guidance, for direction, most teens turn to pop culture, which does not prioritize human life, or teens



Bottom: Shan Serafin, Bobbie Stemple, Steve Mortan and Jimmy King  
Top: Nobuko Kobayashi and Jomo Thorne

turn to other teens who equally lack direction.

We need to help the young people around us create embracing and encouraging communities of friends. As SGI-USA jr. high and high school members, we need to have the compassion to get involved in the lives of our friends. As SGI-USA leaders and parents, we have to create an environment where teenagers can openly discuss their dreams and share their sufferings. After all, the value of human life can only be learned through strong personal bonds of friendship and support. ♣

## El Drama de una Transformación Interna

(A continuación un breve resumen del discurso pronunciado por el Presidente Ikeda en la trigésimo segunda Reunión de Responsables de Sede de la Soka Gakkai, el 9 de marzo, de 1999 en el Salón en Memoria a Makiguchi, en la ciudad de Tokio. La primera parte de este discurso fue publicada en el World Tribune el 2 de abril, de 1999 y la segunda parte el 9 de abril, de 1999.)

En este discurso el Presidente Ikeda comparte la experiencia de Orlando Cepeda, héroe de béisbol y miembro de la SGI-USA. El señor Cepeda ha sido recientemente electo para integrar el Salón de la Fama, él había caído de la cumbre del estrellato debido a su arresto por posesión de drogas en los 1970's-pero ha reconstruido su vida mediante la fe.

El Presidente Ikeda inicia su discurso expresando su sincero agradecimiento a todos los participantes a la reunión. En este resumen enfocaremos en la parte de su discurso en la cual habla de Orlando Cepeda.

"Los otros días, recibí unas noticias tan excitantes como cuando la pelota de un jonrón cae en las gradas de los espectadores. Esto fue la noticia de que Orlando Cepeda, un miembro de la SGI-USA, había sido elegido para integrar el Salón de la Fama-el honor más importante que un jugador de béisbol puede alcanzar en los Estados Unidos. Inmediatamente envié mis felicitaciones.

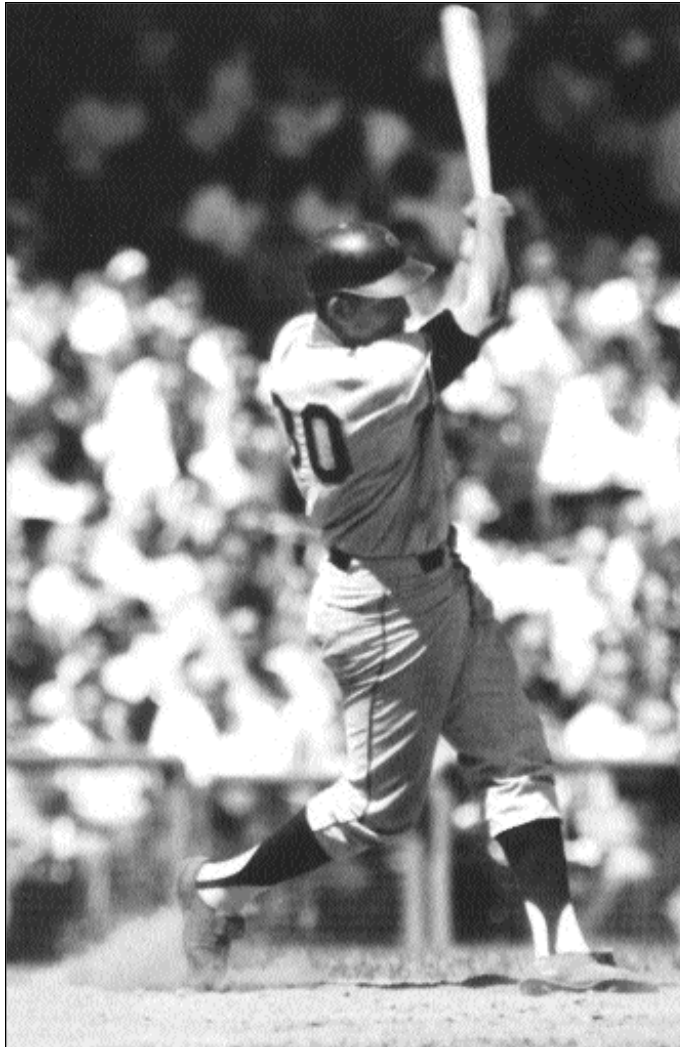
El Sr. Cepeda tiene 61 años y es un líder de distrito en San Francisco. A principio de año el me envié una foto de él. Su rostro irradiaba una maravillosa calidez y madurez.

La noticia de la selección del Sr. Cepeda ha sido recibida felizmente en todas partes. Este triunfo personal de un compañero miembro es una maravillosa noticia para todos nosotros en la SGI.

En realidad, si reflexiono, a la vez que yo visitaba por primera vez San Francisco, en 1960, el Sr. Cepeda experimentaba una gran victoria como uno de los mejores jugadores de los 'San Francisco Giants'. El joven de primera base y bateador poderoso tenía muchos aficionados. En 1958 él fue nombrado 'National League rookie' del año (Jugador Novato del año en la Liga Nacional.) Y en el 1967, él ganó 'The National League Most Valuable Player

Véase Drama pág. II

# Un Diálogo con Orlando Cepeda



CADA DÍA

QUE ME LEVANTO POR  
LA MAÑANA ME SIENTO  
FELIZ AL SABER QUE  
VOY A EMPEZAR EL DÍA  
INVOCANDO DAIMOKU  
Y RECITANDO EL GONGYO

ORLANDO CEPEDA

Primera Base

Batió: Derecho Tiró: Derecho

Altura: 6'2" Peso: 210 lbs.

Nació: Ponce, PR 17/9/37

ADMISIÓN AL SALÓN

DE LA FAMA

25 de julio, de 1999

**World Tribune:** ¡Felicitaciones por su ingreso al Salón de la Fama!

**Orlando Cepeda:** ¡Muchísimas gracias! Ésta no es una victoria solamente mía, es también de la SGI y de mi mentor Daisaku Ikeda.

**WT:** ¡Si! El Presidente Ikeda relata la experiencia de Usted en su discurso en la trigésimo segunda Reunión de Responsables de Sede de la Soka Gakkai. ¿Qué sintió Usted cuando se enteró que el Presidente Ikeda había compartido su experiencia?

(Éste discurso fue publicado en Inglés en dos partes en el World Tribune, la primera parte el 2 de abril, 1999, págs. 1,4-5. La segunda parte en la edición del 9 de abril, págs.4-5. Y en esta edición un breve resumen de éste en Español se publica adjunto a este

diálogo.)

**Cepeda:** ¡Increíble! Me conmovió profundamente. ¡Yo le agradezco tanto a Sensei!

**WT:** El Presidente Ikeda mencionó la calidez y madurez que su rostro irradiaba en la foto que Ud. Le envió al principio de año.

(El Señor Cepeda firmó la foto: "Muchas Gracias Sensei, por toda su ayuda a mi vida. Cariñosamente, Orlando Cepeda, 30." El número 30 es el número en su uniforme en sus días con el equipo de los 'San Francisco Giants')

**Cepeda:** Cada día que me levanto por la mañana me siento feliz al saber que voy a empezar el día invocando daimoku y haciendo el Gongyo.

**WT:** Después de muchos triunfos en su carrera de béisbol, tuvo

que enfrentar una época de sufrimientos en la cual usted lo perdió todo.

**Cepeda:** Cierto, sin embargo, hoy en día miro hacia atrás y pienso en esos sufrimientos con agradecimiento, sin ellos no hubiese comenzado a practicar Budismo. Apesar de que yo había logrado muchos triunfos como jugador de béisbol, era muy inseguro y dudaba mucho de mi potencial como ser humano. Le echaba la culpa a todo el mundo y no quería saber nada de béisbol, lo cual había sido mi vida desde niño. Desde que el Gohonzon llegó a mi vida, todo empezó a cambiar. Empecé a retar todas mis debilidades. Todo mi negativismo se fue desapareciendo. Si no hubiese sido por la SGI no se lo que hubiera pasado con mi vida.

Refiriéndose a esta etapa de la vida del Sr. Cepeda, el Presidente Ikeda comentó en su discurso:

"Un magnífico drama de transformación interna-un drama de revitalización y victoria-había comenzado. Con la determinación de convertirse en un jugador estrella en el campo del Kosen-rufu, el señor Cepeda se retó en su práctica budista por su propia felicidad y la felicidad de los demás, de esta manera desafiando su medio ambiente y a sí mismo. Él se dedicó seriamente a su práctica. Ya no tenía la cabeza llena de humos de grandeza y fama, ni tampoco estaba ilusionado de que él era grandioso

Véase Diálogo pág. II

**Drama de la pág. I**

Award. (El Premio para el jugador más valioso de la Liga Nacional.) Durante sus 17 años en su carrera en la Liga Mayor, él dió un total de 379 jonrones. El era conocido como uno de los más agresivos jugadores de la Liga Mayor en los 1960s. Sus records de jonrones brillan aun hoy en día.

Sin embargo, un número de pruebas bien severas aguardaban al Sr. Cepeda. Primero, en el 1974, tuvo que retirarse porque que se lastimó una rodilla. ¡Tuvo que haber estado bien desanimado y frustrado con ese acontecimiento que tron-chaba sus sueños!

En 1975, fue encarcelado por poseer marihuana y cómo consecuencia pasó 10 meses en una prisión de la Florida. Fue una caída rápida desde la fama y la celebridad al abismo de la desesperación. De repente él perdió su prestigio, riquezas, sus amigos-todo.

Todo el mundo experimenta sufrimientos y penurias. Una vida en la cual todo sale bien no existe. El Sr. Cepeda estaba en las profundidades del infierno. Pero fue en estos momentos de desespero que a través de un amigo

encontró el Budismo del Sol, el Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin, esto fue en 1982.

El encontró el mundo de la SGI infinitamente cálido, compasivo y profundo. Y cuán esperanza los miembros de la SGI le dieron a él. Con el tiempo él pudo experimentar mediante su propia vida lo increíble que es la esperanza que insta la filosofía de la revolución humana.

El Budismo cambió la actitud del Sr. Cepeda hacia la vida 180 grados. Cambió desde una vida que existía solamente para su ambición personal a una dedicada para trabajar por la humanidad, la sociedad y el futuro. Este es el sendero correcto de la vida.

Con entusiasmo y júbilo, el Sr. Cepeda comenzó a trabajar para Kosen-rufu en las líneas fronterizas de nuestra organización. Apesar de su rodilla lastimada, apesar de que a veces tenía que usar un bastón para caminar, el Sr. Cepeda se movía por todas partes. Apoyándose en su bastón, él laboriosamente subía las escaleras de edificios para visitar a los miembros. ¡Cuán sinceridad! ¡Qué misericordia! Nadie puede evitar ser alentado e inspirado por su ejemplo.

El también dedicó sus energías para alentar y educar a la juventud afligida con problemas.

Él les relataba francamente su propia experiencia sobre su arresto debido a las drogas.

Visitó hospitales y prisiones por todas partes de los Estados Unidos, alentando a muchas, muchas personas. Después de haber pasado muchos sufrimientos, su vida resplandecía con un humanismo ge-nuino. Las personas que tienen experiencias sufriendo pueden brindar esperanza y coraje a otros. Y este es el espíritu de un practicante genuino del Bu-dismo. Este es el verdadero espíritu de la SGI.

El Sr. Cepeda se ha ganado inmensa confianza y respeto en su comunidad y la sociedad a través de su cálido carácter y sinceros esfuerzos.

En contraste, quienes permanecen embriagados en la fama y posición terminan perdiendo la confianza de la gente y son aborrecidos.

Muchos miembros sienten un gran cariño y respeto al Sr. Cepeda, y lo consideran como su padre o hermano. El es un líder responsable que trabaja duro y a través de su propio ejemplo, enseña a los demás. Cada vez que hay cualquier reunión, el siempre está ahí con uno o dos invitados. Supe que el llevó tres invitados a su reunión de diálogo el mes pasado. Una persona como el Sr.



Cepeda es un verdadero miembro de la SGI, un discípulo conectado directamente con el Daishonin.

**Diálogo de la pág. I**

porque era una estrella en el campo del deporte.

*En la profundidad de su angustia, él había captado la esencia de la vida. Él ya no estaba perdido e inseguro; tenía la resolución de levantarse una vez más y ganar coronando su vida con los laureles de un verdadero ser humano. El de él fue un drama de transformar los deseos mundanos en la Iluminación, un drama de usar los sufrimientos como combustibles para el crecimiento."*

**WT:** Después de un tiempo de practicar el Budismo, usted pudo regresar a trabajar para los 'Giants' como Representante para Servicios a la Comunidad, ¡Tendría que haber estado muy feliz con su regreso al campo de béisbol!

**Cepeda:** ¡Cierto! Un beneficio que me llenó de mucha alegría, al comenzar mi práctica budista mi actitud Cambió por completo y aun mucho más feliz estoy en poder participar en las actividades de la SGI.

**WT:** Sobre éste tópico, el Presidente Ikeda mencionó sus sinceros y apasionados esfuerzos como líder de distrito luchando junto a los miembros en las líneas fronterizas del movimiento en pos del Kosen-rufu.

**Cepeda:** Yo me siento muy feliz cuando introduzco a otra persona a esta gran enseñanza, por eso es que cada día que pasa estudio más y más las guías de Sensei. Cada día me siento más orgullozo de ser miembro de la SGI. Yo quiero unirme a Sensei con mi vida y seguir luchando por Kosen-rufu hasta lo último.

**WT:** En 1994 Ud. Visitó la Universidad Soka en Tokio para alentar el equipo de béisbol de esa universidad, el Presidente Ikeda mencionó que tres de esos estudiantes se han convertido en jugadores profesionales y señaló la importancia de poder motivar e inspirar a la juventud.

**Cepeda:** ¡Oh! ¡Eso fue una odisea! Tuve que sobrepasar muchos obstáculos cuando a-rivé a Tokio, pues fuimos un grupo de jugadores de los Estados Unidos en un viaje de promoción para la Asociación *Children International (Niños Internacionales)* parecía imposible poder ir, e incluso uno de los agentes encargados en Tokio, cuando le mencioné que era miembro de la SGI me presentó una fuerte oposición, entonces daimoku por horas y horas, también agradezco todos los esfuerzos de mis líderes aquí quienes no escatimaron ningún esfuerzo para apoyarme en mi

viaje y poder llegar a la Universidad Soka.

**WT:** En referencia a su expresión de agradecimiento el Presidente Ikeda mencionó que en su autobiografía, "*Baby Bull: From Hardball to Hard Time and Back*," (Torito: De buenos tiempos a malos. Y de regreso a los buenos.) Usted dedicó en el libro un capítulo para discutir ampliamente la grandeza del Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin y el apoyo recibido de sus compañeros miembros de la SGI. ¿Le gustaría compartir con nosotros algunas de sus palabras en dicho capítulo?

**Cepeda:** Es imposible escribir la historia de mi vida sin rendir reverencia al Budismo. Más que el béisbol, más que el 'Rookie of the Year Award (El Premio al Novato del Año)' 'The National League MVP' (Premio al Jugador más Valioso) el Budismo me ha ayudado a ser lo que soy hoy. Digo esto porque todos los records, alabanzas y la celebridad no pueden, ni pudieron crear paz en mi interior. El Bu-dismo me ha salvado espiritualmente y me ha dado la llave para poder tomar mis dolores en medicina. Me ha ayudado llegar a ser más humano. Y al así ha-cerlo, me ha convertido en un mejor esposo, padre y amigo.

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*(El Sr. Cepeda envió una copia de este libro al Presidente Ikeda el día de su cumpleaños dedicado en la siguiente forma: "2 de enero, 1999. Para Sensei: Muchísimas gracias por todo. Feliz Cumpleaños. Su amigo, Orlando Cepeda.)*

**Cepeda:** Estoy orando mucho para que algún día pueda estrecharle la mano a Sensei y dejarle saber lo que él significa para mi vida, también estoy orando por los miembros y el Kosen-rufu de Puerto Rico mi tierra natal. ¡Muchísimas gracias y muchos cariños a todos!

**WT:** ¡Muchas, Muchas gracias por compartir con nosotros en este diálogo! Para concluir Sr. Cepeda, con miras al futuro, ¿Cuál es su más anhelado sueño?

## MATERIAL DE ESTUDIO

Mayo-Junio

**Gosho:**  
**"Carta al Señor Feudal Toki"**

*Disertación del presidente Ikeda: Aprendamos del Gosho, la eterna enseñanza de Nichiren Daishonin*

**"Carta al Señor feudal Toki"**  
(Toki Dono Gohenji (Gosho Zenshu, pág. 968,) escrita en Febrero de 1275.

**No hay personas tan nobles como las que aman a la humanidad.**

El buda Shakyamuni fue un "viajero." Durante toda la vida, viajó y se movió sin descanso. "Visitaré ese lugar, pues allí hay personas." Se motivaba a sí mismo para actuar, caminaba con la mirada puesta en el horizonte distante. Shakyamuni amó a los seres humanos con toda sinceridad.

Cada vez que se dirigía a un nuevo sitio, disfrutaba plenamente el contacto con gente desconocida, y descubría en los que ya conocía nuevas virtudes y cualidades. Trascendía todas las diferencias superficiales y conseguía sacar de cada uno su mejor voluntad; de este modo, creaba lazos de benevolencia con sus semejantes, lazos de corazón a corazón. Sin duda, su mayor alegría habrá sido la de crear semejante trama espiritual; así es el espíritu de un verdadero paladín humanista.

Un texto budista relata que, en una ocasión, Shakyamuni se encontró con una persona enferma, abandonada por los demás, librada a la cruel suerte de su sufrimiento. Sin embargo, Shakyamuni no se apartó de él. Se acercó al hombre, sucio y hediondo, y lo acarició afectuosamente. Tras ayudarlo a ponerse de pie, lo llevó hacia las afueras y lo lavó. Y mientras el hombre descansaba en el agua, Shakyamuni le cambió las cobijas.

Quienes lo observaban se preguntaron por qué Shakyamuni se estaba tomando tantas molestias por un hombre enfermo. "Si deseáis servir al Buda", les dijo, "debeis atender a los enfermos." Es una anécdota muy conocida.

La enfermedad no sólo es un fenómeno físico. Invariablemente, señala la presencia de un malestar espiritual. En nuestra acción para curar la enfermedad de alguien, no debemos mezquinar esfuerzos, no debemos dejar piedra sin remover.

En el caso que mencioné antes, la intención de Shakyamuni probablemente haya sido la de enseñar que el camino budista sólo existe en la acción laboriosa y sincera que se realiza entre las personas.

Porque Shakyamuni amaba a la gente, eran muchos los que se reunían a su alrededor, atraídos por su conducta tan humana. Y, naturalmente, la atmósfera que lo rodeaba era siempre vivaz y brillante. Lo mismo cabe decir de Nichiren Daishonin. En presencia del Daishonin, la gente se sentía libre de expresar los pensamientos y sentimientos que llevaban en lo más profundo del corazón.

El Daishonin era un maestro y mentor estricto. Pero, al mismo tiempo, en sus muchas cartas vemos que las personas tenían total confianza en él. El Daishonin sabía todo sobre cada uno de sus seguidores.

Cuando estaban ante él, hasta los adultos más maduros se mostraban abiertos y sinceros como un niño. Casi sin darse cuenta, revelaban su verdadera identidad, sin afectación ni impostura.

Toki Jonin era uno de estos seguidores. A partir de las cartas que el Daishonin le escribía, podemos pensar que este creyente estaba muy preocupado por su madre. El Daishonin, por su parte, respetaba y atesoraba los sentimientos de Toki. Y le daba todo el aliento que este necesitaba para poder comportarse con su madre basado en un auténtico amor filial.

En el gosho que estudiaremos esta vez, advertimos el inmenso corazón de afecto y humanismo que tenía Nichiren Daishonin.

**He recibido un quimono sin forrar.**

**Entre los discípulos del Buda, se contaba un monje que, cuando aquel pasó por un lugar azotado por la hambruna y se vio limitado por sus actividades a causa de la escasez, vendió su hábito sacerdotal y le entregó al Buda el dinero obtenido.**

Este le preguntó de dónde había salido la suma. Y entonces el monje debió decirle la verdad del asunto, con exactitud de detalles.

Entonces, el Buda declinó la ofrenda y le dijo: "El hábito es la túnica del Dharma, para la iluminación de todos los

**SE CELEBRA SEGUNDA CONFERENCIA EN ESPAÑOL EN FNCC**

Ciento veinte miembros latinos de todas las regiones de los Estados Unidos, celebraron la Segunda Conferencia en Español en el Centro de la Cultura y la Naturaleza de la Florida del 8 al 11 de abril.

Greg Martin, Vice-dirigente General de la SGI-USA y ahora el Consejero para los Hispanos en los Estados Unidos, Karen Kaplan, dirigente de la región de la Florida, Melanie Merians de los Angeles y Juan Diego Hincapi de New Jersey presentaron los temas: Sobre *Itai doshin*, Sobre la Oración, El Asunto Relacionado con el Templo, y Mentor y discípulo. Los comentarios de la mayoría de los asistentes tienen en afinidad las siguientes palabras: "Esta conferencia no es sólo una victoria para los miembros Hispanos sino también para todos los miembros de la SGI-USA, pues hemos podido traer ese espíritu a nuestros distritos y a la comunidad.

**¡GRACIAS, MUCHAS GRACIAS SENSEI! ¡MUCHAS GRACIAS A TODOS!!**

**budas de las tres existencias. No estoy facultado para aceptar semejante ofrenda". El monje, a su vez, replicó: "¿Qué haré, en tal caso, con el dinero que recibí a cambio de mi hábito?" Y el Buda le preguntó: "¿No tienes una madre**

**a quien amar?" Ante la respuesta afirmativa, aquel agregó: "Entonces, debes dar a tu madre el dinero de tus hábitos."**

El monje, a su vez, expresó a Shakyamuni: "El Buda es el ser más venerable de los tres mundos. Es la vista de todos los seres humanos. Aunque una túnica fuese lo bastante ancha para envolver entre sus pliegues al universo entero, aunque un hábito sacerdotal fuese lo bastante grande para cubrir la Tierra, el Buda sería digno de recibirlo como ofrenda. Mi madre es ignorante como una res; es desconsiderada como un carnero. ¿Cómo podría ella ser merecedora de la ofrenda obtenida por

**la venta de un hábito sacerdotal?"**

**Replicó el Buda: "¿Quién te ha dado a la luz? Tu madre. ¿No merece acaso, entonces, recibir la ofrenda obtenida por la venta de tu sotana?" (Gosho Zenshu, pág. 968.)**

Este episodio transmite vívidamente el humanismo budista. Retrata en pleno el espíritu de un discípulo que quería ayudar a su mentor, y también la preocupación del maestro por su seguidor y por su madre. Es una escena conmovedora.

Puede ser que, en principio, un monje no deba vender su hábito clerical por ninguna razón. Pero el discípulo tomó semejante medida para sostener a su maestro, aunque ello le valiera una reprimenda. El Buda agradece profundamente la actitud del discípulo, pero le dice, más o menos, lo siguiente: No soy digno de recibir una ofrenda tan valiosa. Sin embargo, hay alguien que la merece más que yo.

Esa persona es tu madre. ¿Hay persona más noble que ella? Estás llevando a cabo tu práctica budista, y tarde o temprano, llegarás a ser un buda. El budismo consiste en atesorar a la mujer que te trajo al mundo...

Esta filosofía enseña la virtud del verdadero amor filial.

En otro texto, el Daishonin le dice a otro discípulo prominente, Nanjo Tokimitsu:

**La deuda que uno contrae con su padre es tan vasta que, en comparación, el monte Sumeru resulta pequeño. La deuda que uno contrae con su madre es tan profunda que, en comparación, el océano resulta superficial. Debe trazarse la meta de saldar esta deuda de gratitud que tiene con su padre y su madre. (Ib. pág. 1527.)**

Véase Gosho, pág. IV

## GOSHO de la pág. III

Recuerdo algo que escribió Josei Toda, segundo presidente de la Soka Gakkai, en su obra "Preceptos para los jóvenes." Allí, exhorta a la juventud: "¡Pónganse de pie, bien erguidos! ¡Súmense a la batalla a mi lado". Y agrega:

Debemos luchar armados de amor hacia la gente. Hoy, hay muchos jóvenes que ni siquiera aman a sus padres. ¿Cómo pueden amar a los demás. Nuestra contienda es por la revolución humana, y consiste en vencer nuestra propia falta de misericordia hasta cultivar en nuestro corazón el mismo amor humanista que tenía el Buda.

(Toda Josei Zenshu (Obras compiladas de Josei Toda,) vol. 1, págs. 59-60)

El presidente Toda era muy estricto con los jóvenes que no sentían respeto hacia sus propios padres.

Shakyamuni amaba la imagen que tenía de su madre [quien habría muerto a los siete días de darlo a luz] y adoraba a su madre adoptiva. El Daishonin también atesoraba a la suya y, cuando ella cayó gravemente enferma, oró con toda su vida para prolongar su existencia, como efectivamente ocurrió.

En el pasaje citado, el maestro enseña a un discípulo que está equivocado al pensar que su madre es ignorante e indigna.

No hay en el mundo persona tan respetable y noble como la que siente el amor más inmenso por la gente. Un hombre sabio de verdad no es el que ordena a los demás que lo traten con deferencia, sino el que enseña con sus palabras y acciones que cada persona, y cada madre, son esencialmente importantes. En este episodio, el discípulo debe de haber captado de pronto la inmensa calidez que latía en el maestro; tiene que haber sentido como si el Sol inundara el ambiente de tibieza...

Es el corazón de una persona la que conmueve el corazón de las demás. Un filósofo griego enseña que el odio en el lenguaje y en las ideas inculca el odio hacia la humanidad. Si uno cierra su corazón, también se trancan rotundamente las puertas del corazón ajeno. Por otro lado, cuando uno gana la amistad sincera de los semejantes y los envuelve con la luz diáfana de la primavera, por así decirlo, también es atesorado por los demás.

La forma de vivir de un budista tiene que representar esa razón límpida y natural. El Buda transmite ese resplandor del

corazón universalmente a todos los seres.

Aunque nos empeñemos en tratar a todos con amor y misericordia, ya que somos simples seres humanos, es natural que tengamos preferencias y rechazos. Tampoco hay necesidad de que nos estemos obligando a querer a quien no nos agrada profundamente. Pero en el ejercicio de nuestra misión en la vida, como representantes del Buda, no debemos dejar que nuestros pensamientos o nuestra conducta se tiñan con discriminaciones y favoritismos.

A través de su oración sincera y de su trabajo en el terreno del diálogo, todos ustedes están abriendo la vida de muchas personas que sufren por tener el corazón cerrado como una almeja. En su forma de actuar hay una profunda nobleza.

¿Por qué creen que el Daishonin sacó a colación este episodio en la carta que escribe a Toki Jonin, y emplea dos tercios del texto, de por sí breve, para narrarlo? La razón se ve claramente cuando uno sigue leyendo.

**En la vida consagrada al kosen-rufu, no hay esfuerzo que caiga en saco roto.**

**"Este quimono sin forrar fue un obsequio que una madre afectuosa, de más de noventa años, entregó a su amado hijo [Toki Jonin]. Tiene que haber forzado la vista, tiene que haber dejado hasta la última gota de esfuerzo para confeccionarlo.**

**Por ser usted su hijo, me figuro que me lo habrá enviado como ofrenda sabiendo que le sería difícil retribuir a su madre por los favores recibidos. Y también me será difícil a mí, Nichiren, retribuírselo a usted. Aun así, no creo que sea correcto que se lo devuelva.**

**¿Y por qué? Porque si visto este quimono e informo este asunto detalladamente a la deidad del Sol, el hecho será del conocimiento de Taishaku, Bonten y todas las demás funciones protectoras del universo. No es más que una túnica, pero todas las deidades celestiales seguramente reconocerán el mérito de su conducta. Así como el rocío se integra al océano, así como el polvo se suma a la tierra, su buena fortuna se irá acumulando sin que nada se pierda ni se corrompa, en existencia tras existencia y en mundo tras mundo."**

**Con mi profundo respeto, Nichiren**

**En el quinto día del segundo mes. (Gosho Zenshu, pág. 968)**

Cuando el Daishonin vio el quimono que el señor feudal Toki le había enviado, seguramente recordó la imagen de la madre de su seguidor. Se dice que, después de la persecución de Matsubagayatsu (1260), Nichiren Daishonin pasó cierto tiempo en la finca de Toki, así que, probablemente, haya cultivado cierta relación de afecto con esta mujer.

Habían pasado ya más de diez años desde entonces. En aquellos días, el término promedio de vida era mucho menor que ahora. Alguien de noventa años tiene que haber sido una persona extraordinariamente longeva. Y el Daishonin, naturalmente, pensaba con preocupación el esfuerzo físico extremo que habría sido, para la viejecita, coser a mano una prenda a semejante edad. Sus sentimientos se ven claramente cuando dice: "Tiene que haber forzado la vista, tiene que haber dejado hasta la última gota de esfuerzo para confeccionarlo."

En esa época, Toki Jonin tenía sesenta años. Pero aun después de llegar a una cierta edad, la madre sigue siendo la madre, como suele decirse, y un hijo nunca deja de ser hijo. Toki Jonin se tenía que estar preguntando cómo haría para retribuir a su madre todo lo que le debía por su amorosa consideración.

"Ya sé, habrá pensado. "Le voy a ofender este quimono al Daishonin. Tanto él como mi madre se sentirán felices." Si bien no hay forma de saber con certeza si ésta fue su determinación, lo cierto es que un día, el quimono que la anciana madre había cosido, llegó a manos del Daishonin.

Y cabe imaginar que, a la natural gratitud del Buda, se le sumó una cierta cuota de vacilación. No podía aceptar sin más un artículo imbuido de semajante amor personal. La historia que el Daishonin decide incluir en la carta parece esclarecer sus sentimientos.

Aunque no sabía si aceptar o no este obsequio, devolverlo habría sido un rechazo del espíritu sincero con el que ese quimono llegaba hasta él. En tales circunstancias, el Daishonin reconoce la sinceridad de Toki Jonin y, al mismo tiempo, transmite su tremendo agradecimiento y aliento hacia la madre del seguidor.

El Daishonin dice que, cuando él vista ese atuendo, Bonten, Taishaku y todas las funciones protectoras del universo conocerán el ardiente espíritu de madre e hijo, que palpita en la ofrenda. Y entonces, las "deidades budistas" de las diez direcciones se manifestarán como una fuerza protectora hacia ambos. Finaliza la carta diciéndole que el beneficio de haber

hecho esa ofrenda iluminará su vida eternamente, en existencia tras existencia.

¡Qué alegría habrán sentido la madre y el hijo al recibir tamafía respuesta! Y Toki Jonin, seguramente, tiene que haber experimentado un hondo agradecimiento al Daishonin, por la consideración extrema que éste evidenció hacia la anciana.

"Lo que importa es el corazón de uno." (MW-5, pág. 289.) En este episodio, vemos un intercambio maravilloso: una madre que emprende el esfuerzo conmovedor de coser y coser, con manos temblorosas por la edad, movida por un amor puro hacia su hijo; un discípulo que actúa motivado por la preocupación sincera hacia su maestro y hacia la mujer que le dio la vida; un mentor que da todo de sí para que el empeño de ambos brille con la luz genuina de los máximos beneficios, impulsado por su misericordia hacia la madre y el hijo... Así es el mundo del Budismo.

Un año después de que el Daishonin envió esta carta, en febrero de 1276, esta señora falleció, mientras Toki Jonin, su esposa y otros parientes la estaban cuidando. Según cierta explicación, en el momento de su muerte la señora tenía noventa y tres años.

Toki Jonin ocupaba una posición destacada en la sociedad [era vasallo del señor feudal Chiba, gobernador de la provincia de Shimousa, hoy prefectura de Chiba, y su jerarquía podía compararse con la de un intendente local]. También era una de las principales figuras dentro de la comunidad de creyentes del Daishonin.

La esposa de Toki Jonin también cuidaba a la anciana con sincera preocupación.

Uno de los nietos de la madre de Toki Jonin luchó por el kosen-rufu al lado del Daishonin; dos de sus nietos desplegaron una intensa actividad al lado de Nikko Shonin, años después. Envuelta en la misericordia del Buda, la vida de esta señora sin duda se vio coronada por la satisfacción profunda y por la victoria estallante. Aquí se revela la epepeya de una mujer que vivió honesta y sólidamente, y que logró un brillante triunfo humano, aun dentro de sus circunstancias corrientes y ordinarias. El Budismo existe para ayudar a que las personas así sean auténticamente felices.

Cuando basamos nuestra vida en el gran deseo del kosen-rufu, y consideramos cada uno de nuestros actos como "el rocío que se integra al océano, como el polvo que se suma a la tierra," para pedir prestadas las palabras al Daishonin, entonces nuestro "yo superficial" cede el paso a una identidad mucho más esen-

cial, que relumbra con el aura de la eterna victoria. Cuando esto ocurre, cada uno de nuestros esfuerzos se convierte en un "océano" de beneficios, en una "tierra" de buena fortuna.

Espero que todos ustedes tengan la plena convicción de que, tal como afirma Nichiren Daishonin, ya están transitando por este camino. Y espero que, por ese mismo motivo, siempre atesoren el "corazón" de la fe.

La "Carta al señor feudal Toki" es una carta breve, pero rebosa en calidez. En ella se nos permite apreciar el contacto tremendamente cálido y humano que unía el corazón del Daishonin con el de cada uno de sus seguidores. Y como este lazo era tan fuerte, como infundía tanta seguridad interior en los creyentes, ellos podían soportar todos los obstáculos que se les presentaban por delante y luchar con denuedo por el kosen-rufu.

"¿Cómo puedo ayudar a los demás a sentir profunda alegría? ¿Qué puedo hacer para que practiquen con espíritu jubiloso y se esfuerzen por voluntad propia y resuelta?" No hace falta decir que, en el mundo humanista del Budismo, nadie puede llamarse líder si no considera minuciosamente estas preguntas y si no responde a las necesidades de los miembros.

Nuestra práctica tiene que basarse en una fuerte oración por la felicidad de cada persona. El Daishonin, al ponerse ese quimono imbuido de tal sinceridad, también oraba con la misma franqueza a las funciones del universo para que protegieran a Toki y a su madre.

Cuando oramos sinceramente, brota sin falta en nuestra vida la sabiduría de Buda para saber de qué manera alentar a los demás. Nuestro movimiento por el kosen-rufu es una contienda para expandir esta esfera de aliento continuo.

(Con esto concluye la disertación del presidente Ikeda sobre el gosho "Respuesta al señor feudal Toki").

**NOTA DE EDITOR:**  
Los antecedentes de este gosho para el estudio de mayo y junio serán publicados en la edición del 11 de junio, 1999.