



EXPERIENCE:

Alex Bardales attends a peace conference in Holland.

page 2

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S POEMS

Buddhism Is a Win-or-Lose Struggle

SGI President Ikeda composed the following poems in commemoration of July 3, the Day of Mentor and Disciple.

SGI President Ikeda dedicated three more poems to participants in the SGI Training Course, June 30-July 4, in Tokyo.

*We advance dauntlessly together
On the lion's path,
Dismissing with hearty laughter
The three powerful enemies
And the three obstacles and four devils.*

*How excellent
That Bodhisattvas of the Earth
Have gathered from throughout the world
Embracing the determination
To realize kosen-rufu!*

...

...

*Our revolution is a drama
Transcending life and death —
As a fine actor,
Make your way confidently
Throughout the three existences.*

*You, too, are a comrade
Sharing the same aspiration
— Creating value —
Since time without beginning.
Raise the banner of victory
In your community, your country.*

...

...

*We advance resolutely on our path
In exact accordance with
The sutra that teaches
Buddhism is a win-or-lose struggle.*

*The Daishonin himself,
Bodhisattvas past, present and future
And all the benevolent forces of nature
Protect you,
Praise and protect you.*



SGI Training Course participants arrive at the Chiba Culture Center for an exchange meeting, July 2.

New SGI-USA Guidelines for Membership

The guidelines for becoming an SGI-USA member have been revised. The Central Executive Committee met to review the guidelines for membership in the SGI-USA during its June 1999 conference. After gathering input from cities across the country to review the process on becoming an SGI-USA member, the guidelines were revised to reflect the suggestions received. To qualify for membership in SGI-USA and to receive the Gohonzon, these basic requirements should be fulfilled. They encompass the basics of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism — faith, practice and study.

6. Have participated in a Basics of Buddhism Seminar.

In addition to meeting the above qualifications, to complete the membership approval process, the prospective new member should:

- Be sponsored by a member of the organization.
- Complete the application form.
- Be visited by a district /chapter leader who can answer questions and assist in any way needed.
- Submit the application to be approved by the chapter membership committee.
- Receive the Gohonzon at a scheduled meeting and enshrine the Gohonzon in their altar at home.

Faith:

1. Demonstrate the intent to take faith in and practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Practice:

2. Have started learning gongyo and chanting daimoku regularly.
3. Have an altar set up at home for the Gohonzon to be enshrined.
4. Belong to a district and have attended activities for a minimum of three months.

Study:

5. Subscribe to and read the *World Tribune*.

The focus of the Soka Gakkai International is to always cherish each individual. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is a religion that enables every human being to bring forth his or her full potential. Applying humanistic principles and always respecting the dignity of each individual's life, the SGI movement seeks the happiness of all people and the realization of a peaceful society.

EXPERIENCE — ALEX BARDALES, SANTA ROSA, CALIF.

Standing Tall at the Hague

Alex Bardales from Santa Rosa, attendee of the Hague Appeal for Peace, remains hopeful as he recounts the conference and importance of the SGI's movement for peace.

The 1999 Hague Appeal for Peace is civil society's international conference for global peace. Since it was NGOs and common people for whom this conference existed, the phrase For the people, by the people directly applies. Could you imagine how encouraging it is for the government officials and visiting dignitaries who came to see so many common people — 8,000 to 10,000 — gathered for the cause of global peace? I imagine seeing this group at the Hague Appeal for Peace really gave them hope. These officials include U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, and Muhamed Sacirbey, the Ambassador to the U.N. for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The aim of the conference is to de-legitimize war and violence as a means for solving conflict. Not only is it supported by the major peace figures of the day, including Nobel Peace Prize winners Rigoberta Menchú Tum, the Dalai Lama, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, but it also was attended by everyday people, especially those from the Global South and many youth. With such a lineup, I expected to hear the voice of those gathered in the Netherlands Congress Center proclaiming to the world, "Time To Abolish War!"

I was awarded a scholarship from the World Federalist Association of Northern California and attended the conference with my father. My trip to Holland for the Hague Appeal for Peace was the first time I had been outside the North American continent — just going to Holland itself, merely seeing another culture, was a great experience for me.

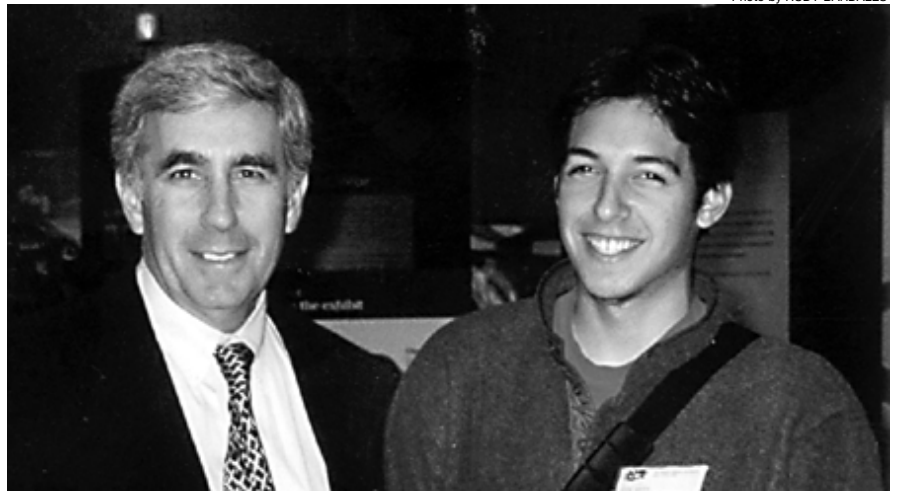
This five-day conference (May 11–15) was laid out such that in between the opening and closing plenary sessions, there were dozens of core sessions, a film festival, art exhibits, performances, an auditorium for booths and other activities around the city. Generally speaking, these were based on the four "strands": Disarmament, including

Nuclear Abolition; Prevention, Resolution and Transformation of Violent Conflict; International Humanitarian and Human Rights Laws and Institutions; and Root Causes of War/Culture of Peace. As is self-evident, many issues overlap in these four strands. In addition to these activities, the participants met with other attendees from around the world and formed friendships.

Since returning to the United States, many have asked me about my experience. The aforementioned Kofi Annan says that "Telling the story is as important as making the story!" I wish I could begin by showing you the full 80 pages of the conference program of activities. Or give you a tour of The Netherlands Congress Center, the Congresgebouw, the building where the conference was held. Actually, this building was so large and had so many rooms that one time I got lost! I also wish I could show you all the young faces in the crowd that gathered in the Congress Center.

Instead I'll offer a report on two of them. In support of the film festival, I went to the one of the first screenings of Punitive Damage, a documentary about East Timor, the island nation where one-third of the population has died at the hands of the Indonesian military regime. This film included interviews from American reporters who got caught filming part of a democratic movement. Guns aimed at their heads, they repeatedly yelled, "Americans! We're Americans!" to convince the Indonesian soldiers where they came from. Unlike other reporters, their nation of origin, they said, saved their lives: The soldiers didn't want to harm citizens of the country that supplied their weapons.

On another day I went to a session titled "Nonviolent Conflict Resolution Between States and Unrepresented Nations." One of the speakers was José Ramos-Horta of East Timor who won the Nobel Peace Prize for fighting for the East Timorese. Another speaker, Nalani Minton of Hawaii, commented that out of the world's 7,000 languages,



Alex Bardales with Dr. David Kreiger, founder of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, at the Hague Appeal for Peace conference in Holland in May.

there are 12 that the world's majority uses. These 12, she said, are the colonial languages. When I heard this phrase colonial language, for a moment I felt ashamed to be a speaker of a colonial language. I come from a country whose majority speaks the most dominant of colonial languages, even though there are so many languages brought here by immigrants. Is it time that Americans start to learn other languages so that we might better communicate with others in our own country and even the rest of the world? Whether or not this is so, I was happy to hear such a comment because it has stayed in my mind ever since.

Although I felt honored to attend such a magnificent conference, there was a period after the conference in which I did not know how to respond to the people who asked me about my trip. Of course, this was agitated by the semester finals that took place the following week. When my dad went to a session on the International Criminal Court, José Ramos-Horta began by relating an interview he had given that morning. The interviewer asked, "Are you hopeful, Mr. Ramos-Horta, about the future?" Citing the many crimes against humanity that happen today, issues such as civil wars, military dictatorships, biological and chemical warfare, land mines, and, of course, nuclear weapons, he simply replied that "No," he wasn't hopeful.

Even though I was already aware of most of the issues brought up at the conference, I began to take everything into account and realized that I really didn't know what to do about the future. Shouldn't the hallmark of youth be that they still have hope? Yet when I came back from the conference I told

more than a few people that it appears like there is no hope. That's the way it seemed to me. On the last day of my stay in the Hague, the day before my plane left, I came home to the local chapter leaders' house to chant because of this feeling. Therefore, in addition to the incredible positive energy of the conference, it also left me with the burden of how to remain hopeful.

However, because Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is a philosophy of hope, there was nowhere better for me to park myself than in front of the Gohonzon. Even though I told quite a few people that it seemed too late to be hopeful, I have decided that I have to be optimistic, no matter what. I came to this decision through the encouragement of many of my SGI friends.

SGI President Ikeda says that what's important "is that you resolve to become the 'sun'" (Discussions on Youth, vol. 1, p. 33). For me to have regained my hopeful spirit has partially been the challenge of many friends in faith, and to them I offer my gratitude. To state the obvious, this conference has helped me to stand up taller and prouder in my Buddhist practice.

From the beginning of my stay in the Hague, I was meeting SGI members. On the day of my arrival, I went to the home of the Hague chapter leaders. It was here, the pleasant house on Fredrik Hendriklaan (Lane), where I came to know the Beckers family—Kiyomi, Maarten and their children—so well that they seemed like friends whom I had known for many years.

Two women were happily carrying out some last minute preparation for the big conference. I could only imagine what type of activities that they had been involved in during the previous weeks in their desire to support this magnif-

icent peace conference. And with most of the SGI members whom I met, this was a scene that I saw over and over again: diligently supporting the conference in whatever way they could without, as far as I could tell, any desire for personal recognition. The SGI-Holland members left me with a fine impression. They have such a wonderful spirit to not begrudge their lives and to support from behind the scenes.

Doesn't this go to show how important our SGI movement is? Since the Hague Appeal for Peace addressed many root causes of war, isn't the Hague Agenda for Peace a document that each SGI member can support, be it directly or indirectly? Can't this be accomplished by allowing people the opportunity to overcome their sufferings, by introducing friends to the philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin? I think it's the most certain way to deal with the root cause of war.

If there is anything that the conference has left me with, it is the conviction that any peace movement must begin with the happiness of the individual. And this is not just my opinion, or that of the SGI: At the conference, Kofi Annan expressed this very statement. I think others are coming to this same conclusion as the modern peace-making techniques are repeatedly proving themselves to be incapable.

For example, in spite of the economic sanctions, peace treaties or other anti-conflict agreements, in spite of the supposed dissuasion factor of nuclear arsenals or biological weapons, there are still conflict zones, killing fields, around the world and our environment continues to suffer. In other words, this conference helped me to realize how much more basic and fundamental is the SGI's movement for peace. ■

The Solution Is Inner Change

In his message to the HAP Conference, SGI President Ikeda says that 'inner, personal transformation, in the depths of the lives of individual human beings, holds the key to realizing lasting, sustainable resolutions to the problems that we face.'

I take this occasion to express my heartfelt respect, greetings and solidarity of purpose with the distinguished participants in the Hague Appeal for Peace. I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to all those whose efforts and support have made this important gathering a reality.

When we reflect on the lessons of the 20th century, stained by a history of bloodshed and human suffering, it is clear that this conference, with its goal of creating the foundations of peace for the coming millennium, will be met with the praise and approbation of future generations. And there is inestimable value in that this a gathering not of governments but of citizens motivated by a sense of responsibility for the future.

I have long felt the need for an assembly of the world's peoples and have urged that this be realized in discussions with the citizens, intellectual and political leaders of each country. The 12 million SGI members active in 128 countries and regions around the world have been striving to contribute to the wel-

fare of humankind, creating a people's network active in the fields of peace, culture, humanitarian interests, human rights and environmental protection.

Next year will mark the 25th anniversary of the SGI's establishment. It will also mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Josei Toda, second Soka Gakkai president and an early advocate of nuclear abolition. In a declaration issued in 1957, he described these weapons, unspeakable cruelty and unspeakable evil, an embodiment of the darkest realms of the human heart.

Next year, the Millennium NGO Forum will be held in spring and the Millennium Assembly in September. The present conference, and those that will follow next year, are certain to create a dramatic, unprecedented new current for peace and humanity — values sought and desired by all people everywhere.

The ultimate objective of the SGI's movement is to strengthen and expand this current of peace and humanity without cease. As early as 1903, the founding president of the Soka Gakkai,

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, called for a new form of what he termed *humanitarian competition* to supplant military, political and economic rivalries. I feel that the HAP represents a concrete endeavor to realize this same ideal through the efforts of the world's citizens.

The core strands of the HAP, of course, are: conflict prevention, resolution and transformation; disarmament and human security; international humanitarian and human rights law and institutions; root causes of war and a culture of peace. Each of these represents an area of urgent global concern.

In our efforts to resolve these challenges, I feel it vital to never lose sight of the importance of transforming the inner lives of individuals. Without this inner transformation, external reforms will result in at best a temporary solution and will not prevent the reemergence of the underlying problem. I believe that this is one of the most important lessons that we can learn from the history of the 20th century.

In connection with this, it must be acknowledged that humankind's devoted efforts to reform and restructure the systems and institutions of society and the state have done little toward enhancing the human condition, toward truly increasing and deepening human happiness. It is for this reason that I emphasize that inner, personal transformation, in the depths of the lives of individual human beings, holds the key to realizing lasting, sustainable resolutions to the problems that we face.

The kind of personal transformation that most directly contributes to the creation of a culture of peace is one that fosters the spirit of active non-violence. The concrete manifestation of this spirit is to be found in the courage to carry out dialogue — and never retreat from the challenges it presents.

Civilizations do not, by their nature, conflict or clash. Mistrust and conflict arise when we fail in the effort of dialogue, when we accept the mistaken belief that cultural differences present an insurmountable obstacle to communication. This

applies equally to all human interactions, across whatever differences appear to separate us. In the coming millennium, dialogue and open interaction among the world's peoples must form the basis for the ethic of a global society.

The outlines of this ethic can be expressed, I believe, by this simple admonition: to reject the temptation to create one's happiness at the expense of others' sufferings. To live this ethic, we must develop a greater empathy for the actual experiences of others.

This again is something that we can only develop through interactions and exchanges with others — through dialogue. This ethic of human solidarity and empathy will serve as the foundation for strengthening the practice of international humanitarian law and the other structures of global non-violent order.

The participants in this conference represent the conscience of humanity at the 20th century's end. I close with my heartfelt prayers for the excellent health and well-being of all the conference participants and for the great success of the campaign to actualize the vision to which it has given birth.

May 15, 1999
Daisaku Ikeda
SGI President

Share Your Byakuren Impressions!!

Contribute to Byakuren history for the 21st century by sharing your thoughts or significant experiences as a Byakuren member. The many voices and faces of the Byakuren past and present will be captured in the first Byakuren experience book. We are looking for impressions, reflections and experiences of the Byakuren since its formation in America. We're also seeking ideas for the book's title and for a cover-page illustration. All submissions are subject to editing.

If you like, use any one of the following questions to help form your response:

1. How has doing Byakuren activities impacted your life?
2. In what ways did/do Byakuren activities allow you to develop compassion, courage, wisdom or joy?
3. How has doing Byakuren activities changed your view of the world?
4. Why would you encourage someone to join the Byakuren group?

Who can participate? Current or former Byakuren group members

Due Date: Aug. 2, 1999

How many words?

Impressions: 100-word maximum.

Experiences: 600 words or less.

Send responses by e-mail to: Donna Keller, SGI-USA Vice Byakuren Leader donnamk@aa.net or mail to: SGI-USA Seattle, 3438 S. 148th St. Seattle, Wash. 98168, Attn: Donna Keller

Soka University of America Is Now On-line!

The Aliso Viejo
portion of the
new SUA Web site,
www.soka.edu,
will be up the first
week in August

- Find out the latest information from both the Calabasas and Aliso Viejo campuses.
- Get your question answered.
- Watch the Aliso Viejo campus construction via WebCam.
- Try the Quotation Quiz!

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 5 SPEECH

Succeed in Everything!

President Ikeda tells junior high and high school division members to 'never be defeated, no matter what! Live your lives brightly and cheerfully! Succeed in all things, with boundless strength and fortitude!'

I hear that all of you are model sons and daughters! Congratulations! And I hear that every one of you is an excellent student! Congratulations again!

Including those who will view this meeting later via satellite throughout Japan, a total of 500,000 junior high and high school division members will participate in this gathering. I want to store the names of all the participants in a special monument for posterity. I propose that this monument to the leaders of the 21st century be erected near Soka University's new Central Tower.

Today, May 5, is officially recognized as Children's Day in Japan, but I have come to feel that this is not the proper name for such an auspicious day. I think some better names would be Leaders of the 21st Century Day, the Day of the Young Men and Women of the 21st Century or the Day of Youth. We should try to come up with a new name with significant meaning.

Children, after all, are individuals in their own right. They are frequently very mature. In contrast, there are many adults who act childish and immature. I consider all of you much more admirable than such grown-ups.

Whether you become happy or unhappy is solely up to you.

Some of you may have lost your parents. I say to those of you who have no father: Please live with the spirit that "I will be the father of my family," and take good care of your brothers and sisters.

And to those of you who have no mother, I say: Please live with the spirit that "I will be the mother of my family." You will only feel unhappy if you give in to your loneliness, become depressed and look glum. Whether you become happy or unhappy depends solely on your inner determination; it's a

matter of making a decision.

Remember that there are many families where parents and children live together but are constantly arguing with one another. Things won't be perfect just because you live with both parents.

There are many great people who have grown up in families with no parents. No matter what your circumstances, I want you to become people who can declare, "I am the happiest person in the world!" Please develop yourselves into such strong individuals.

There may be some of you who are not getting good grades in school right now. For those who fall into this category, please study with all your might. By doing so, your grades will definitely improve. The most important thing is your inner resolve.

Some of you also might wish that you could have been born into a wealthier family. However, if, from the time you are very young, you are always eating fine food and wearing expensive clothes, it's highly unlikely that you will become a person of depth and substance.

To be ruled by one's desires is to fall into the path of Animality and eventual ruin. This is too sad. How much more exhilarating it is to become great individuals through struggling hard amid less-than-comfortable financial circumstances!

When you grow up, you can get a job that allows you to earn enough not to have to worry about money. One of the things you have to learn now is patience. I also hope that all of you will understand and appreciate the struggles your parents are going through. If you can do that, you are an adult.

It's important to chant with firm resolve, until you've solved your problems.

I am sure that there are some of you who have been bullied at school. But the important thing is



SGI President Ikeda talks with Professor Stuart Rees of the University of Sydney (far left) and Professor Majid Tehranian of the University of Hawaii, May 5.

not to be defeated by such cowardly bullying. I hope you will have the sense to make friends with good, decent people and unite with them.

If the teachers at school do not do anything to deal with the bullying, please consult your mothers and fathers and the various leaders of the junior high and high school divisions. I, too, will protect you. Remind yourself that you have the support of 10 million SGI friends behind you.

You must never suffer on your own. There is absolutely no need for it.

It is also most important for you to chant — to chant with firm resolve, until you've solved your problems. Daimoku is the most powerful weapon there is, and everything will begin to move in a positive direction if you chant to the Gohonzon.

Never use violence against your parents. There is nothing more sad or pitiful than domestic violence, and we must never let it happen in our homes.

Whether your grades are good or bad, please be sons and daughters who cherish your parents. Be resolved to do something nice for them in the future, when you are grown up. I hope that you will have such beautiful families.

In any family, parents always nag their children, shouting: "Hurry up!" "Turn off the television!" This has been an unchanging pattern since time without beginning! Please use wisdom to avoid upsetting your parents. Make an effort to bring them joy and comfort, and try not to fight with them. OK? [The meeting hall resounded with a big "OK!"] I hope that all of you will answer in

this same fashion when you're at home, too!

Faith is the propeller that moves our lives ahead.

My wife, who is here today, began practicing Nichiren Daisshonin's Buddhism when she was a fourth-grade student. It was during World War II, and her family was constantly persecuted and harassed by local military officials and abused and slandered by neighbors. Even amid such difficult circumstances, my wife — as a young trailblazer of what has today become the junior high and high school divisions — attended Soka Gakkai meetings and did Gakkai activities with her mother.

Based on her experiences, she later shared the following viewpoint with our three children: "Before going out to play, you're in high spirits. But you often come home afterward feeling exhausted and drained. In comparison, before going to a Gakkai activity, you may not feel so excited, but afterward, you always come home feeling enriched and uplifted. Joy wells up inside you, and you are left with a great sense of fulfillment."

This is the world of faith. I am sure that you would probably agree with my wife's observations. Faith exists in order to help us improve ourselves. It exists so that we can create and generate hope. Faith is a propeller — the propeller that moves our lives forward. Everything in our practice exists for our growth.

Many people go through life aimlessly, agonizing over what course of action they should take. Buddhism is the law of life that al-

lows us to stand up resolutely and advance along on our chosen path, brightly and correctly, without wasting any effort.

The sun rises in the east. Summer follows spring. Such phenomena, too, accord with an unchanging law. The earth revolves around the sun, and the solar system itself is moving at an enormous speed.

There is something — a wondrous rhythm, a great law of the universe — that moves all things in the cosmos with well-ordered precision. It is the Mystic Law. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is this great law of the universe. It is not something that someone just created.

Therefore, living in accord with the Mystic Law is the most correct way to live. That is why it is so essential to embrace the correct teaching, the correct faith that expounds this great law of the universe.

Our personal development contributes to the development of society and the world.

There are people who may possess great scholarship but who suffer from ill health. There are people who are brilliant but are mean and spiteful. There are people in high positions who may inflict suffering on many good, decent people.

Those who incite people to war are a case in point. There are people with prestigious educational backgrounds who look down on others, their arrogance causing them to be disliked and rejected.

Please uphold the correct law in order to develop yourselves into fine, upstanding human beings. This is a basic tenet of the SGI. We

practice Buddhism for our growth. Our personal development contributes to the enhanced welfare of society and the world.

If we plant a tree, it will flower and bear fruit. In the same way, one person is important. Everything starts with one person's human revolution.

We are fortunate to have with us today guests of outstanding intellect and character: Professor Stuart Rees of the University of Sydney in Australia, the land of hope; Professor Majid Tehranian of the University of Hawaii, that lovely group of islands in the Pacific; and Ambassador Zephyr Mutanguha and his wife Odette of Rwanda, a country that will help open wide the Century of Africa, of which I have often spoken.

A little earlier, together with all of you, my beloved successors and leaders of the 21st century, I humbly accepted two peace-related awards from institutes at the University of Sydney and the University of Hawaii, both world-renowned, venerable places of learning. I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for these solemn honors.

In their speeches today, our distinguished guests presented a global outlook on life, in addition to revealing a profound poetic spirit. Their richly stirring words flowed forth like the refreshing waters of a beautiful river.

All great people fight momentous struggles.

When he was about your age, Iranian-born Dr. Tehranian began to speak out for the sake of peace and justice. Later, while studying abroad at Harvard University, he threw himself into the movement to bring democracy to Iran, his native land, as a result of which he was followed by the secret police. When he returned to Iran, he was immediately taken into custody by the police — right in front of family members who had come to pick him up at the airport.

All great people and people who are bound for greatness are fighting momentous struggles. None of them is idly wasting time. Dr. Tehranian was soon released from custody, but for the next seven years, he was constantly kept under police surveillance.

Those walking the correct path will be spoken ill of and persecuted exactly because they are doing what is right and just. This is an unchanging pattern throughout history.

The Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, which I founded three years ago, is work-

ing to bring the world's civilizations closer together through dialogue. Under the strong leadership of Dr. Tehranian, it has quickly become an internationally recognized peace institute.

I am filled with joy that the name of my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, has become known throughout the world as a symbol of peace. As a direct disciple of President Toda, there is nothing that could make me happier.

Working hard for others' happiness is the best way to make peace.

Professor Rees is also well-known as a peace scholar of action. Outstanding individuals are humble and do not put on airs. In contrast, arrogant people are unable to accomplish anything great, no matter how powerful they may pretend to be or how eloquently they speak. As a result, they are not trusted.

Professor Rees does not shut himself off in the ivory tower of learning. He is more concerned for others, for the future of the youth, than himself. He is an important person.

Out of the wish to create a more humane world, he has made valuable contributions to human welfare in many countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, India and Sri Lanka.

Professor Rees also has close ties with the SGI members in Australia. I understand that he said SGI members gathering and uniting to create value is the exact opposite of the destruction caused by war or the use of arms.

The mothers and fathers of many of you are busily engaged in SGI activities each day. They are encouraging many people and working hard for the sake of others' happiness. These efforts in themselves constitute the most steady, most noble creation and construction of peace.

Although the names of those who carry out such efforts may be unknown in society, I feel they all deserve an award of the highest honor. Where else can you find individuals who work every day of the year for the sake of others? I believe that these people are far nobler than those who merely possess fame and power. I want you to wholeheartedly respect and treasure such hardworking and dedicated parents.

As I mentioned, we also have with us today Rwandan Ambassador Zephyr Mutanguha and his

wife Odette, both of whom will be returning home in June at the close of the ambassador's term in Japan. The ambassador is a person of great wisdom and integrity. He has also attended many SGI events. Let us offer our best wishes for the continuing good health of Ambassador and Mrs. Mutanguha and for the ongoing development of Rwanda.

Currently, Satoshi Sasaki, a Soka University graduate who was once a member of the junior high and high school divisions like you, is working to aid the social development of Rwanda. For job-related reasons, Mr. Sasaki is back in Japan for a short period of time and has come to participate in today's meeting. The 21st century is the Century of Africa. I wish Mr. Sasaki great success in his endeavors to forge a path for those who will follow in his footsteps in the years ahead.

What brings forth our ultimate strength is nothing but correct faith.

Humanity is sick of conflict and war. We have entered an age in which human beings seek a peaceful world — a society in which human beings can live together happily, with dignity and humanity, working together for the welfare of all. We have entered an age where humankind, until now so foolish, is gradually becoming wiser through the many bitter experiences it has undergone.

This is exactly why having a command of foreign languages will be so important in the future. I want all of you to apply yourselves diligently to your language studies.

It is important to have sound intellect, to continue developing your minds and to polish your sin-

cere humanity. That said, even if you can speak a foreign language but are arrogant — or if you are very intelligent but look down on people from other countries — you will only end up undermining or destroying friendly ties with those countries in the long run. That is folly. There are many Japanese who behave this way.

There is an impressive motto engraved on the crest of the University of Sydney. In Latin it reads, "Sidere mens eadem mutato," which can be translated as "Though the stars are changed, our spirit is the same."

The constellations vary according to the season, but our spirit remains unchanged, displaying its light of wisdom for all eternity. In other words, there is nothing mightier than the strength of the spirit, which is our very essence. Napoleon said the same thing. What brings forth this ultimate strength is nothing other than correct faith.

I hope that you, the SGI junior high and high school division members, will open a fresh, new millennium for humanity. Hold high the writer's pen of justice and the jeweled sword of this great humanistic life-philosophy.

Finally, together with all the guests attending today's gathering, I say to you, the young scholars of peace for the new century: Never be defeated, no matter what! Live your lives brightly and cheerfully! Succeed in all things, with boundless strength and fortitude!

SGI President Ikeda's speech at a junior high and high school division general meeting commemorating Soka Gakkai Successors Day, held at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Sendagaya, Tokyo, May 5.

Topics for Discussion Meetings

Firm Resolve

From This Speech:
It is most important for you to chant — to chant with firm resolve, until you've solved your problems. Daimoku is the most powerful weapon there is, and everything will begin to move in a positive direction if you chant to the Gohonzon.

1. What does it mean to you to chant with firm resolve?
2. When you're facing a problem, how do you encourage yourself to chant with this firm resolve?
3. What's the difference between chanting with a firm resolve and a weak resolve?
4. Have you ever had the experience of having to chant for a long time to solve a certain problem?
5. Have you ever had an experience of realizing that daimoku was a lot more powerful than you thought it was?
6. What are you chanting about now?



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The World Tribune welcomes reader submissions. If you are interested in contributing an article or photograph, please contact us for guidelines. Together we can make a great newspaper.

幸福人生不外求

劉慶斌

我於一九九八年八月開始信仰大聖人的佛法，今年四月三日受領御本尊，正巧和我十一年前在臺灣受洗成了基督徒同一天，我想這有很深的象徵意義。

十一年的歲月是一段很長的歲月。在這漫長的日子中，我一直努力以信心和行動證明我的信仰。除了讀經、禱告、聚會、參加主日學以外，我也曾多次參加傳福音的事工，並定期禁食禱告。以屬靈的眼光來看，我是一個作戰的勇士。來到美國後，我還加入詩班。這樣的背景經歷，使教會的人認為我的信心堅強，是一個好榜樣。但我無法否認的是，在這十一年來的基督徒歲月中，除了成為別人代禱與祝福的管道之外，神在與我有關的各項大事上，所做的並不多。舉凡感情、事業、家庭與錢財方面都交了白卷。我的禱告並沒有應驗，而生命境界卻每況愈下。尤其自一九九四年以來，不論在感情、事業和金錢上，我都蒙受巨大的損失。

譬如，一個已經論及婚嫁的男友，突然被指控犯了強姦罪，面臨牢獄之災。在對方撤銷控訴

體
驗
談

財津理事長的謝函

親愛的SGI-USA會友：
謹此感謝各位誠懇地參與並支持上個月的五月特別捐款活動。我很高興向大家報告，今年參與這項活動的人數增加很多。此外，金額的總數也遠超過去年。我衷心感謝你們對廣布全心全意的參與與奉獻。
我想五月捐款活動的成功顯示你們對修行充滿喜悅和信心，而且對美國廣布活動的信心也不斷增進著。在為廿一世紀做最後的準備之時，我期待與大家共同維持這種趨勢。再一次謝謝你們。請代為問候與謝謝所有SGI-USA的會友。
財津光明

後，他被公司遣送回國，我們的姻緣就此劃上休止符。在這訴訟過程中，我不止覺得尷尬，更是傷心絕望，他是一個天字第一號。

就在這個時候，我在公司中不但升職，並被公司送到中國做短期工作。一回到台北，就遭受原來工作單位員工的謠言中傷，以集體辭職要脅加薪。他們都受到我的副手蠱惑煽動才這樣做的。他是我一手栽培的人，但卻背叛了我。我當時已經因感情創傷，情緒極為低落。這件事情更讓我痛心，我因此而生去意，就離開了我苦心經營的飯店。

接下來的幾年中，這種被人背叛和欺騙的情形又陸續發生好幾次。我終於醒悟了，如果神真愛我，這些事情不應該出現在我的生命中，尤其是每次都造成莫大的損失和創傷，我必須經過很長的一段時間才復原，幾乎每次都長達半年或一年，可說非常痛苦。

一九九六年十月我回到洛杉磯，換了工作，一切從零開始，覺得自己好像已經死了一次。幾個月後，我認識了李鑑軒。雖然他從第一天開始就折伏我，但始終沒動搖我對神的信仰。一直到去年八月，我在一個月內連續兩次在應徵工作時被騙。第一家公司騙我替他們在報紙上發佈公共關係廣告後，臨時變卦，談妥的工作也消失了。另一家公司也是答應雇用我以後，改變主意，決定聘請一個在我之前應徵的人。老闆對我感到非常抱歉，但對我來說，他的道歉無法解決我眼前的急難。我沒有時間再禁食禱告四十天，我必須立刻有個結果。

當天一下班，我就去找李鑑軒。他帶我到會館，我就從那天開始唱頌，我再也沒有回教會。我給御本尊三個月的試用期來證明它比基督教偉大。

我目前這份工作是在我唱頌後兩星期出現的。一個月後，我開始上班。這個結果和我以前的經歷有著天壤之別。此外，這份工作符合了我開出來的所有條件，御本尊真是不可思議。

雖然我順利找到工作，但我的業障並未消除。在工作環境中，被小人嫉妒中傷的情形依然存在。以前信基督時，我只能默默忍受，暗中禱告。現在則不然，題目的力量使我有勇氣面對難題。這是發生在我開始上班後的第四個月，結局是對方被公司開除，我總算扭轉局勢，不必再做無謂的犧牲。

在心情方面，我比以前快樂多了。對自我的認同也大幅提升。今年一月，我開始考慮受領御本尊，如果御本尊能夠讓我解決住家的問題。我幾乎是立刻得到答案。就在一個月內，我哥哥搬回台北，我必須搬出我們住的房子。當時最大的問題是我母親是基督徒，家中不能供奉佛堂。我還沒有開始找房子，就得到一位同事的支持，她但不介意我供奉御本尊，還讓我把我成壇擺在客廳。現在她也是信徒，而且才唱題一個月就得到很大的功德。她和我一樣迫不及待趕著把御本尊迎回家中。

由於題目的力量，我「一家」的問題也解決了。母親上個月突然決定將父親的遺產分給我們子女。父親在世時，原本計劃將所有財產交給二哥，因此，這個決定對我們女兒，尤其是兩個已婚的姊妹，是一個意外的祝福。在很短的時間內，我就會從無殼蝸牛變成有巢鳥。這是一個極大的功德。

在工作方面，我的進展更多。去年九月廿一日開始上班時，我就希望公司在試用期滿後給我加薪。今年三月廿一日是我試用期滿的日子，老闆在廿二日就宣佈給我調薪，並且讓我升級。我現在的新職位是信用經理，負責風險管理。這項職位調動醞釀了很久，也遭遇一些困難，主要原因是我老闆在錢財上有許多不開的業障，為人所氣，但在我一

些好朋友一起唱頌以後，終於塵埃落定。

入信十個月內，我最大的功德不是外在的收穫，而是內在生命的改變。我從來不曾如此快樂、平靜和自信。我們的信仰與學會揭示的「開創個人最高價值與潛能」，改善了我對自己的錯誤的看法。許多以往認為不可能的事，現在都可能成就。題目具有無限的力量，像一把利刃，可以直入敵人的心坎，這個敵人就是我們無明的迷心。正如大聖人所說：「譬如明鏡，磨之則明如玉。只今一念無明之迷心，是未磨之鏡也。磨之，必成法性真如之明鏡。須深發信心，日夜朗磨之不懈。如何磨之，但奉唱南無妙法蓮華經是謂磨之。」人最怕的就是執迷不悟。對於基督徒、天主教徒朋友，我有一句忠告，請記取我過去的教訓。

聖經從未合理解釋為何神會允許苦難降臨祂的子民。我們被教導，苦難是為了考驗我們的信心。在未來，鍛鍊我們的品格，以便忠信和鍛鍊我們一起同享榮耀。這樣的信念和個人的情感作用，使我們失去了常識和邏輯的判斷，以致於在面對突來的災難時，我們就怨恨神，把祂當成成人一樣地生他的氣。因為不從因果法理的觀點看苦難的問題，基督徒永遠脫離不了苦難的惡性循環，更無法突破盼望等待的無奈及失望所帶來的痛苦和信心的低落。信心方面或許堅強，但智慧方面卻是乏善可陳。

苦難根源於生命內在，前世種下惡因，今世就得承受惡果。因此，遭遇困難時，如果不在外環境尋求答案而非內省，即便問題解決了，也是暫時的。信仰妙法

是開啟智慧、消除罪業的惟一途徑。耶穌說：「凡勞苦擔重擔的人，可以到這裡來，我就讓你們得安息。」信仰妙法不但可以得到安息，還可以根據你的重擔，只要你持之以恆。

此外，你所信仰的宗教對你的生命到底有沒有幫助，或者有多少幫助，都是可以評估的，而且只有你自己最清楚。請將初信時的狀況和願望與現在的比較一下，你應該可以得到答案。到底你是為了宗教而存在，或者這個宗教是為了你而存在？宗教沒有好壞之分，但有高低之別。

與其讓自己苦於忍受痛苦和失望，做無謂的等待和犧牲，為何不給自己三個月時間體驗妙法的偉大。希望大家多發揮題目消除惡業的希望，從今開始，就像使用電腦一樣，按一個「消除」鍵，把生命中不好的檔案消除了，給自己一個新的起點和機會。美國總統傑佛遜曾說：「我愛未來的夢想基於過去的歷史。」我以此話與大家共勉。

最後我要感謝阿凱亞區所有會友在過去十個月中與我一起成長，他們認真修行的態度和熱情的關懷深深感動和激發了我。我也感謝李鑑軒折伏了我。他花了將近兩年的時間，我才入信。在這段期間，我們遭受許多挫折和障礙。教會許多詩班團員把他歸類於魔鬼一流，而且常常集體禱告祈求我早日脫離他的壞影響。但他堅持到底，沒有放棄。在短短十個月中，生命竟然經歷這麼多令人喜悅的改變，回顧以往，真讓我恍如隔世之感。祝福大家挑戰成功，日新又新！



▲劉慶斌近影。

位於加州聖塔蒙妮卡的SGI大樓在六月二日正式向社區開放。參加開幕儀式的來賓包括一百五十位本地政府、商業界及民間組織的代表。這項儀式同時慶祝SGI-USA總部在聖塔蒙妮卡成立卅週年紀念。在典禮中，聖塔蒙妮卡市長潘歐歐納頒贈一份文告給財津理事長，宣稱六月二日為「聖塔蒙妮卡市的池田大作及SGI日」。這幢七層樓的建築是SGI-USA的總部，也是SGI北美辦事處。

SGI大樓向社區開放

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新人間革命隨筆

法悟空

創價永遠的軌道

日前，波士頓廿一世紀中心的橫田政夫代表報告了採訪加利福尼亞大學洛杉磯分校巴納德·懷納教授的內容。

懷納教授在「動機心理學」方面首屈一指，名聞世界。

什麼能使人產生偉大的「動機」，培育自發之心？他認為是「老師」。

出這這一觀點，他對於創價學會通過「師徒」的紐帶加深信仰，擴展運動，深懷共鳴。

懷納教授說：「池田會長說自說自己不是戶田的弟子，而是牧師。」

「牧口混蛋」。

人心真是可怕。

戶田先生經常說：我當上會長以後，狡詐傲慢的傢伙們便到處說自己不是戶田的弟子，而是牧師。

口會長的弟子。我不曾要求他們當弟子，可是，他們為什麼隨便說自己是牧口先生的弟子呢？

說穿了，他們就是為自己打算，粉飾自己。

說是牧口會長的弟子，門面很漂亮，但他們從沒有作為弟子而奮鬥過。那不過是逃避現實、陷入空論而已。

只是利用牧口會長，絕不是弟弟子。

如果是牧口會長的真正弟子，不應該瞭解到先生的心，跟隨繼承其精神，為廣宣流布奮鬥的戶田城聖嗎？

這才是師徒不二。

因為是師徒不二，所以追隨繼承初任牧口會長精神成為第二任會長，才是對先生的報恩。

我本人的事姑且不談，佛法永遠靠師徒來傳遞，這是令法久住的一個方程式，一個法理。

自稱牧口會長的弟子，卻不跟隨戶田先生，這類人都退轉、反叛、偏離了佛法。

無論他們如何狡辯，把自己正當化，也顯然是愚者的淺薄謬論。不知何謂真實的弟子。

那是戶田會長就任第二任會長的前一年(1950年)。

我們學奉為師的戶田先生突然把當時學會的最高職務理事長讓給了別人。

是辭職，因為事業陷入困境，怕給學會帶來麻煩，但我無法想像學會可以沒有戶田先生。

我立即問先生：「先生辭去了理事長，今後我的老師是誰？」

先生當即回答：「你的老師是我呀，雖然只是讓你跟著吃苦。」

——終生難忘師徒情，小說《人間革命》也寫了這一幕。

不消說，我們的信仰是奉日蓮大聖人為末法的本尊。立足於此，日蓮佛法非常重視師徒關係。

日與上人這樣教示：「此大聖人之法門，正師徒之道以成佛。師徒之道略有誤，雖同持法華經，亦墮無間地獄。」

因而，「不求正修行」之法，師徒關係頭目和嚙噬似的，讓人盲目跟從自己，不是佛法的應有方式。

修行佛道的同志是「異體同心」，是平等的。

而且，佛法本身是一種「師徒一體」，教導佛(師)和眾生(弟子)是一體不二。法華經是一條確立了嚴格師徒道理的大道，循其軌道，人就永遠向上。

總之，美國心理學懷納教授指出：「因為有嚴謹的師徒關係，所以創價學會有所發展」，實在是洞如觀火。

御書反覆教示「捨惡知識，親近善友」。

不要親近惡知識，不要親近有野心或固執己見的假信徒、假幹部，不論他們信仰了多久。

御訓還說：「惡知識者貌作如善，巧言騙彼愚人，壞人善心者也。」

必須聰明地識破惡知識的偽善。

《開目抄》有云：「善知識者，一向非師，一向非弟子。」

這是教示，同志要互相成為善知識，互相鼓勵、互相學習。

可以說，今後代代相續的會長就是善知識的頂點。他們之所以被敬仰為「師」，一定要出自他們致力於廣宣流布的深厚信心和使命。

上野殿母御前御返事(所勞書)

一三二一年(弘安四年)十二月八日六十歲作

池田會長講解

昔文永十一年六月十七日入此山，至今年十二月八日，未出此山一步，八年之間，痠麻多疾，年事既高，身衰心弱。今年春初，遂撰此疾，經秋入冬，日見頹萎，夜則加劇，此十餘日殆未進食。加以雪降不絕，寒風逼人。身儂如石，胸冷似冰。得此酒熱之，並覆香而食，稍暖一口，通體火焚，如浴溫泉。流汗下滴，淋漓濯足。如斯厚意，何以為酬？思念及此，喜悅難禁，不覺兩眼一淚盈眶。

日蓮困於病，人有來書者多未作覆，此事甚甚傷歎，勉為執筆。此亦將不久於世。若然，必為訪五郎殿也。倘在母前見得，當為道母之哀傷。

日蓮由於生病，無法寫回信給大家，但此事(故五郎殿之事)實在太令人悲傷，不禁提筆回信。日蓮想必也不會永久活在人世。(死後)一定會去見五郎殿。如果比母御前先到五郎殿，必轉達母御前的悲嘆之心。

以大誠實回應誠實

一五一十、毫不掩飾的為人。大聖人根本不想故作自大，是一如偉大凡夫。連大聖人都如此。何況是末法的普通凡夫，又何必矯揉造作？掩飾自己又有何用？誠以待人，謙以律己，審視自己，琢磨自己。

凡是人當然會遇生老病死。重要的是，如何堂堂地面對它，並加以超越。

大聖人在寫這封信的前幾年，曾對佐渡的阿佛房淡淡地寫道：「受生既及六旬，老亦無疑，所餘者病死二字耳」(阿佛房御返事)——意指，出生至今，年齡已近六十，(所以，生老病死的「老」)是無庸置疑，往後唯剩「病」、「死」兩字。

多麼達觀啊！彷彿從萬里高空，悠然地俯視「病」、「死」這片苦惱的黑雲。

這封給時光之母的回函，是為答謝母御前擔心身體衰弱、無法進食的大聖人，於一三二一年(弘安四年)十二月，致贈玄米、清酒與治胃藥草的供養一事。是在入滅的十個月前寫的。

信中，大聖人具體地透露本身的身體狀況，並充分表露出對母尼真心

《通解》

自文永十一年(一二七四年)六月十七日，入此山(身延山)至今年十二月八日為止，寸步未離此山。在這八年當中，身體不適而致消瘦，再加上年齡已高，身體一年不如一年，心神衰弱。今年春又生此病，秋過冬至，(身體)日愈衰弱，(病情)夜夜愈重，這十幾天來，三餐幾乎不能入口。又加上積雪，寒氣逼人。身體已寒如石，胸部冷如冰。這時溫熱(母尼您供養的)酒，連同馨香(增進食慾的藥草)就口一喝，胸口即熱如火焚，身心舒暢如入浴後，汗水去污、滴滴淨足。

您這份心意，該如何報答？欣喜之際，兩眼不由得浮淚一滴。

(中略)

(中略)

先生當即回答：「你的老師是我呀，雖然只是讓你跟著吃苦。」

——終生難忘師徒情，小說《人間革命》也寫了這一幕。

不消說，我們的信仰是奉日蓮大聖人為末法的本尊。立足於此，日蓮佛法非常重視師徒關係。

日與上人這樣教示：「此大聖人之法門，正師徒之道以成佛。師徒之道略有誤，雖同持法華經，亦墮無間地獄。」

因而，「不求正修行」之法，師徒關係頭目和嚙噬似的，讓人盲目跟從自己，不是佛法的應有方式。

修行佛道的同志是「異體同心」，是平等的。

而且，佛法本身是一種「師徒一體」，教導佛(師)和眾生(弟子)是一體不二。法華經是一條確立了嚴格師徒道理的大道，循其軌道，人就永遠向上。

總之，美國心理學懷納教授指出：「因為有嚴謹的師徒關係，所以創價學會有所發展」，實在是洞如觀火。

御書反覆教示「捨惡知識，親近善友」。

不要親近惡知識，不要親近有野心或固執己見的假信徒、假幹部，不論他們信仰了多久。

御訓還說：「惡知識者貌作如善，巧言騙彼愚人，壞人善心者也。」

必須聰明地識破惡知識的偽善。

《開目抄》有云：「善知識者，一向非師，一向非弟子。」

這是教示，同志要互相成為善知識，互相鼓勵、互相學習。

可以說，今後代代相續的會長就是善知識的頂點。他們之所以被敬仰為「師」，一定要出自他們致力於廣宣流布的深厚信心和使命。

對母御前掛念大聖人的真心，大聖人或許心想：「母御前可令人放心了，已有餘力關懷他人」。

自五郎逝後一年多。雖說「時間」是最佳良藥，可治癒一切，但內心的空洞，並非那麼容易填補。

大聖人信中再次提及七郎五郎的事，在信尾寫著：「我若先死，見到故五郎殿，必轉達您的思念之情。」

此信大聖人是在身體很衰弱，幾乎無法拿筆之下寫的。從信中可知，大聖人不僅想致謝，而是更深知母御前思子之心切，所以才特意提筆的。

佛在無時無刻都在祈願著眾生的幸福。壽量品的自我偈 有句：「每自作是念」——如何才能令眾生進入無上道、速成就佛身，我才特意提筆的。

壽量品以這句佛的「祈願」作為結語。一天廿四小時、日日月月，心掛念眾眾，鼓勵眾眾不懈。這就是佛，此心即是佛界。奉拜御本尊的我們，也要秉持「每自作是念」此心來奮鬥！一念要抱著徹底保護所在的地區或組織的所有人，並令每一個人都能幸福、奮起、領受功德。一切視領導者的責任感而定。

大聖人無微不至的慈愛，就如手搖撥處般的細心。而且指導明快，非常合乎情理。大聖人鼓勵人的言行，是信仰佛法者，不！應說是所有領導者的風範。

一切事情在佛法上都有其意義。或許是七郎五郎將他的壽命轉讓給時光。

時光繼承父弟的遺志，一生貫徹青春之誓，為廣宣流布奮鬥到底。他榮耀的一生，也象徵著母御前、七郎五郎的勝利。

(譯自一九九六年七月廿四日聖教新聞，取材自第二〇三八號《通訊》)

THIS BEAUTIFUL EARTH: PHOTO ESSAYS BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA



‘A Path at Windsor’

I had paid a visit to Windsor Castle, famous these days as the weekend abode of Queen Elizabeth. It stands about twenty-two miles west of London. It is in this castle that the traditional rites and ceremonies of the English royal house are conducted. My wife and I had been honored with an invitation to one such ceremony at which the Queen would be present. Unfortunately, our schedule prevented us from attending.

Grateful for the consideration shown us, however, we felt we must at least pay a visit, and that day we set out for Windsor Castle.

We had just had lunch at a restaurant on the bank of the Thames with the Marquis of Reading, who had been so instrumental in assisting us with the “Robes of the Realm” Exhibition at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum. (Fully titled “Robes of the Realm—An Exhibition of 300 years of British Ceremonial Dress, it opened in October, 1989.) After bidding the Marquis farewell, we took a stroll

along the banks of the Thames.

The English philosopher-poet Thomas Gray affectionately called this river, of which he cherished fond memories from his youth, “Father Thames,” and described it as a venerable old soul.

Walking a while, we came upon Windsor Bridge. Across it stands Eton College, the prestigious boy’s school that Thomas Gray attended. It is a school with a tradition of humanistic education, noted for its teaching of English gentlemanship. As we stood by the river’s edge, a group of swans swam up to us. We tossed them some food, and heard a sudden fluttering overhead. Looking up into the blue early summer sky, we saw some pigeons taking wing.

*Though the eye cannot discern them, there are paths in the sky.
Birds have their path,
as does the wind,
The stars, too,*

*have a path to follow,
as do the rivers, the oceans,
and the fish that swim in them.*

People, too, have a human path to follow.

Windsor Castle was built atop a hill overlooking the Thames. It is a dignified old castle of Norman architecture. It had its origin as a fortress built some 900 years ago. Standing on the stone path leading into Royal Town (another name for Windsor Castle) one can see a long road stretching into the distance. It runs as a single strand through green fields interwoven with lawns and plantations. This three-mile path is known as the Long Walk. On the road far off I could discern a few small human forms — perhaps a family out for a walk. Enticed by the distant sky, I raised my camera and snapped the shutter two or three times.

A single road, stretching limitlessly. If we follow that single road, that single path, it will link

us to the land. And beyond the broad expanse of the land, it will link us to the world as well. If we never stop walking ahead step by step along the correct path in life, then the boundless expanse of a world of hope surely will open before us.

There is also the path of fame; the path of power. But continuing along these paths, one’s own destruction awaits in the distance.

We follow an unadorned path. But it is also an unsurpassed path, a path that glows with the light of sublime mission and deep fulfillment.

About 15 minutes to the west by car from Windsor is Taplow Court. It is the “Treasure Castle of Peace and Culture” of SGI of the United Kingdom. Once a center for high society, this manor has received as guests many members of the Royal Family.

I heard there was even once a saying that went, if you hire a horse at Windsor, it will quite naturally turn toward Taplow. Two days before my visit to Windsor, at a meet-

ing I attended at Taplow, my young friends sang powerfully a song they had written called “The Path”:

*Freedom! Break the chains
Lift up your hearts, now
you’re living again
Now is the time to break the chains
It feels so good to be giving again
Ever more free from fear,
Walking in the path.*

There are those who build a path, and those who tear it down. There are those who continue to walk a path, and those who stray from it. I wish to be a person who forges a path; a person who persists in walking a path.

No matter what; until the end, I will keep walking, keep running. Even if I should fall along the way, and return to the dust of the land, because I believe in the youth who will succeed me along this path, I will have not a single regret.

Four in a series

BYAKUREN, SOKA GROUP AND GAJOKAI

Development in our lives results from our efforts for the sake of others

We've all seen them — the young men parking cars in the pouring rain outside your local SGI-USA community center, the young woman helping you find two seats together in a crowded meeting room. Who are they? And what motivates them to do these seemingly thankless tasks? They are the Byakuren, the Soka Group and the Gajokai. They have all committed to ensur-

ing that your Buddhist activities run smoothly, that you are comfortable, and that there are no accidents.

The payoff for these efforts can often be hard to see immediately, but is always undeniable. Here are three experiences that demonstrate the impact of these behind-the-scenes efforts. Actions for the sake of others produce deep, personal growth in our lives

— growth that can propel us to succeed for years to come. SGI President Ikeda says:

We are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth charged with the mission of leading the suffering to true fulfillment. This philosophy — that our lives exist to help others — is the most fundamental energy source for nurturing a vigorous kindness. Kindness is a

universal language. It links hearts in every society and culture around the globe. The spread of our kosen-rufu activities is cultivating a rich field for the growth and expansion of just such humanistic spiritual values.

If you are interested in participating in these groups, please speak with your local youth division leaders. ♪



Paul Houle together with son, Lucas.

other than my Buddhist practice. My main interest was leisure, and my sense of responsibility and commitment was summarized by my standard response to most requests: "Yeah, maybe."

Buddhist study and encouragement from my fellow Gajokai members enabled me to make a commitment to myself not to miss this chance to do

Gajokai — to create fortune in my life. It was often a struggle, having to get up early or stay up late, chanting extra daimoku to gear up extra energy to travel a long distance to the community center just to support others, often for many seemingly thankless hours.

Yet I sensed it was the greatest training for my life — to challenge my every moment for the sake of others, to chant daimoku and maintain a high life-condition so that I could always be at the right place at the right time during my shift. And to read people's life-conditions with my own. What did they need? Where were they coming from? What was their struggle? How could I help make their brief time here more enjoyable and encouraging?

I refused to miss my chance to do a Gajokai shift. I could miss gongyo once in a while, but not Gajokai. If the SGI was the right place for me, and if President Toda's words "This organization is more important than my life" were true, I couldn't let him or myself down. So I determined to train myself to protect the movement for kosen-

rufu, the will of the Daishonin.

After a few years, I began to see significant changes in my life, which I felt were directly connected to my Gajokai training. I was consistently promoted at work, given more responsibility, titles and pay. My attitude, optimism and perseverance — all polished through Gajokai — gained me access to business training and experiences that landed me a better job and continued to pay off in my daily life. I was able to develop my own family fortune, purchase a home and eventually finish my B.A. degree.

One benefit I recently realized was the almost immediate level of trust the top executives at my new company placed in me after less than nine months on the job. People who have two or three times my level of experience and education now frequently consult me.

Most importantly, I've been able to consistently and continuously reveal my own negative karma and persevere to change it. In the Goshō, the Daishonin writes, "This I will state; let the Gods forsake me, let all persecution assail me, still I will give my life for the sake of the Law." This quote has helped anchor my practice. Gajokai activities gave me a personal connection to the idea and I think the idea exemplifies the spirit of the Gajokai — the protectors of the castles of kosen-rufu. When things get tough, not only can I think about this quote and the Daishonin's spirit behind it, but I can also rely on my Gajokai training to give me the extra punch to push through whatever difficulty I'm facing. I've begun to find my own internal strength.

I deeply appreciate President Ikeda and all the members of SGI-USA for the opportunity to do Gajokai, protect the movement for kosen-rufu, and create eternal fortune in my life.

BECOMING A PRINCESS OF FORTUNE

By Laura Recht, New York

When I first joined the Byakuren, I was anything but the model of the Byakuren spirit. In fact, I was struggling with very deep negativity in my life. I was trying to heal from a two-year-long



Laura Recht of New York.

depression and from the recent breakup with my partner, who only the year before had moved to the States from London so that we could be together and get married. At that time, I was also in graduate school, which wasn't fulfilling the real dream that had brought me to New York 11 years ago — to become a filmmaker.

Even though I went to NYU and was one of 60 people in the art school

(continued on page B)

WHY DO I APPRECIATE GAJOKAI?

By Paul Houle, Seattle

For me, doing Gajokai activities has been the source of incredible fortune and benefit in my life. Years ago I heard an experience of a longtime member. Because of his efforts over the years in doing Gajokai activities, he had amassed a substantial bank of fortune in all aspects of his life, including a stable and rewarding job, his own home and a happy, healthy family. Most importantly, he developed an inner strength, which was something that couldn't be taken away. This experience always stuck with me. I wanted to create that kind of fortune in my life, that kind of strength. So I began to challenge myself to participate in the Gajokai.

At the time, I was a timid, soon-to-be college dropout with loads of personal worries always dogging me. "Why am I in college?" "What should I do with my life?" "Will I ever get a real girlfriend?" etcetera, etcetera. I had little organization and direction in my life

(continued from page A)

chosen for a special cultural and academic scholarship program, I had little confidence. After graduation, I lost all hope of ever being a filmmaker, and while my friends moved on to jobs at television and film companies around the city, I didn't even try to find work because I didn't feel capable enough.

As I mentioned, when I became a Byakuren member I was struggling! I didn't feel at all like the other girls in the group, who seemed positive, self-assured, and strong. Still, with the support of my three great Byakuren leaders, I felt myself begin to grow. I tried with all my might on each shift to really act as SGI President Ikeda would.

The Byakuren leader, Beatrice Lopez, always used to encourage me, saying, "Laura, please chant to me, President Ikeda's heart." I had absolutely no idea what that meant, but I tried it, and determined to do as much behind the scenes as I possibly could. When I cleaned the bathrooms, I cleaned with the determination that I was scrubbing every bit of negativity from my life. I tried also to greet each and every individual member as they came in and left, no matter how hectic things were, or how many people were crowding around.

This was my first experience with practicing Buddhism with the spirit of President Ikeda. I'd practiced Buddhism for two years before, but not with this same determination to love and care for the members. My heart began to open, and for the first time, I began to respect and view President Ikeda as my mentor. I realized how deep his caring is for the members, how very hard he works, the beauty of his words, and the overwhelming breadth of his vision. I began to realize that being a Byakuren at the culture center wasn't enough; the challenge was to become a Byakuren in life as well.

In the fall of 1998, I was asked to take responsibility for the New York Byakuren's New Hostess program, which is the training program for potential Byakuren members. It seemed like such a large job to me; once again I felt my negativity rise and my lack of confidence surface. I couldn't imagine myself filling the shoes of the Byakuren leaders.

In fact, I even went into hiding for a while. Once again I received encouragement to try with all my might, not run from my depression, and take a step forward. My life for many months was consumed with nothing but Hostess activities, but I was proud of our young women, and eager to see them become Byakuren members.

After the Hostess program was over, I got my first benefit. I started working at the local public television station, WNET/Thirteen. I loved it! Even though I was "only" an intern, I wanted

to be the best, brightest, most "Byakuren" intern they ever had. I found out quickly that the skills I had learned in Byakuren training directly applied to everything I did at the station and on shoots. In fact, one of my first jobs was to serve water to our weekly guest hosts! No other intern took this "little" job as seriously as I did.

I chanted to be in rhythm with the host and the crew, to prevent accidents, and always to add a positive Buddhist energy to the set. Soon I was highly trusted by the professional camera crew and the producers, and I was the only intern whom they requested to work with time and time again.

Going that extra mile, regardless of whether or not anyone notices, is a key point to Byakuren, and one I used at WNET. Within mere weeks of being on the job, one of the producers asked me if I would like to produce a half-hour documentary on a local dance school downtown that couldn't afford to hire a WNET crew. I immediately agreed.

Not only was the dance school in the area of my district, giving me the opportunity to participate in the SGI's Year of the Community, it was also a very humanistic school that believed in treating dancers with utmost respect and preventing injuries at all cost. I loved the school and the staff. We quickly grew into a warm family, working together on the project.

But, as Nichiren Daishonin teaches us, obstacles will always arise on the road to winning. The day before shooting was set to begin, my cameraman backed out of the project. I was devastated, worrying, "How am I going to have this beautiful documentary, if no one is there to work the camera?" I chanted and chanted.

At the last minute, a wonderful cameraman volunteered to shoot the first day, and he recommended a friend for the next day.

By the time the third day rolled around, I felt utterly confident to shoot the piece myself. At one of the last days of the shoot, I was working the camera, lights and sound all by myself. How did I suddenly have the confidence to do it? It was the Byakuren — stand alone — spirit for sure.

The deadline for my film approached. Because WNET liked the footage I shot, they decided to film an entire week of host locations at the dance school, using someone from my documentary as the host. This was an



Nobu Kawasaki, Soka Group member in Oregon.

honor, but it also meant I absolutely had to have the film edited in five days. No one thought I could do it, and the producer put another show in the schedule just in case I didn't make it.

When I was at the dance school the next day, I remember chanting in my head, saying: "OK, Gohonzon, I need that comet to fly across the sky. I need something to change."

A couple of minutes later, a young woman walked up to me and volunteered to edit my piece free of charge! She was a PBS editor who also danced at the school. Together, we spent five grueling days and nights at the editing machine. Grueling yes, but also the most fun I can remember having. She did a beautiful job, and the film is everything I chanted for. It aired April 23.

Byakuren continues to help me change my negative nature, and believe me, it's still there. I constantly have to recommit to the process, not allowing myself to get lazy or complacent or to complain.

As I embark on my second film project, I hold in my heart President Ikeda's message to Byakuren to be shining Princesses of Fortune that, like flowers, bring the fresh scent of beauty, calm and wisdom to every situation. Thanks, Byakuren!

JOY OF SOKA GROUP

By Nobu Kawasaki, Eugene, Ore.

I have been participating in the Soka Group in Eugene for more than a year. Eugene Chapter is very big and includes about one-third of the state of Oregon. Our small community center is located in a business complex between an Asian store and electric repair shop.

When I came to Oregon about three years ago, I did not see any Soka Group or Byakuren members at activities. In November 1997, a former youth division chapter leader asked me to organize the Soka Group because the store next to the community center had com-

plained about our members parking their cars in front of their store.

My first effort was to create a Soka Group manual that was specific for our chapter. I obtained a 20-year-old manual from the chapter leader, but it was useless. I spent a lot of time thinking and chanting about the role of Soka Group. I asked my region Soka Group leader for his advice. He told me that the success of the Soka Group would be totally dependent upon how much I devoted myself to protecting the members. Shortly thereafter, I completed the manual for the Eugene Chapter Soka Group. I then asked several YMD members to become Soka Group members.

Now, two or three Soka Group members are always present to help to set up the stage, welcome people, find parking places and prevent accidents at each Kosen-rufu Gongyo meeting. I've almost memorized what kind of car each member drives.

Recently some members told me that they really look forward to seeing the Soka Group welcome members with their fresh, smiling faces. I was really glad to hear that because I've learned that our behavior as Soka Group can make the members feel either very comfortable or uncomfortable, depending on how much each of us devotes himself to protecting the members and our attitude toward supporting behind the scenes.

SGI President Ikeda has said, "Those who support members from behind the scenes are the greatest." I've really learned a lot of things in challenging Soka Group activities, especially how important it is to take care of others. Through my Soka Group activities, I have been able to chant more for the members' happiness and challenge myself to overcome my weakness and laziness to expand my capability for protecting others. I would proudly like to continue Soka Group activities and supporting the members! ♪

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YOUTH *Study* AUGUST

"GENERAL STONE TIGER"

The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol.1, pp. 225–27

THE STORY OF GENERAL STONE TIGER

By Ken Saragosa, Philadelphia

The Goshō we are studying this month refers to the story of "General Stone Tiger." Here is a contemporary retelling of this Chinese fable.

There was a warrior in ancient China named Li Kuang. One day, his beloved mother was killed by a mighty tiger. The warrior vowed to avenge his mother, and was filled with an awesome determination to hunt down and kill the tiger. Finally one night, he came upon the beast lying very still in the moonlight. He knew that this animal was so fierce and so strong that he would only have one chance to kill it. If he didn't kill the tiger on the first blow, he himself would be killed. Knowing this, he took out a single arrow — his only shot. Summoning every bit of his anger and determination, he fired the arrow, thinking, "With this one arrow, I will avenge my mother!" He scored a direct hit!

To his surprise, however, the tiger didn't cry out or even move. He approached slowly and as he got closer, he realized that what he had thought was the sleeping tiger was really a huge stone. Amazingly, the arrow was lodged deep within that rock. He couldn't believe this, and he tried to understand how he had managed to pierce the rock with his arrow. He even tried to shoot other arrows into the stone. Naturally, this was impossible. The arrows simply bounced off. But then he remembered the awesome determination he put into that one single arrow, and he realized that this kind of powerful and focused effort was what had enabled the impossible to become possible. Because of his extraordinary feat, the warrior Li Kuang became known throughout China as "General Stone Tiger."

WHO ARE THE BODHISATTVAS OF THE EARTH?

By Naoko Miyauchi, Atlanta

Among those who propagate this sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, who could compare with Shariputra, Mahakashyapa, Kannon, Myō'ōn, Monju and Yakuo? Shariputra and Mahakashyapa, who were of the two vehicles, had destroyed all illusions of thought and desire, thus freeing themselves from the six paths. The others, all bodhisattvas, had eradicated the forty-one illusions and were approaching perfection, like the harvest moon the night before it reaches fullness. Nevertheless Shakyamuni Buddha refused to entrust the mission of propagation to any of these people and gave it instead to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Thus these Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the ones who had thoroughly forged their faith. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 226-27).

In the Lotus Sutra, after Shakyamuni preached his highest teachings, he asked who would be willing to undertake the difficult task of spreading Buddhism throughout the society in the Latter Day of the Law. His best and brightest disciples all expressed their determination to do this, but as this Goshō passage tells us, Shakyamuni refused to entrust the mission of propagation to them, even though they were thought to be his most capable disciples. Suddenly, the earth opened up and a

number of truly brilliant Bodhisattvas came out of the ground. These Bodhisattvas of the Earth, the passage tells us, are the ones to whom Shakyamuni entrusted kosen-rufu. These Bodhisattvas of the Earth were the ones who had thoroughly forged their faith.

Who are these Bodhisattvas of the Earth? In Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, he says that those of us who choose to practice and propagate Buddhism in our contemporary society — the Latter Day of the Law predicted by Shakyamuni — are, by definition, those Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are us! We are the ones whom the Buddha entrusted with the great mission to propagate Buddhism in the Latter Day of the Law, though it may appear to us that we were simply born into the SGI, or that we merely made a simple decision to start practicing Buddhism. From the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin, we are fulfilling a promise we made in the distant past.

We are Bodhisattvas of the Earth and disciples of Nichiren Daishonin, so we have nothing to be afraid of when we face hardships.

Believe in this Goshō! As soon as we recognize our great mission, we try to make strenuous efforts with a proud and strong conviction every day. But, do we always behave like a Bodhisattva of the Earth who overcomes all hardships with strong determination? Do we recognize our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth?

It sometimes takes us a while to make a strong determination when we face problems. Hesitation, anxiety, pessimism and doubt are often our first reactions! But every difficulty is actually a crucial opportunity for us to be courageous and make a strong determination. SGI President Ikeda says, "Someone who has deep doubts and lives as though behind a smoke screen will be utterly incapable of connecting in faith with the great life of the Buddha" (*Lectures on the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 2, p. 119).

Courage is easy to talk about when things are going fine. However, when life gets complicated, and difficulties arise — problems at work, in our relationships, with our families, or with our health — it isn't so easy to keep our conviction strong. So, how can we maintain our courage in faith?

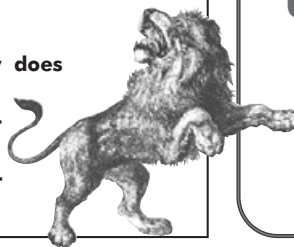
President Ikeda said the ultimate meaning of faith is difficult to understand — and yet at the same time quite simple. He says that faith is "to maintain a seeking mind toward — and not to forget — the Gohonzon, no matter what our circumstances. When we seek the Buddha with an honest and pure spirit — like that of a child in search of his or her mother calling 'Mommy!' or a mother embracing her child — a palace of indestructible happiness arises in our hearts. By contrast, faith means yearning for and thirsting to see the Buddha. It is to be 'honest and upright, gentle in intent'; to be thoroughly honest and gentle in one's spirit toward the Buddha, toward the Gohonzon" (p. 119).

So when we lose sight of our conviction in faith, it means that our life is thirsting to see the Buddha. In that case, we can receive wisdom and energy by doing gongyo and daimoku every day, and we can maintain a high life-condition and strong conviction.

But not only do we help ourselves; through our conviction, we can illuminate the lives of our friends with the light of hope. That is our mission as the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Just as General Stone Tiger lodged an arrow into a rock through his strong belief that it was the tiger that killed his mother, let's each of us make just as strong a determination and live courageously! ♪

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What lessons can we learn from the story of General Stone Tiger? Why does Nichiren Daishonin use this as an example to encourage Shijō Kingō?
2. Have you ever thought of yourself as a Bodhisattva of the Earth? Is this a difficult thing to believe? What difference does it make if we believe it or not?
3. Why is courage in faith important? Does faith imply helplessness, or is praying a passive activity? What does it mean to act with conviction?



UPCOMING STUDY MATERIAL

August & September
"Letter to Niike"

October and November
SGI President Ikeda's 1999 Peace Proposal

SEIZE the DAY ESSAY CONTEST



Illustration by Brian McKenzie

Thank you to all who entered our Seize the Day Essay Contest. There were many outstanding essays. We hope that each one of you who submitted an essay will benefit from the act of writing your essay, as well as the chance to be recognized as a **Gold or Silver medal writer**. We included all essays submitted for last year's contest in this year's consideration. Look for winners' announcements in our next issues of Seize the Day. We hope all of you have a great summer! ✎

REDETERMINING TO WIN

By Jomo Thorne,
SGI-USA Jr. High School Division Leader

Recently I received an e-mail from a college friend of mine who told me that he might not be able to graduate on time because of poor grades. Reading about his struggles took me back to the late spring of 1998 when I was in a similar position, when laziness and fear of taking responsibility for my life resulted in my not having enough credits to graduate from college on time. I would be able to walk at graduation with my classmates, but would not receive a diploma until I finished my last two classes in summer school.

I remember how devastated, bitter and frustrated I felt. I thought, "After all those years of using my Buddhist practice to challenge and overcome depression, poor grades, and anxiety over paying for college (among many other struggles), is this how it's supposed to end?!" Most of all, I really didn't even want to go to my graduation.

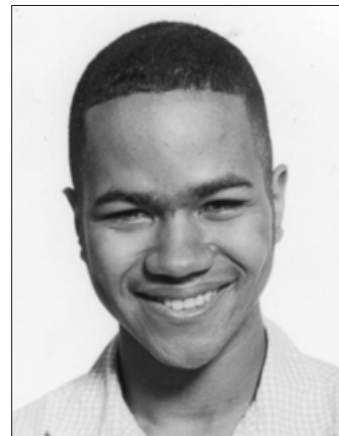
I decided that I would have to

chant like I'd never chanted before and throw myself even more wholeheartedly into my SGI activities. I happened to pick up SGI President Ikeda's lecture on the Goshō "Happiness in This World," and was very encouraged by his words:

"Everything comes down to our state of life. It is within our power to take our lives in any direction we wish."

In time these sentences helped me develop a new perspective and determination. Diploma or no diploma, this was going to be the only graduation I would be going through, so I had to enjoy it.

The principle of *ichinen sanzen* (3,000 realms in a single entity of life) as revealed in the Lotus Sutra describes the changing nature of each moment of life. At any given moment, we have the potential to experience any one of 3,000 life-conditions. A Buddha understands this principle with his/her entire being, and as such understands that the next moment can be his/her greatest moment. On a practical level, we can understand this principle as showing



us the power of redetermination at the crucial moment. President Ikeda is a great example of this principle in action — he is the master of redetermination!

My graduation was a total victory. I got the most cheers when my name was called, and my family came together in a way I had never seen. It is a golden memory. And none of it would have occurred if I hadn't redetermined to win at the crucial moment. ✎



By Valerie Thomas,
SGI-USA Student Division Leader

Can You Make a Difference? Student Division Survey

You Make A Difference?" sponsored by the SGI-USA Student Division is being circulated throughout the nation since the beginning of June 1999. All students studying beyond high school have the opportunity participate in the survey.

The purpose of the survey is to evaluate how students feel about their ability to make a positive difference in the world and the factors that have influenced these feelings. Participants rank statements on a scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Examples of the statements are: "In the future, the world will be a better place because of my efforts" and "My education has increased my ability to help others."

Recent violent actions by young people in the United States seem to have raised questions about whether or not students are concerned with making a positive difference in the world. Is the current hopelessness of the students expressed through violence shared by most students or only a few? Are there students who believe they can make a positive difference?

To help discover the answers to these questions, a survey titled "Can

The idea of conducting this survey originated when the Student

Division Conference planned for the Florida Nature and Culture Center this summer was cancelled. In discussion with the student division region leaders, it was apparent that many students were excited by the idea of having a project that they could work on together. We hope that this survey, which will be circulated to members and non-members, will not only be a vehicle to collect a clear picture of the current views of students, but will also be a way for SGI-USA students to introduce their non-member peers to the SGI-USA. Results of the survey will be published in *Seize the Day*.

For more information on how to participate in this survey, please contact your local student division leaders or e-mail the national leaders at studentdiv@sgi-usa.org. ✎



Victory Over Violence

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

VOV Campaign Begins in August

This summer the youth of the SGI-USA will spearhead the Victory Over Violence campaign in August by sponsoring seminars at the district discussion meetings nationwide. The meetings will focus on the content in-

cluded in the "Quest For Peace: Working Together Toward a Non-violent World" information kits and video that will be given to each district and available through the SGI-USA regions. We will also be initiating a Pledge of Victory Over Violence, created by the

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Volunteers at the SGI Visitor Center in Santa Monica, Calif., prepare 'Quest for Peace' information kits to be distributed to districts nationwide.

Junior High and High School divisions, where signatures will be collected from all who wish to promote peace and work together toward a nonviolent world. All those who sign will receive a very cool Victory Over Violence button and bookmark to commemorate their pledge.

The SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee — with the dedicated and much-appreciated support of many volunteers — have successfully completed the more than 1700 information kits and videos that will be used for this nonviolence campaign. These educational materials are intended to promote greater awareness, introspection and dialogue on how best to address violence in our own lives and the world around us. It is through such discussions, within the SGI and in the community, that we hope to "transform disregard for life" in an effort to truly make the coming millennium a century of peace.

This Victory Over Violence campaign marks a wonderful united effort of the youth division nationwide toward the creation of a more harmonious world. SGI



President Ikeda has asked that we carry out this campaign with joy and see that it is a "resounding success." He states: "Nonviolence is a testament of our humanity. It signifies the triumph of the human spirit." With this in mind, let's each be creative in including our friends and respective communities in our Victory Over Violence seminars.

—STEPHANIE CELANO

Why the YPC Chose the Nonviolence Project

The year was 1995. The New York Youth Peace Committee (YPC) had just finished celebrating the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. A celebration steeped in flowering ideals of peace and brotherhood. But as we contemplated what our next step was as a committee for peace, two events occurred that changed the direction and focus of what would be our next four years.

First, one YPC member had been mugged on his way home from the New York Culture Center. Not long after, another youth division member was murdered on the subway after telling his "gang" he was no longer interested.

The dialogues that ensued were intense and thought-provoking. With discussions focusing on the three poisons of greed, ignorance and anger, we soon came to realize that until the negativity that exists in the human heart is healed, there can be no peace throughout our world, even if the United Nations declares that war is abolished. We asked ourselves what could we, as Buddhists, do to calm the fires of violence that rise from such unhappiness and suffering.

Our journey toward understanding and overcoming violence in this world led to the selection of the nonviolence video and information kit as the YPC's next project.

Experience — Sarah Grosso, New York

I Survived a Violent Crime

On Sept. 13, 1997, my life was changed forever. I had transferred to a new school, where the students were unfriendly and consumed with appearances. My old school had more of a feeling of community; students and professors were friendly, and the environment was healthy.

At my new school, I felt really isolated and

under tremendous academic pressure to perform. This is why, when a seemingly nice young man asked me out, I agreed. I thought it would be nice to have a friendly person to talk to. Because my studies were always my first priority, I gave little time and attention to dating.

The plan was to go to the movies. We never

arrived at the theater. Early on, it became clear that all he wanted was sex. I repeatedly said no to his advances. I didn't want to be rude, so I just kept saying, "No, no, no." He wouldn't listen to me at all; my words meant nothing to him.

SEE CRIME, II

SGI President Ikeda's Recent Encouragement on Nonviolence

- Message for the Caltech opening of the "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century" exhibition on May 14:

"The tragedy in Colorado shocked educators, students and parents around the world. But we must not look away from the issue that this painful incident symbolizes. How can we transform disregard for life, which has been deeply deeply rooted in the minds of children through war and violence that plagued the 20th century? This is the most important issue for us as we stand at the

threshold of the 21st century."

- Message at June 27 kickoff for the SGI-USA Youth Grand Culture Festival (July 9 *World Tribune*):

"I have been informed that you have begun a signature-collecting campaign on your own to promote nonviolence. I would like to ask that you proceed with this drive with joy and the freedom to exercise your utmost initiative to make it a resounding success, so that the memories of this campaign will remain forever golden in your hearts...."

- March 16 speech to recent graduates of Soka Junior High and High Schools (July 9 *World Tribune*):

"Ignoring the true purpose and turning schools into places of insult and violence is a terrible thing. Such behavior reflects the state of Animality. If places of learning in Japan and the rest of the world are reduced to arenas of violence, the future of humanity can only be one of never-ending violence.

"The complete rejection of violence is a fundamental prin-

ciple of the Soka Junior and Senior High Schools. If a violent person should appear in the schools' midst, I hope you, the students, will make an effort to discuss the problem and join together to protect your schools from violence.

"The way of true humanity is to love and care for your parents and to avoid worrying or troubling them. You may think your parents are always nagging you, but try to take it in stride, with composure and a big heart...."

The Change Must Begin With Us

BY ED FEASEL

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION LEADER

Recent events of violence have shocked our nation. The school shootings in Colorado and Georgia, the murderous hate crimes in Chicago the July 4th weekend and the overall increase in violence,



especially among youth, have led the entire nation to ask, "What's going on?" In

response to these events, the SGI-USA youth have initiated a signature-collecting campaign called Victory Over Violence. This campaign centers on dialogue about respect for the dignity of life and the understanding that the change must begin with us.

During the time of his youth, Nichiren Daishonin was confronted with the suffering that society around him was undergoing. Japan, at that time, faced an onslaught of natural disasters, epidemics and famine. The people began looking for the cause of their misery, much the way that our nation is now looking for the underlying cause of the violent episodes that occurred recently.

Under these circumstances, the Daishonin wrote the "Rissho Ankoku Ron" and clearly outlined that it was only through creating a change in our own lives that we could affect a change in society.

As SGI President Ikeda states, "The message of the 'Rissho Ankoku Ron,' simply put, is that each of us should accomplish a personal human revolution based on the principle of humanism and thus become key players in realizing social prosperity and world peace" (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, pp. 241-42). The change must begin in our lives, and this will lead to a change in society.

While this principle that change must begin with us may seem obvious, it is some-

thing that I have found very difficult to remember and apply. When we are faced with suffering, it is much easier to look for the cause of our suffering outside ourselves. In the same way, we end up looking for the solution outside ourselves.

Buddhism teaches, however, that our lives have infinite potential and value, and that when we tap this potential we can transform our situation for the better and also transform society. I believe that firmly grasping this principle in our lives and sharing it with others is an important first step toward creating a Victory over Violence.

In the "Rissho Ankoku Ron," the Daishonin explains that, from the perspective of Buddhism, the underlying force behind the disruption of peaceful relations among people is anger. It is anger in the lives of people that causes war; it is what causes violence.

In his "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," President Ikeda states: "Anger is fundamentally an arrogant state of life....

Those in the world of Anger vie with one another in their quest for status and power, spilling blood and doing injury to one another" (July 1998 *Living Buddhism*, pp. 21-31).

Overcoming anger in each of our lives is fundamental to standing up for nonviolence. But, how do we do this? Courage is the key to overcoming our anger. In "Discussions on Youth," President Ikeda states: "The people who have no courage are the ones who steal, who oppress, who kill and maim, who threaten lives with weapons, who wage war. People do such evil things because they are cowards" (May 7 *World Tribune*, p. 1).

With courage, we can overcome our lesser self and awaken to the greater mission that we possess and that others do, too. President Ikeda goes on to explain that compassion is also an important part of courage, and that compassion has, at its roots, a great respect for the dignity of life.

One of the greatest examples of courage and compas-

sion is Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. The Lotus Sutra introduces the actions of this man, who praised every person he met because he understood that every single person has the Buddha nature in their lives.

Armed with this respect for the dignity of each person's life, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging traveled widely and shared with people the spirit and practice of respecting life — despite his being vilified and even stoned.

Based on the great compassion he had for all life, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging met these persecutions and continued to live with courage, setting an example for all to follow.

President Ikeda states, "Courage is the strength to live our lives the right way, to walk the right path" (May 7 *World Tribune*, p. 6). This is exactly how Bodhisattva Never Disparaging lived.

Similarly, we must tap the compassion that exists within our lives and live with courage. Resorting to violence to solve our problems is be-

having cowardly and signifies a weak life. A life of courage, in the end, is also a life of no regrets. As our society seeks an understanding and solution to the recent events of violence, we must firmly engage in dialogue with our peers, with our juniors and seniors, and share the great values of humanism that we embrace.

President Ikeda has traveled the globe exhaustively to share these values throughout the world. He is living up to the spirit of the "Rissho Ankoku Ron" and setting an example for all of us.

In his recent message to us, he states, "What becomes of America will determine what becomes of the world.... And what becomes of America will be determined by its youth" (July 9 *World Tribune*). Now is the time for us to stand up and call out for peace. We must not sit idly by as spectators to a society that is more and more frequently resorting to violence to solve problems. The future is in our hands! Together, let's stand up for a Victory Over Violence. ❧

FROM CRIME, PAGE I

Part of me never returned from that date. That night, I was sexually assaulted. I reported the rape and underwent a rape kit and other tests.

In my case, the police made me feel as if I were the criminal. They said that if I prosecuted this man, my entire sexual history would be discussed, and my actions that night would be scrutinized and judged. I felt that I didn't have anyone to turn to.

To me, legal prosecution was unfathomable. I was broke and isolated, and I felt as though no one in the world would understand. I could not risk having a court find me at fault. The police had me sign a release form to close the case. They said that they would speak to the rapist, who never approached me again. But his image still haunts me.

This was my first experience. That night and the following months were almost unbearable. I could remember being covered in my own blood and feeling physical pain. To survive this, I knew I had to take complete responsibility for my life. No one had ever told me to watch out for this. I never thought that it would happen to me. I was terrified that my family would find out and disown me or call me names.

Soon after the rape, I read a magazine article that motivated me to get tested for HIV. The article showed that large numbers of young women in my age group were becoming infected with the HIV virus at an alarming rate. I didn't know my attacker's history, so he could have given me any number of sexually transmitted diseases. Fortunately, the HIV test was negative.

Unfortunately, I was living upstairs from where the rapist worked. He was there every day from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., as well as on the weekends. I couldn't even go to the store or the Laundromat for fear

of seeing him or his friends. I couldn't sleep or eat; I was literally shaking when walking down the street or going into stores. I changed my whole schedule around. My daily life became unbearable. It was imperative that I move out as soon as possible.

I determined to move and used my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to help me take the actions I needed to get out of the apartment. I chanted a great deal and held overnight chanting sessions with the goal of getting out of that apartment. By Friday of the same week, I had moved into my new apartment. I was now living only seven blocks from an SGI-USA culture center. I went for evening prayer and other religious activities every night. I was so close to the edge that I needed to be there and hear people chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to bring myself back to life.

This experience has filled me with compassion for what rape survivors have lived through — those lucky enough to have survived an attack. It has also given me a fighting spirit to stand up and fight for rape to be perceived as a serious violent crime and for rapists to be perceived as violent criminals. I want all rape survivors to know that they are not alone and help them get the justice I was discouraged from seeking.

Coming so close to death, I have reevaluated my life and learned to mourn the loss I experienced. In individual and group therapy, I have begun to understand myself better as a woman and my feelings about the rape. The rage and pain are coming out. They are only something that can be healed in time.

I am so fortunate to have my life, when others have lost theirs. In the process of overcoming this experience, I learned to take responsibility for my life. By creating value out of the rape, I learned to deal with the fear that had grown inside me. It was a fear of life. I now have supreme respect for the dignity of all life. ❧

Quest for Peace

What's in the Kit?

By YVETTE EDMOND AND DARIN NELLIS
SGI-USA YPC LEADERS

Violence! It's everywhere we look — in our schools, homes, neighborhoods, places of work, throughout our country and abroad. Not only is there the physical violence that we see every day, but there is also passive violence, such as disrespect of another person's life. It has become impossible to escape.

To address this alarming escalation of violence and decreasing respect for life, the SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee has created a video and information kit, titled "Quest For Peace: Working Together Toward A Non-violent World."

Initially conceived of in New York by YPC volunteers, the final information kit and video are a result of the efforts of more than 35 youth in New York, San Francisco and Los

Angeles who spent hundreds of hours researching and compiling the kit and writing multiple storyboard drafts, interviewing youth, locating footage, filming, creating music and editing the video. Many adult division members also helped in compiling the kit and finding footage for the video.

How To Use This Video and Information Kit

The purpose of this information kit is to create greater awareness and spark dialogue on the topic of violence. The video contains provocative images and topical monologues that illustrate violence in our world today.

The information kit contains statistics, experiences, activities, resources and articles. We suggest that the video be shown and then a discussion on violence be facilitated using the information in the kit.

For example, a person wanting to facilitate a discussion on youth violence could first, prior to the discussion, go through the kit and pick out statistics, experiences, resources and articles on youth violence. He or she could then host a meeting on the topic of youth violence by showing the video, sharing the statistics and experiences, and facilitating the group through an activity.

The video and the information kit are designed to provide each individual with enough material to host small or large group discussion meetings on the topic of violence. We hope that SGI-USA members will use this as an opportunity to create community meetings and participate in neighborhood and school anti-violence assemblies.

The information kit, however, is still a work in progress. We hope those using it will feel free to add to each section new articles, experiences, statistics and activities as they are found. We have also included a section called local resources and ask that members add the names, addresses and phone numbers of local organizations that aid survivors of violence or act positively in the struggle for peace.

In keeping with our 1999 SGI-USA theme of Victory in the Community and the upcoming International Decade for the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World (2001–2010), as declared by the UN General Assembly, please use this video and information kit to act locally while contributing to the cause for peace on a global scale.

The "Quest for Peace" video was created as a vehicle for stimulating dialogue on the topic of violence and how we can create a peaceful world through the power of one person's conviction and determination to change the world.

The following information has been provided to give you a glimpse of what you will see in the video:

Violence:

- In America each day, 33 women are raped by someone holding a gun,



Yvette Edmond and Darin Nellis, SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee leaders.

- 570 robberies are committed by criminals using a handgun,

- 1,000 assaults result from the use of a handgun.

- And every year in America, guns kill 40,000 people and maim another 100,000.

But are we becoming desensitized to it? Is all the physical violence really such a big deal to any of us anymore? During the introduction of the "Quest for Peace" video, various youth recite the following portion of SGI President Ikeda's "Sun of Jiyu Over a New Land" poem:

Holding high the standard of humanity, we advance —
from divisiveness to union,
from conflict to coexistence,
from hatred to fraternity.

But how do we bridge these gaps? How can we heal? As President Ikeda also expressed in another excerpt from the same poem:

As each group seeks its separate roots and origins...

Continue your uncompromising quest for your truer roots...

Beyond all borders, beyond all differences of gender and race...

If one reaches back to these fundamental roots, all become friends and comrades.

Our hope is that this quote, which is shown at the end of the video, can become a touchstone for meaningful dialogue about how to move beyond the violence of the 20th century toward the 21st century — "the century of life."

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of Nonviolence, taught that passive violence fuels the fire

of physical violence. Passive violence includes those simple and inconspicuous things that we do to one another to disrespect each others' lives — like criticism. "Quest for Peace" asks the viewer, "In what ways are each one of us violent?" And, "If I am violent, then what can I do to make a difference?"

But even if I can change my behavior, what power does that have in changing others? Many youth have stood up in the past with indomitable conviction and commitment, and successfully changed the world. An example is Iqbal Masih, the 12-year-old from Pakistan who was sold at the age of four for \$12 into bonded labor and chained to a loom in a filthy carpet factory for six years. Iqbal stood up for justice and, after freeing himself, fought for the freedom of 3,000 other children in bonded labor, awaking the world to the plight child slavery.

As President Ikeda has said, "A great revolution in just a single individual can positively change society and even change the world." Iqbal is a great example of how a single person without any special authority or prestige can transform his or her existence and be the catalyst for the whole world to change.

This is the story of "Quest for Peace."

The YPC hopes that SGI-USA members will utilize this video, the information kit and the pledge to build bonds of friendship and trust with their friends in society and to touch people's lives with the power of the SGI's spirit to reach out to those that are suffering the most.

Let's have a resounding Victory Over Violence!



In Each Information Kit:

- Four lessons in passive violence that Arun Gandhi learned from his grandfather
- How a man assigned to blow up tanks in the Gulf War didn't take even one life
- How many countries the United States has bombed since World War II
- How many violent crimes occur in an hour
- How to facilitate a tolerance exercise
- What SGI President Ikeda thinks about school violence

A Pledge of Nonviolence

By JIMMY KING, BOBBIE STEMPE, STEVE MORTAN & NOBUKO KOBAYASHI
SGI-USA JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL DIVISION LEADERS

Due to the recent tragic events that have taken place in our country and around the world such as in Littleton, Colo., and Kosovo we wanted to come up with a way to reach out to society and take action regarding violence. We started to discuss with members around the country about how we could take this positive stand against violence and make a difference in society.


It came about that many of the members wanted to take some form of concrete action against the increasing tide of violence in our country. The idea of the pledge came up and we felt that it was the most positive way for everyone to get involved.

Our idea was that people would be able to personally decide to make a difference by signing this pledge and then take the responsibility to encourage others to also make a difference. We had a great discussion about the ideas we wanted to convey and the feeling behind it. Using the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's Abolition 2000 Petition as an example we came up with the three point pledge. The first point was to respect our own life and not be violent toward ourselves. The second point was to respect the lives of others. And the last point was to encourage and in-

spire hope in others through our own example.

The goals of this campaign are to heighten the awareness of the different forms of violence through meaningful dialogue and to inspire a lifelong commitment from each individual to pledge against all forms of violence.

We hope to see the junior high and high school members put all of their efforts into making this campaign really successful. We want the members to be as creative as they can and if they want, to use suggestions from the "Quest For Peace" information kit, which is very inspirational.

Through the information kit we learned that violence doesn't always occur in a physical form. It is perpetrated by many of us every day through the words that we speak and our actions. We will begin this Victory Over Violence campaign in every district throughout the SGI-USA during the month of August. We should also feel free to create other exciting arenas where we can share the Victory Over Violence drive both in- and outside of our organization. These pledges will be distributed to all districts throughout July. Through each person's efforts, we can truly make a difference in the way society views violence and make a positive stand toward a more loving and peaceful society. 



SGI-USA's Junior High and High School Division leaders.

My Pledge of Victory Over Violence

I _____
(print name)

- will value my own life. Recognizing that a lack of self-identity and hope for the future lay at the roots of all violence, I will reach beyond my limitations, taking concrete steps each day to uncover my real potential. I will never give up on my dreams, even if they seem impossible.
- will respect all life. Recognizing that violence comes in many forms, I will not isolate myself but will create an environment where others feel comfortable and can be themselves. I will see beyond superficial differences and reflect on my own behavior.
- will inspire hope in others. With courage, I will resolutely stand up against violence, be it verbal, physical or passive and teach others through my own example. I will support others and encourage them to follow their dreams.

_____ (signature)

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