



**EXPERIENCE:**  
John Cannella  
challenges  
his multiple  
illnesses.  
page 2

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA 90401 and at additional mailing offices  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: SGI-USA Subscriptions, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427

No. 3266

\$2.00

OCTOBER 29, 1999

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S OCT. 7 SPEECH

## To Fight Injustice— This Is Buddhism

SGI President Ikeda says, 'To fight passionately against injustice, to rebuke, attack and condemn it to the end—this is Buddhism and the correct path of humanity.'

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



An unweiling ceremony for a statue of the first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, is held Sept. 25 in the Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Park in Curitiba City, Brazil.

The following is part one of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 38th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Japan, Oct. 7.

second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's birth, the 40th anniversary of President Ikeda's inauguration as third Soka Gakkai president and the 25th anniversary of the SGI's founding.

Next year will be the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding. The fact that we will proudly celebrate this momentous milestone is thanks to the earnest efforts of each of you.

It was announced earlier in the meeting that the Soka Gakkai's theme for 2000 will be "Raising the Curtain on the 21st Century—The Year of Youth." Next year also marks the centennial of

A leading intellect has remarked that the Soka Gakkai has achieved in 70 years what it would normally take 500 years to accomplish.

The SGI's development is toward worldwide kosen-rufu, toward lasting peace. We are working to make this world "safe and tranquil" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 230). There is no more noble organization than ours.

You are truly emissaries of the Buddha; each one of you is diligently pursuing the bodhisattva way. How mystic is your pres-

ence! Otherwise, we could never have accomplished the amazing development of the kosen-rufu movement that we see today.

Possessing a lofty mission, we of the SGI have charged ahead and striven tenaciously to achieve kosen-rufu, just as Nichiren Daishonin taught. There can be no doubt that we will enjoy the eternal protection and praise of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the 10 directions. Please have absolute confidence that inexhaustible benefit will flow forth from your lives throughout eternity as a result of all your hard work for kosen-rufu.

Today, many people around the world have a true appreciation for our activities. Many praising and supporting those activities

and helping to publicize them. The SGI has gained widespread trust even in Korea, a country that has a long history of anti-Japanese sentiment, due to the barbarous acts perpetrated against its people by the Japanese in former times. And the same can be said of China and in Russia.

**Our preparations for the 21st century are now complete.**

A little while ago, I received a notice from Brazil announcing that the municipal assembly of Pindamonhangaba—a city of wonderful history and scenic beauty in the state of São Paulo—has passed a resolution, signed by the mayor and assembly president, naming one of the city's main roads Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Boulevard and another street nearby Josei Toda Avenue. Both thoroughfares, I understand, are located in a quiet, new residential area.

Incidentally, last June, the city of Pindamonhangaba presented me with a Certificate of Commendation.

On that occasion, City Councilor Noriaki Odan said, "This commendation contains our wish for the further flourishing of the SGI's peace and cultural activities in our city and for Dr. Ikeda's philosophy to spread from our city to the rest of the world."

There are now roads named

after Mr. Makiguchi in four Brazilian cities and roads named after Mr. Toda in two.

In Brazil, there is also a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Park in Curitiba and a Josei Toda Park in São Jose dos Campos, while a Daisaku Ikeda Peace Park is under construction in Londrina.

Internationally, the SGI has many friends and supporters. But in Japan, the majority of people still have a grossly distorted view of our movement. In Japan, we are envied, attacked, maligned and abused—exactly in the same way described in the Daishonin's writings. The Japanese lack the capacity to discern what is of immediate, vital importance for humankind and for their own humanity. They remain forever stuck in their insular mind-set.

Nevertheless, out of his deep compassion, the Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, chose to be born in Japan—a land populated by the most base, perverse of people, where persecution of the Law would be its harshest. Even in this land steeped with the five impurities [of the age, of desire, of the people, of thought and of life itself], close to 10 million Soka Gakkai members, Bodhisattvas of the Earth, have built a solid base for kosen-rufu.

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 4

### FNCC Conferences for 2000



See page 6 for a complete schedule of conferences to be held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center for the year 2000.

# The Stuff Enlightenment Is Made Of

**John Cannella reveals his enlightenment through his multiple illnesses.**

By JIM GIRARD  
NEW YORK

The first thing John Cannella does upon awakening is unshackle his hands from splints. Then, with his right hand, he grabs the trapeze bar hanging over his bed while lifting himself to a sitting position with his left. He removes the thermal socks he must wear during the night to prevent circulatory loss in his feet (they once turned black and nearly had to be amputated).

John then backs up into the wheelchair kept close to his bed, and with great difficulty, locks its swing-away footrest and wheels himself to the bathroom. The simple act of using the bathroom for most, is an arduous feat for John — one he can never take for granted.

He returns to the bedroom to take a profusion of vitamins and herbs, which he has strategically distributed all over his apartment for convenient access.

After he eats some fruit, he cleans his altar while reading SGI President Ikeda's *Daily Guidance*. Then he does gongyo.

The 56-year-old Cannella has a degenerative nerve condition that has paralyzed him from head to toe. He cannot move his legs at all. He also has a heart condition, arteriosclerosis, carpal tunnel syndrome, dental problems, and arthritis. His body is a minefield of maladies, and a cut on his index finger could easily trip-wire fatal complications.

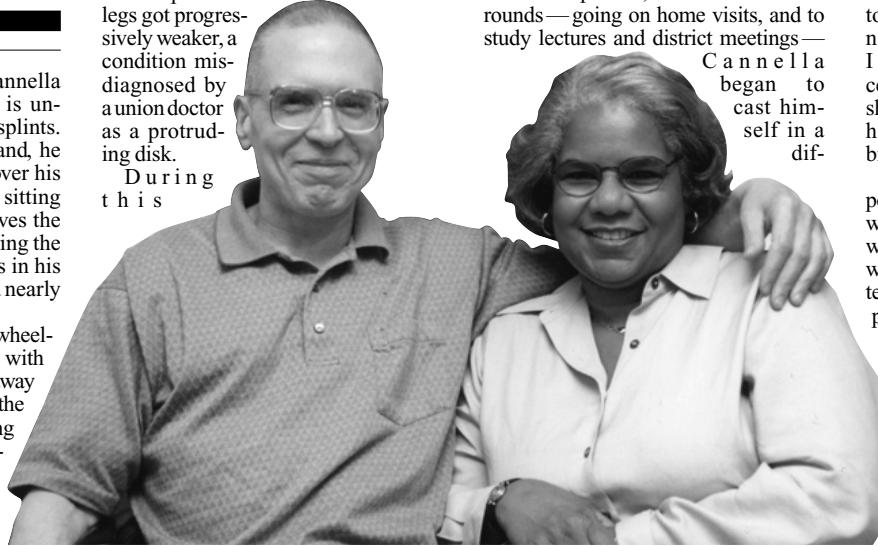
A man with such obstacles could easily retreat into despair and cultivate the idea that he is the helpless victim of destiny. In fact, John had harbored these dark thoughts long before his illness, starting in childhood. "You know how you feel when you go see a movie and the images just keep flashing at you and you don't know what's going to happen next? I felt like my life was like that. I didn't know who I was or why I was here."

Cannella grew up in a working-class family in lower Manhattan, to a father who berated him for playing with black children and whose rage paralyzed him with fear. John's parents divorced when he was a teenager, and after high school, John enlisted in the Army, joining the 82nd Airborne Division.

After injuring his back parachuting, he became addicted to painkillers. He also noticed that his legs would occasionally collapse while he stood in the ranks. An Army physician asked him if he wished to see a psychiatrist. "I asked, 'Would it help?,' and the doctor said, 'No, not really.' So I said, 'Why waste our time?'" Then the doctor wrote, "Patient refused psychiatric treatment."

It's no wonder that, soon after being discharged, racked with pain and dispirited by his encounter with the military's dehumanizing, *Catch-22* ethos, Cannella took to heroin. Not long afterward, he was arrested and lost his job as an elevator operator. His legs got progressively weaker, a condition misdiagnosed by a union doctor as a protruding disk.

During this



John Cannella with his wife, Valerie, at home in New York.

Photo by JEFF JONES

time, he met his first wife, Gilda. "Our marriage was a disaster," he says, "we were both very confused, unhappy people." Despite having two young children, he was still using heroin, the pursuit of which became evermore dangerous.

By 1972, Cannella discovered Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism; an actress he saw on a talk show introduced him, as did a friend's uncle. He started chanting and immediately Cannella's reality began to shift.

"I was staying with my mother in a municipal housing project. She lived on the third floor, and the two elevators always were broken. Since I was in a wheelchair, one of the first things I chanted about was for the elevators to be fixed. One day after chanting, I went out to ring for the elevator and someone came out, and said, 'I'm sorry, the elevator is broken.' I thanked him, but just stayed there, chanting. Suddenly, the elevator came. I got in, went down, and got out in the lobby. There were many people there waiting for the elevator to be fixed and, boy, did they ever look at me strangely!"

Despite the fact that he now seemed to have his own private elevator, Cannella still harbored doubts about the practice. "Chanting to something — the Gohonzon — felt like idol worship, like chanting to a rock," he says.

Yet he continued to chant hours a day, knocking down obstacles like tennpins. First, he kicked his heroin habit much sooner than expected, despite initially being given an overdose of methadone that, he says, "left me in a coma 16 hours a day." Then, one day, while in the bathtub, he felt sensation

in his legs for the first time in years. Finally, he and Gilda (who had been separated for years), were granted the divorce they'd long desired when the hitherto-draconian New York State divorce laws were liberalized overnight.

Most important, as he made his SGI rounds — going on home visits, and to study lectures and district meetings —

Cannella began to cast himself in a different

stumbling through the *jigage* (prayers), Valerie took the time to reciprocate John's feelings for her, and they were married. Although he didn't want to invite his father to the wedding, Valerie (who's also African American), insisted on it. "I told my father about my plan to marry Valerie, all right, and he didn't talk to me for a number of years. But I was determined to have both a successful marriage and a strong relationship with my father. So I kept calling him, and little by little, we started breaking through."

During this time, X-rays revealed a portentous dark spot in John's hip, which was diagnosed as prostate cancer that was metastasizing. His initial reaction was to consider the news a death sentence. He vowed to face the end with repose, bolstered by SGI President Ikeda's lectures on life and death and a quote by Nichiren Daishonin from "The Dragon Gate": "In the end, no one can escape death...you should be willing to offer your life for the Lotus Sutra. Think of this offering as a drop of dew rejoining the ocean a speck of dust returning to the earth" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 251).

But then something in him began to rebel against this resignation, and he recalled the end of that same passage: "Our desire is to share this blessing equally with all people, and we together with them will attain Buddhahood" (ibid.). He decided to fight valiantly and encourage people by overcoming this obstacle.

Valerie was distraught at the diagnosis, but John told her that they should make his fight against cancer a joyful kosen-

ferent part, no longer the angst-ridden pessimist. "One day I was sitting in the lobby of the community center, and it occurred to me: 'I know who I am now. I'm a Buddhist, working for kosen-rufu.' And as I studied, I began to grasp that the way I used to see the world wasn't true, that we weren't doomed after all, and I was elated. I felt, 'This is it, this is the solution.'"

Inspired by this epiphany, John decided to repair his relationship with his father, whom he hadn't seen since his marriage.

"I began to realize we were a lot more similar than I'd thought, that he was a human being, not a scary monster, and that he was really suffering. I vowed I would tell him about Nam-myohorenge-kyo. So I chanted every day for three months. Finally, I called him and asked him to say it with me, and he did." Although his father refused to practice, Cannella had taken a major step.

Chanting also helped Cannella realize that his resolve to live as a once-bit-ten, twice-shy bachelor was a sham, and that it was his nature to have a wife.

"For years, I'd been admiring a woman named Valerie who worked at the hospital where I went for clinics. I loved the way she looked and the sound of her voice, but I had such poor self-esteem, I figured she'd never want to be with me. One day, though, I decided to invite her to a Buddhist meeting. When she told me was too busy to come, my leaders agreed to host a special meeting, just for her, which really touched her."

Teaching someone gongyo hardly ranks with roses and champagne, but it became the foundation of John and Valerie's unconventional courtship. While

PLEASE SEE EXPERIENCE, 3

**World**  
**TRIBUNE** The  
SGI-USA's  
Weekly  
Newspaper

The *World Tribune* (692-720) is published weekly by the SGI-USA, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427; (310) 260-8900; FAX (310) 260-8910; E-mail: wt@sgi-usa.org Subscriptions Office: (800) 835-4558; FAX (310) 260-8970; E-mail: SGIUSUBS@aol.com

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA, and at additional mailing offices. Return To: SGI-USA Subscriptions, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427

Subscription Rates (subject to state taxes) \$15 for Three Months; \$28 for Six Months; \$50 for One Year; \$85 for Two Years; \$110 for Three Years

Printed on 100% recycled paper

Copyright © 1999 by SGI-USA.  
All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.

# Keeping a Seeking Mind

## PERSPECTIVE

By **BILL MANHEIM**  
LOS ANGELES

Why is receiving encouragement in faith so important for our Buddhist practice? How does it affect our daily lives? I have been practicing for 24 years. I still remember what was said to me from my first encounter with an SGI leader at a discussion meeting. That encouragement was given with such thoughtfulness, I was inspired. That encounter set in motion my willingness to start chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and participating in SGI activities and the reason I have continued, in part, until this very day.



Due to life's continuous daily challenges, however, it's very easy to become discouraged when faced with situations that cause us suffering related to our families, jobs, health or relationships or whatever. Sometimes we become so unhappy over these situations that we can dig a hole that we cannot seem to get out of.

My tendency is to blame. I have not always viewed my problems and negative situations clearly and I've needed direction. Without someone to act as a catalyst, helping me to see the nature of my life, I can become even more unhappy.

As a security guard, I struggled with my perception of my job. I was not proud of my work. When I received some specific encouragement and direction, I was able to make a leap in faith and within two days I changed my problem — one with which I struggled for over 10 years! This senior in faith allowed me to see my attitude toward work and how I needed to change internally before I could expect to see a change externally. I hadn't been able to see

this before I spoke to someone whom I trusted to help me get back on track.

As a result of my change in attitude, I got a new position that had all the components and benefits I was looking for. I now do the same type of job, but it's for the United States government and it has much more prestige, security and respect. Although these qualities can be important in a job, I now realize that I had to have a change of perception in order to appreciate my new job and all these added benefits. I realized, among other things, that I do not have to look outside my life for self-esteem.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that both gain and loss of benefit depend greatly on a seeking mind. Since the Gohonzon doesn't talk, we come to understand the functions of our Buddhist practice in relation to our daily lives through chanting daimoku and/or receiving faith encouragement. SGI President Ikeda states: "Whether you have positive or negative influences in your practice of faith will determine whether you turn toward happiness or unhappiness...you should always cherish the Soka Gakkai, the greatest source of positive influences for kosen-rufu" (*Daily Guidance*, vol. 4, p. 249).

In my case, through receiving encouragement, I believe I was protected from my arrogance. As I said, it allowed things about my nature to be uncovered and revealed, and it prevented me from developing a distorted view of life. Based on this experience that I've gained in faith, I now chant with more appreciation to the Gohonzon and I can encourage others who have similar problems. Additionally, I feel I have a better understanding of the mentor-disciple relationship.

I'd like to conclude with a thank you to SGI President Ikeda and to the many SGI leaders that I've received encouragement from. Forming relationships with people like this has enabled me to appreciate my practice and my life so much more. **WT**

### FROM EXPERIENCE, 2

rufu activity. Wherever he went, instead of depressing people, he often left them chuckling with his jubilant confidence.

In the end, John had the last laugh on his doctors, when his "cancer" he so feared turned out to be arthritis.

Despite his infirmities, Cannella keeps his day-planner filled to the margins. In addition to learning the piano, he's embarked on a study of Chinese so he can extend Buddhism's message of liberation to his many immigrant neighbors. He's a vice district leader and publications representative of Clinton Street District. Valerie, too, is an SGI leader, and John's first wife, Gilda — "the first person I introduced to Buddhism who receive the Gohonzon" — is a vice chapter leader in the Bronx.

There are times in Cannella's life, such as when his father comes over to eat mussels with him and Valerie, that he can't imagine being more blessed.

Then he recalls his mentor, President Ikeda.

"He says that we should share our vision with our members. So this is my dream: that the day will come when we've introduced so many people in the neighborhood to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, that the news reporters will report that there's this area of downtown Manhattan where the people have totally eliminated crime, and they'll ask us how this was done and we'll say, 'Ever since we started practicing Buddhism...?' And I want to do this on my two feet."

Cannella's ambition, like his heart, is huge, and his determination unquestioned. As he puts it: "This illness is very severe. It's constantly at war with me, and I'm constantly refusing to let it overtake me. Yet, I feel no doubt that this is definitely the stuff that your enlightenment is made of." **WT**

At the  
click  
of a  
mouse



Two years of  
World Tribune  
and Living Buddhism  
with the new  
"pubs 97-98" CD-ROM

### No more searching through stacks of papers or magazines!

- GREAT for study, research and meeting preparations.
- CLICK on the perfect encouragement for yourself or a friend.
- AS FAST as your fingertips — the past two years in searchable, printable formats. Type in a key word or author and up pops a list of articles. Click on one and go straight to what you need.

Limited  
numbers,  
so order the  
PUBS 97-98  
CD-ROM  
today!

Now Available at: SGI-USA BOOKSTORES

or from the SGI-USA MAIL ORDER CENTER

By mail at: 8811 Aviation Blvd., Inglewood CA 90301

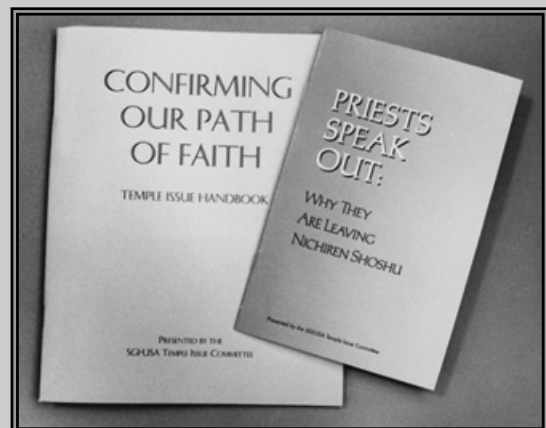
By e-mail at: sgjusamoc@aol.com • By phone at: 800-626-1313 Mail Order No.0510

\$40

## New Books on the Temple Issue

*Confirming Our Path of Faith: Temple Issue Handbook* is now available free of charge through the organization. This 62-page resource is intended to help all the members of SGI-USA understand the essentials of the temple issue and the true history of Nichiren Shoshu.

Also available free of charge through the organization is a new 12-page pamphlet called *Priests Speak Out: Why They Are Leaving Nichiren Shoshu*. This pamphlet contains letters written to Nichiren Shoshu High Priest Nikken by two chief priests who recently seceded from the school. They express their deep disillusionment, based on the Daishonin's teachings, with the current high priest and state of the priesthood.



## FROM SPEECH, I

Our preparations for the 21st century are complete.

For our countries, for peace, for the eternal Law and for our own happiness, let us get in solid rhythm with the universe and boldly give our all, as we head toward the 21st century. Let us fight intrepidly and lead lives of utmost meaning and value.

### A leader's job is to bring happiness and joy to others.

In *The Pathway of Life*, Tolstoy declares: "When a man comes to know the true faith, he is like unto a man lighting a lamp in a dark chamber. All things become clear, and joy enters his soul." The great Russian writer stressed the importance of "true faith," keenly aware that the world teemed with people of counterfeit faith — nowhere more so than in the clergy.

All things become clear, Tolstoy says, when we base ourselves on true faith. We can see what is good and bad, what is happiness and misfortune, what it is we must do; everything becomes clear, as if illuminated by a bright light. This way of thinking strikes a chord with Buddhism.

*The Daishonin writes: "When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated. Similarly, when one knows the Lotus Sutra, he understands the meaning of all worldly affairs" (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 82).*

When you know true faith, Tolstoy states further, joy enters the depths of your being. Your heart shines brightly, becoming light and carefree. You are kind to others. You bring comfort and peace of mind to all you meet. You brighten their spirits.

In contrast, a leader who is always gloomy, depressed and unsmiling, who behaves arrogantly and lashes out at people emotionally, is not a person of true faith.

As leaders in the SGI, we meet with our members and juniors to be of service to them, not to ourselves. A

leader's job is to bring happiness and joy to others. Wisdom wells forth when we chant with the determination to do our best to bring joy to the members, to instill in them enthusiasm and help them become happy. Such compassion increases our good fortune.

If you offend and turn people off, you are only making bad causes for yourself. Unfortunate indeed is the organization that is led by self-centered leaders.

Let us advance with the wisdom and joy in our hearts that befits people of genuine faith.

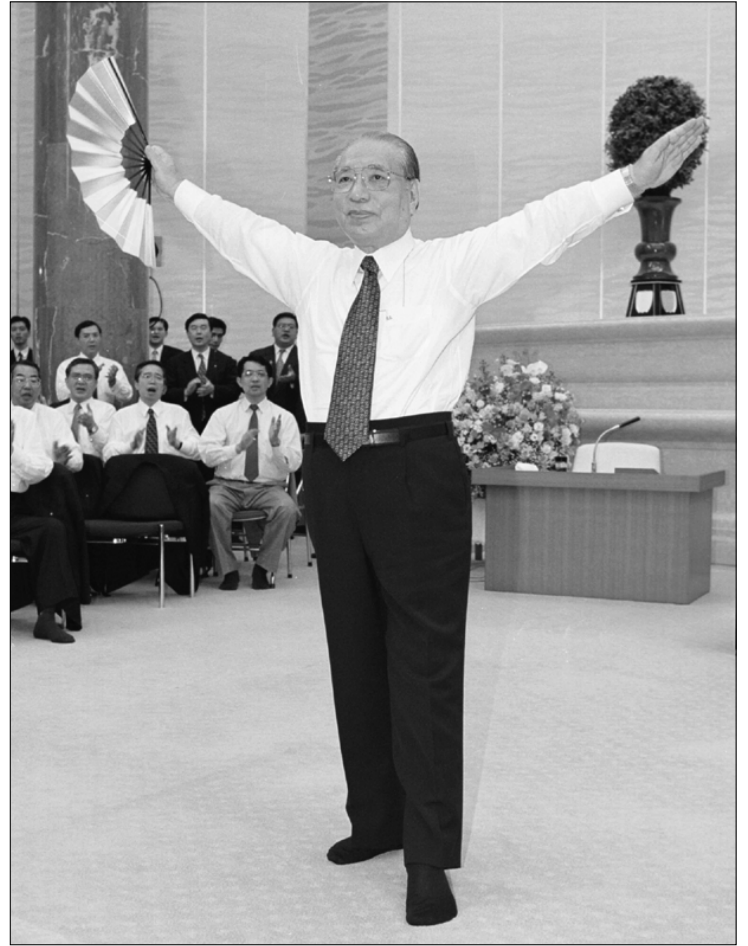
In *The Laws*, the Greek philosopher Plato declares, "When you have to deal with complete and unmanageably vicious corruption, you must let your anger off its leash." To launch our anger at the incorrigibly corrupt and evil — this is also the Soka Gakkai spirit. It resonates with Plato's philosophy.

The Daishonin writes, "Anger can be either good or evil" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 584). Being fired up with anger toward evil and injustice constitutes good. When we no longer have this blazing anger toward iniquity, it is a sign that we have lost our commitment to justice and truth. It signals our spiritual death.

There is no benefit, no joy, no happiness in the hearts of those who are spiritually dead. To fight passionately against injustice, to rebuke, attack and condemn it to the end — this is Buddhism and the correct path of humanity.

In the pioneering days of our movement, our members eagerly went out and fought pitched battles of words with unjust, corrupt individuals. They brimmed with fighting spirit. Someone commented to me the other day: "Our youth division has grown extremely subdued and passive of late, and we have people among the top women's division leaders who act as if they're royalty. By comparison, the pioneer members of the Many Treasures Group are far more lively and vigorous. They are like youth in the very best sense!"

As we move into the 21st century, let us make our organization blaze afresh with the true Soka Gakkai spirit!



SGI President Ikeda leads the Soka Gakkai song 'Ifu Dodo' (Indomitable Spirit) on Oct. 7 at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall.

### The only way to succeed is to be patient and persistent.

Today is also the Tohoku General Meeting! Many members have made the long way from the Tohoku region [in the northeastern part of Honshu, the largest of Japan's four main islands] to be with us today. Thank you very much for coming.

Seventy-seven years ago, in December 1922, the world-famous physicist Albert Einstein visited the Tohoku area. [He visited Sendai, the capital of Miyagi Prefecture, and delivered a lecture at Tohoku University.] The previous month, he had given a lecture at Keio University in Tokyo, which first and second Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda attended. Mr. Toda spoke about that occasion many, many times.

Of the Tohoku people, Einstein writes in his journal: "Excellent people. Bright, modest, with a love for nature and the arts. I'll never forget them." Trust Einstein to perceive so astutely the virtues of the Tohoku people!

Tohoku is full of people who, from the moment you get to know them, you never forget. It is home to many people of outstanding character and warm humanity.

Tohoku boasts an illustrious past: Gold was mined there, and it was a leading cultural center in ancient times.

Its prosperity, however, made it a constant target of would-be invaders.

That which is successful and prosperous is targeted and attacked — this same principle is at work in the onslaughts against our organization.

In any event, the Tohoku people have persevered again and again through difficulties and hardships. [Tohoku is a region where deeply entrenched traditions, customs and prejudices persist.] That is why I fervently pray for a new era of prosperity for Tohoku.

Einstein once said: "It is...not astonishing that the struggle against prejudices cannot have a quick success. But we can work for a slow success in expressing truth in our daily life whenever occasion arises" (*Einstein: A Life*, p. 367). He acknowledges that the fight to overcome prejudice is difficult indeed. He says that the only way to succeed in this endeavor is to be patient and persistent, seizing every opportunity to speak out for justice.

This is precisely what we are doing in our SGI activities. We are exerting ourselves with patience and persistence.

Tohoku members, I have heard in great detail about your noble efforts. I want to share some of those achievements with all who have gathered today.

Koromogawa Village in Iwate Prefecture is famous as the place where the noted 12th-century Japanese warlord

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

## Good Fortune and Benefit

From This Speech:

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "The *ku* [of *kudoku* (benefit)] means to extinguish evil, and *doku* means to bring forth good" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). Good is not simply a matter of doing charitable deeds or living piously; it includes fighting evil and injustice. By rebuking evil, we expiate our negative karma and bring forth good fortune and benefit. This is the meaning of benefit in the Daishonin's Buddhism. Happiness is born when we fight injustice.

1. Why do you think the Daishonin taught that benefit has two parts: extinguishing evil and bringing forth good?
2. Why does President Ikeda say that "good is not simply a matter of doing charitable deeds or living piously"? Is this different from what you were taught growing up?
3. Why does extinguishing evil expiate our negative karma? How does that work?
4. Have you had your own experience of fighting injustice that made you happier?

# Northern Ohio Members Participate in Interfaith Event at Grafton Correctional Institution



The World Peace Rhythm Project: (l-r) Percussionists Mary Gibala, Fred Goodnight, Addie Lewis, Frances Edwards, Ky Sutton, Carol Hasek, Linda Adams and Estelle Goodnight were the featured performers at Grafton Correctional Institution, Oct. 3.

Drums in tow, seven members of the World Peace Rhythm Project and their director, Fred Goodnight, rushed out of the Northern Ohio Area Community Center all revved up from the morning's World Peace Prayer Meeting. It was Sunday, Oct. 3. Destination: Grafton Correctional Institution, where the vibrant group of percussionists were the featured performers at a unique gathering of inmates and visitors.

The first of hopefully many such meetings focused on two questions: What and how does your faith's perspective respect the dignity of life? And what steps does your faith take to achieve this in society? Each of the six religious faiths that practice within the prison chapel had a representative respond to the questions.

Mr. Goodnight gave the SGI perspective, and Michael Baker, a longtime SGI member and Grafton inmate, answered audience questions.

The attendees engaged in dialogue, which enabled them to learn a little about one another's beliefs. After being served

a light snack by Grafton inmates, everyone got to meet one another on a one-to-one basis and discuss faith further.

The entire program was videotaped, and the warden's office will monitor inmate interactions to see if, as a result of this event, there is a lessening of tension in the prison. If the answer is yes, a recommendation will be made to repeat this program in other Ohio State Prisons.

Since limited space allowed less than 150 attendees — out of a total institution population of more than 1,500 inmates — there's a good chance that the first prison the program would be repeated at is Grafton itself. Then, the people who were unable to attend the first time will have an opportunity to do so.

Estelle Goodnight, a member of the World Peace Rhythm Project, verbalized the feelings everyone in the group had about the visit to Grafton: "I was so excited about being part of this program and being able to bring something new into people's lives. I think what we all did today is truly what kosen-rufu and our mission is all about."

—MURRAY I. SINGER

Minamoto Yoshitsune met his death. In Koromogawa, where our Light of Friendship District is located, more than 60 percent of the households currently subscribe to the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily paper.

Kamiiso Chapter, situated on the Tsugaru peninsula, Aomori Prefecture, regularly maintains the *Seikyo Shimbun* readership at more than 20 percent of local residents. The town mayor and many other citizens are long-standing readers.

Odate Sunshine Chapter in Odate City, Akita Prefecture, is a new chapter formed just last month. In one month, every block organization in the chapter has already introduced one new member to the Soka Gakkai. Congratulations!

Members in the town of Yamanobe, Yamagata Prefecture, centering around the women's division, have been conducting an energetic dialogue campaign with temple members to great effect. I understand that through their efforts, the former chief lay representative of the Hokkeko in their area decided to leave the temple organization.

In the town of Naruko, Miyagi Prefecture, each block has introduced one new member to Buddhism. Yumoto District, in particular, has expanded readership of the *Seikyo Shimbun* to more than 50 percent of local residents in the area.

And the members in Iwaki City in Fukushima Prefecture — in just the last month — have succeeded in bringing 48 households away from the Hokkeko organization.

The phenomenal development in each area is the result of the

## members' efforts to confront injustice.

The phenomenal development we are seeing in each area is the result of the great good that has followed from the members' efforts to confront and denounce injustice.

The Daishonin writes, "The *ku* [of *kudoku* (benefit)] means to extinguish evil, and *doku* means to bring forth good" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762).

Good is not simply a matter of doing charitable deeds or living piously; it includes fighting evil and injustice. By rebuking evil, we expiate our negative karma and bring forth good fortune and benefit. This is the meaning of benefit in the Daishonin's Buddhism. Happiness is born when we fight injustice.

The pioneer members of the Many Treasures Group all over Tohoku are truly hale and hearty, their lives radiant. The efforts of the youth division members have also been noteworthy; they are all standing up splendidly.

*In the last two months, the Tohoku young men's division introduced 500 new households to the Daishonin's Buddhism. And in the last month, the Tohoku young women's division increased the subscriptions of the Seikyo Shimbun by 1000 copies.*

I express my deepest respect to the Tohoku members, who are striving so hard in one of the most challenging regions in Japan.

I wholeheartedly praise Tohoku's magnificent advance!

(To be continued)

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S OCT. 16 ENCOURAGEMENT

# 'Regard Obstacles As Peace and Comfort'

*The evening of Oct. 16, SGI President Ikeda attended a representatives conference commemorating Nov. 18, Day of the Soka Gakkai's Founding, in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. The following is a summary of his remarks.*

Nichiren Daishonin's goal was kosen-rufu. Consequently, only faith that strives earnestly for the sake of kosen-rufu constitutes the correct practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism. In the present day, the SGI is the sole organization carrying out this correct practice.

When we dedicate ourselves to advancing kosen-rufu in accord with the Daishonin's teachings, the three obstacles and four devils, as well as the three powerful enemies, will appear without fail. The Daishonin tells us, however, to "regard obstacles as peace and comfort" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750).

It is by fighting and triumphing over the enemies of the Buddha that we ourselves become Buddhas. In sumo wrestling, for instance, one cannot become a Yokozuna, or grand champion, without fighting strong opponents.

Once we have firmly established the life-state of Buddhahood, we can be reborn wherever and in whatever form we desire — in lifetime after lifetime throughout eternity. And every time we are reborn, we will enjoy a state of utter freedom and happiness.

Buddhahood is the state of life of one who is never defeated, one who wins in the end, no matter what happens. All who are striving together earnestly, united in purpose at this crucial time to vanquish the enemies of the Buddha, can establish the state of Buddhahood within their lives in this existence. No effort for the sake of Buddhism is wasted. **BT**

# Schedule of Conferences at the Florida Nature and Culture Center in the Year 2000



No.	Dates	Conference Title	No.	Dates	Conference Title
1	January 13–16	Temple Issue Conference	20	July 6–9	Youth Performing Groups Conference
2	January 20–23	Seniors Group Conference #1 (Japanese Language)	21	July 13–16	Junior High and High School Division Conference
3	January 27–30	To be announced	22	July 20–23	Educators Division Conference
4	February 10–13	Women's Division Conference #1	23	July 27–30	Raising Children (Parents, Teachers, Boys and Girls Coordinators)
5	February 17–20	Japanese Language Conference	24	August 10–13	Women's Division Conference #2
6	February 24–27	Public Relations Bureau Conference	25	August 17–20	Student Division Conference
7	March 9–12	Men's Division Conference #1	26	August 24–27	Men's Division Conference #2
8	March 16–19	Stage Crew Conference	27	September 7–10	Southern Zone & Caribbean Conference
9	March 23–26	Chinese Language Conference	28	September 14–17	Spanish Language Conference #2
10	April 6–9	Spanish Language Conference #1	29	September 21–24	Theme: Enhancing Our Relationship Conference
11	April 13–16	Seniors Group Conference #2 (Japanese Language)	30	October 5–8	Korean Language Conference #2
12	April 20–23	Study Department Conference	31	October 12–15	Study of the Lotus Sutra
13	May 4–7	Service Group Conference (limited participation)	32	October 19–22	Theme: Mentor & Disciple Relationship, Studying President Ikeda's Guidance #2
14	May 11–14	Arts Division Conference	33	November 2–5	Culture Department Conference
15	May 18–21	Theme: Mentor & Disciple Relationship, Studying President Ikeda's Guidance #1	34	November 9–12	Youth Division Support Groups Conference
16	June 1–4	Nationwide Chorus Conference	35	November 16–19	Thai, Cambodian, Vietnamese Language Conference
17	June 8–11	YMD Conference	36	December 14–17	Seniors Group Conference #3 (English & Japanese Language)
18	June 15–18	YWD Conference			
19	June 22–25	Jinzai Groups 10th Anniversary Conference (i.e. America Soaring Group, etc.)			



# the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

Illustration by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

## 'EARLY SPRING'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 3, PARTS 19-20

### A discussion of the long road that led to European economic unity.

The other members of the Common Market criticized French President de Gaulle for his opposition to British membership in the community and tried persuading him to change his stance. But de Gaulle refused to budge, saying that the time was not yet ripe for the British to join the European Economic Community. Two weeks later, on Jan. 29, the negotiations for U.K. admission to the Common Market broke down.

The idea of a unified Europe had a long history, the first signs appearing as early as the 14th century. Concrete plans to achieve this goal dated back to the first half of the 18th century, in the pioneering efforts of the French thinker Charles-Irénée Castel Saint-Pierre, who proposed achieving lasting peace in Europe through the establishment of a European confederation and a united council that represented all the constituent nations.

Many great thinkers after him, including the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, pursued the dream of European unity. One of the most vocal was the great 19th-century French writer Victor Hugo, who throughout his life was a staunch proponent of the ideal of a "United States of Europe."

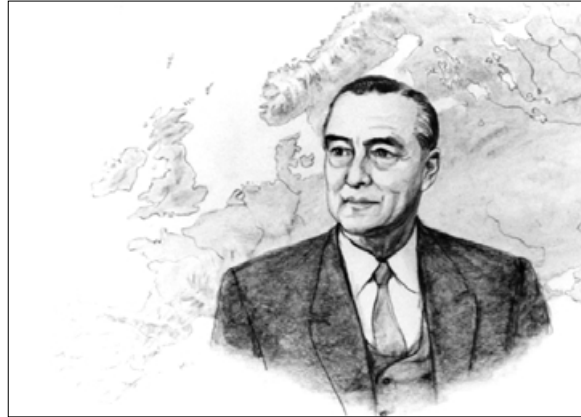
He insisted that one day all the nations on the continent, without losing their distinct qualities and their glorious individuality, would melt together into one higher unity, thereby forming European fraternity.

As if blind to this beautiful ideal, however, the European nations became enmeshed in ever-deepening division and conflict, where military strength was often used to seize one another's territories and economic markets. Then, in the first half of the 20th century, Europe experienced the cruel tragedy of two world wars.

After the desolation of World War I, the European people felt a deep sense of impending crisis and a portent of the collapse of Western Europe. In 1923, Austrian thinker Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, then only 28, published a book called *Pan-Europe*, in which he passionately called for European unification. The book was widely popular and gave rise to the global Pan-European Movement.

But fascism and Nazism suddenly reared their heads, plunging the whole continent again into war. In the face of brutal military aggression, the ideal of European unification was once more consigned to oblivion.

The dream of unification only began taking concrete shape



Austrian thinker Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi.

after World War II ended in 1945.

The world continued to see dramatic changes. After the end of World War II, the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union came to the fore. Europe, too, was divided into East and West.

Even so, after living through two world wars, people of good conscience were seriously seeking a way to lasting peace. One such person was the French statesman and political economist Jean Monnet, who pursued the idea of European unity based on his wish "to unite men, to solve the problems that divide them, and to persuade them to see their common interest" (*Memoirs*, p. 221).

As a first step toward that goal, Monnet decided to establish a structure that would prevent the countries of Europe, particularly Germany and France, from ever warring with each other again. He aspired to create first of all an economic union. Inspired by Monnet's ideas, Robert Schuman, France's foreign minister, proposed in 1950 that the markets for coal and steel-commodities that had been triggers of war between the two countries over the many years-be jointly managed.

This took shape in 1952 as the European Coal and Steel Community, which comprised six members — France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. Given that there were then more than 30 nations in both Eastern and Western Europe, it may have been a modest beginning. Nevertheless,

the ECSC was to be the nucleus of subsequent moves toward wider unification.

In 1957, the same six nations signed treaties establishing the EEC (Common Market) and the European Atomic Energy Commission, both of which began operating the following year. Over the years, these three organizations gradually merged, taking the name the European Communities (EC; the plural was dropped in the 1980s).

But in 1963, there was still a long road to travel to European unity.

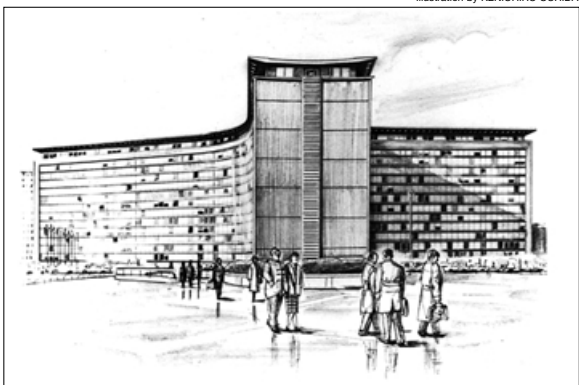
Eiji Kawasaki said in a quiet, contemplative tone: "De Gaulle's rejection of British membership to the Common Market reminds me anew of just how daunting the task of European unification is destined to be.

"Not only is the schism between Eastern and Western blocs wider than ever, but even among the Western democracies, France and the United States are sharply at odds over nuclear policy. In the socialist camp, meanwhile, we see tensions between the Soviet Union and China. Looking at all of these phenomena, it seems that the world, including Europe, is heading toward further division."

Shin'ichi Yamamoto responded with strong conviction, "I, on the contrary, feel quite sure, from a long-term perspective, that Europe's unification is a historical certainty."

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1963.

Illustration by KENICHIRO UCHIDA



The European Community (EC) Headquarters in Belgium.

The World TRIBUNE SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

**Publisher**  
Fred M. Zaitsu  
**Assistant Publisher**  
Greg Martin  
**Editor in Chief**  
Ted Morino

**Managing Editor**  
Margie Hall  
mhall@sgi-usa.org

**Associate Editor**  
Jeff Farr  
jfarr@sgi-usa.org

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

**Contributing Writer**  
Terry Ellis

**Contributing Artist**  
Stephanie Sydney

**Staff Translators**  
Jeff Kriger  
Shin Yatomi

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

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

**Bureau Chiefs**  
Phil Simpson, Atlanta  
Fletcher Dalton, Boston  
Veronica Evans, Chicago  
Terry Ellis, Florida  
Joanne Tachibana, Hawaii  
Margie Hall, Los Angeles  
Cheryl Utley, Midwest  
Robert Talaferro, New York  
Dave Shadovitz, Philadelphia  
Irene Owada, Rocky Mountain  
JL Henriques, San Diego  
Ron Baird, San Francisco  
Bill Lawrence, Seattle  
Troy Murrain, Texas  
Robin Meador, Washington, D.C.

**Foreign Language Pages**  
Chinese: Ingrid Yeh  
Korean: Charles Lee  
Spanish: Cesarina Caro

#### READERS COMMENTS

Send to:  
Mailbox  
606 Wilshire Blvd. PO Box 1427  
Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427  
or e-mail: wt@sgi-usa.org

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**  
1-800-835-4558  
or e-mail: SGISUBS@aol.com

**FRIENDS FOR PEACE**  
ffp@sgi-usa.org

**SEIZE THE DAY**  
seize@sgi-usa.org

**FINE PRINT**  
fine print@sgi-usa.org

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.



## Mosaic Unveiled at Los Angeles Friendship Center



The fountain and garden are a respite for all who visit the LAFC.

Shining brilliantly, the grand mosaic adorning the outer wall of the Los Angeles Friendship Center was unveiled on Oct. 2.

A portion of SGI President Ikeda's poem "Sun of *Jiyu* Over a New Land," dedicated to the members of Los Angeles in 1993, is engraved on a plaque beside the mosaic: "Beloved Los Angelenos! / I want you each to be / like the California sunshine, / showering on all people / the bright light and warmth / of your compassion. / Be people who extend hope and courage, / who inspire



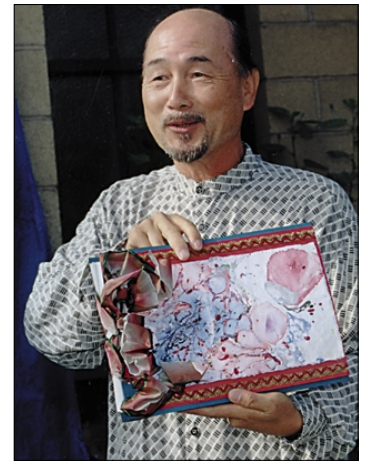
SGI General Director Eiichi Wada at the unveiling on Oct. 2: 'In Buddhism, no effort is wasted. Unseen virtue brings forth visible reward.'

respect and gratitude / wherever you go."

Eiji Miyamoto, veteran SGI stage crew member and fine artist, was commissioned to create the 11 ft. x 17 ft. mosaic, displaying brightly colored figures and flowers, each uniquely designed to signify the diversity of American society. The five dancing figures, depicting the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo, leap toward the sun; the golden figure embodies the limitless power of the individual. "To me," Eiji said, "the 'Sun of *Jiyu*' represents joy and the stand alone spirit. America is joyful. Our Buddhist practice is joyful. I wanted to encourage the SGI members based on this spirit."

The mosaic is made of more than 65,000 1-sq.-inch ceramic tiles from countries as far as China, Italy and Mexico, and is surrounded by a marble border. Accenting the various flowers are pieces of jewels, stones and glass donated by SGI members and volunteers — one stone was donated from a member from Scotland.

The project, which began a year ago, came to fruition on Aug. 24, with the help of more than 130 volunteers — all of which whose names are etched inside the bottom of the mosaic. "I wanted a lot of people to get involved. One hundred thirty-six people's *ichinen* is in this mosaic. Each person



Mosaic designer Eiji Miyamoto receives a photo album from the members.

took care and treated it as if it were their personal artwork."

The dedication of a beautiful fountain, made of high desert slate and 2-ton granite rocks, was held in the atrium. Numerous members tirelessly dedicated their time and effort to erect the fountain and plant the splendid garden encircling its perimeter. The heart of the Los Angeles Friendship Center, the atrium, has flourished into a warm and embracing respite for everyone who visits.

—STEPHANIE CELANO

# GUIDELINES



SGI-USA General Director Fred Zaitzu in an informal discussion with members at the Los Angeles Friendship Center.

Dear SGI-USA Members,

My best regards and thanks to all of you as we aim to conclude this year with victorious general meetings commemorating Nov. 18, the day the Soka Gakkai was established in 1930. This goal coincides with our plan at the beginning of the year to use this final quarter of 1999 to focus on participation in our SGI-USA activities for kosen-rufu, specifically in our Nov. 18 Commemorative Meetings. To carry this out with joy and compassion, let's refresh the basics of our faith, practice and study by deepening our confidence in the Gohonzon, solidifying our conviction in the justice of the SGI and strengthening the front lines of our district organizations.

Our prayer, filled with compassion to dedicate ourselves to the happiness of others, is the starting point. This is practicing the essence of the Daishonin's Buddhism. "If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth.... Only I, Nichiren, at first chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, but then two, three and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Likewise, propagation will unfold this way in the future. Doesn't this signify 'emerging from the earth'?" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 93).

Another important action necessary to care for each person is to deepen our friendships with one another through home visits. SGI President Ikeda states: "It is our hearts that change others' hearts. Friendship changes people" (*For Today and Tomorrow*, p. 373). Taking the time to visit someone, at home or elsewhere, communicates that we really care. It also provides quality time to address specific issues. Members can share their dreams, their burdens and their questions — everything that is in their hearts. Herein lies the wonderful opportunity we have to help one another overcome problems, or develop conviction in our Soka Renaissance with regard to the temple issue, or remain in close communication despite job or other responsibilities that may prevent us from attending activities. These heart-to-heart exchanges are some of the important ways in which we can deepen our faith in the Gohonzon.

The desired result of our focus on participation is more than just increasing the number of participants at the district meeting. And it's more than simply increasing the number of home visits in preparation for the meeting. The real objective is to further develop trust and friendship, which will continue to enhance the atmosphere of our meetings — creating more joy and true camaraderie. In this way, let us extend our hand of friendship not only to our district members, but also to less involved members, temple members and guests.

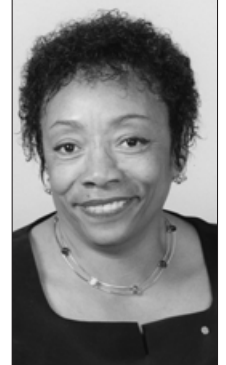
I have come to realize that this is the Gakkai spirit; to care so much for each person that we will do our utmost to help them learn about the Daishonin's Buddhism and the SGI's movement. Exerting individual effort for the sake of other people's happiness is the key. It is exactly this wise effort for the happiness of others that invites friends to join our cause. It is this humane concern that demonstrates the genuineness of the SGI.

In conclusion, the Nov. 18 Commemorative Meetings can be held at the district or group level. Each region can decide what is most appropriate for its membership. Let's make these gatherings of friends the great final victory of 1999 that will propel us toward the new century.

Fred M. Zaitzu, SGI-USA General Director

## Nurturing an Individual

By Sheilab Edwards  
SGI-USA Vice General Director



When I think about the meaning of nurturing, I think of nourishing, training, educating and rearing. I think about what makes members strong in their faith — what helps them to get stronger, such as listening to them without judging them, keeping promises I make, finding many ways to support them in their practice.

people they respect us in turn. If we are unstinting in our concern for them, we will be protected and supported by them.

❖ Rather than doing things out of a sense of obligation or because "my leader says so" — it ought to be something that comes from the heart; something that we bring to life within our own hearts because we are following in the footsteps of our mentor in his quest to nurture the youth.

❖ I started practicing in 1968 and received the Gohonzon the following year. Over the years I've gained an absolute sense that there is nothing greater than caring. It's so heartwarming when I bump into members — or when they call — and they let me know that they've overcome their struggles; that they now understand why they have to do gongyo in the morning and evening, or why they have to focus when they pray; or that they feel good about themselves and understand that they are the Buddha, that the gem is in their robe no matter what they look like now or how other people perceive them to be.

❖ For me to hear people say, "I finally got it," "I broke through," "I'm really moving forward," "Maybe I haven't received my specific dream, but I know where I'm going" wipes out all the unpleasant things I experienced in my life. I feel I'm doing a little something in my corner of the world to propel the movement of kosen-rufu forward. That to me is beautiful.

❖ I remember the passage in which Nichiren Daishonin says, "When Bodhisattva Fukyo bowed in reverence to the four categories of people [monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen], the Buddha nature inherent in the lives of these arrogant people bowed back to him. This is the same as how, when one bows facing a mirror, the reflected image bows back" ("Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" in *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 769). If we truly respect other

❖ We can nurture people in our districts by creating and maintaining a warm, wonderful atmosphere where they feel free to express themselves. To have unity and mutual understanding strengthens the organization where people want to come — and stay. The district can be a great place to have fun while we encourage one another to base everything on prayer first and share the Daishonin's Buddhism with others, subscribe to the publications and learn about the importance of studying Buddhism so that we can practice correctly.

❖ Dealing with the situation regarding the temple is difficult, but if we have compassion, then we will educate ourselves first and then others through dialogue so that we can prevent one another from going astray and losing faith. When we feel confident about our organization and our practice, we can feel the joy and excitement of SGI activities and the joy of hope for the future.

❖ Nurturing the youth means allowing them the freedom to express themselves without judging them — to trust them a thousand percent so that they, in turn, can trust us wholeheartedly. To entrust them with the movement of kosen-rufu for the new century means giving them the baton and allowing them to take us into the new century with their fresh, innovative and diverse ideas. A perfect society does not destroy its youth or dismiss its elders.

❖ The main point is to really enable a person to stand firm on their belief and on their understanding that the Gohonzon is absolute — that we need strong faith to be able to experience the greatest life force that we can conjure up.

# On the Formality of Gongyo

The following is excerpted from *Selected Speeches—On the Basics of Buddhism*, pp. 34–45: SGI President Ikeda's speech at a Kansai general meeting, held at the Soka University auditorium in Hachioji, Tokyo, May 4, 1993.

Faith is a lifelong pursuit. It is also an eternal one, continuing over the three existences of past, present and future. Kosen-rufu, too, is a long, long journey.

How, then, on this journey toward happiness, can we stay the course to the end? How can we live so as to make each day of our precious lives valuable and exhilarating?

Doing so requires profound wisdom. For example, there are times when we suffer from exhaustion or feel under the weather. This is only natural since we are creatures of flesh and blood. At such times, what should we do about gongyo? What should our attitude be toward chanting daimoku? Today, in response to the members' day-to-day concerns, I shall address these points in light of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. Such concrete guidance based on the Daishonin's writings is important.

Essentially, the Daishonin says that, depending on the situation, it is all right to just chant daimoku, and that we need not necessarily sit before the Gohonzon to do so.

This is how the Daishonin responded to a question from the wife of a follower, Hiki Daigaku Saburo Yoshimoto. The wife had asked whether she should refrain from carrying out her daily Buddhist practice during her menstrual period. Since ancient times, it had been a common belief in Japan that menstruation represented a kind of pollution. It appears that the woman who put this question to the Daishonin was worried about whether it was acceptable to read and recite Buddhist scriptures at such a time.

In response, the Daishonin emphasizes that there is no cause for avoidances in connection with menstruation, and that, rather, menstruation has an important biological function. For the time in which he lived, such a view was remarkably enlightened.

"Or in another sense," he says, "it [menstruation] might be regarded as a kind of chronically recurring illness" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 12), and goes on to explain the type of practice that would be best suited for such times.

At present, the question of "pollution" or "impurity" in connection with menstruation is no longer an issue. Indeed, in a broader sense, we can interpret the Daishonin's words as providing a clear direction on what we should do about reciting the sutra,

that is, gongyo, when ill or feeling poorly. In other words, the Daishonin here indicates the principle that gongyo is a practice that should be carried out with flexibility in accordance with various circumstances.

In a preceding passage of this writing, the Daishonin says: "This is a matter that concerns all women and about which they always inquire. In past times, too, we find many persons addressing themselves to this question concerning women. But because the sacred teachings put forward by the Buddha in the course of his lifetime do not touch upon this point, no one has been able to offer any clear scriptural proof upon which to base an answer" (MW-6, 11).

The Daishonin says that all who have commented on the matter, being unable to produce documentary proof based on the Buddhist scriptures, merely speak arbitrarily. By contrast, the Daishonin always made the scriptures his foundation. That is why we, too, always advance basing ourselves on the Goshu, the scripture of the Latter Day of the Law.

Similarly, regarding the custom of doing five prayers during morning gongyo and three prayers during evening gongyo, nowhere in the Goshu is such a practice set forth. It is a form that came about at a later time.

Moreover, originally, this form of gongyo was part of the practice for priests. It would appear, however, that today it is priests who are failing to adhere to this form. That lay people, with their busy schedules, should be following such a regimen of daily practice is truly remarkable.

Many members, out of their earnestness and sincere faith, strive to carry out a perfect practice of five prayers in the morning and three prayers in the evening, even when tired or feeling ill, or even if it means staying up late at night. Such faith is infinitely praiseworthy. The efforts of those who maintain such a practice are definitely known to the Gohonzon.

However, and this is especially true in the case of the elderly, unreasonably pushing yourselves may seriously undermine your health. There may be times when, depending on your physical condition, [instead of doing a complete gongyo] it is more valuable to just chant daimoku for a little while, or even just chant three daimoku, and then get some rest. This is something we must determine for ourselves.

Faith is something we endeavor to pursue throughout our entire lives. Even though there may be times when we cannot carry out our practice of gongyo perfectly, so long as we believe in the Gohonzon and maintain a seeking mind of faith, our good fortune will not disappear.



There is a difference between strong faith and taxing ourselves unreasonably. What counts is having the life force to live each day vigorously and burning with hope. Therefore, under certain circumstances it may be better to go to bed early and get a good night's sleep so that in the morning you can do gongyo with a refreshed feeling.

In the course of our lives as common mortals, gongyo, along with daimoku, represents a most solemn encounter with the original Buddha. It is a ceremony that brings forth our state of Buddhahood and allows us to reveal the Gohonzon in the depths of our lives. For this reason, our practice should be invigorating and filled with joy. Gongyo should leave us feeling refreshed and revitalized.

It may be that your gongyo has lapsed into mere formality, your eyes constantly on the clock. And the more you think about the time, the more slowly it seems to go by. Or it could be that you're so exhausted you can't concentrate on your gongyo, constantly losing your place when reciting the long section of the "Juryo" chapter—inadvertently jumping ahead, returning to an earlier point, and just basically going in circles. Or maybe your daimoku is really garbled and indistinct because you're half asleep.

While you are certainly to be commended that despite all this you still make the effort to do gongyo, I think it is important to use your wisdom and practice in a way that accords with the principle "faith manifests itself in daily life."

In this sense, I think it is best, if possible, to make a point of doing evening gongyo fairly early, before it gets too late.

In conclusion, Nichiren Daishonin states: "If you feel so inclined, then dispense with the reading of the sutra and simply recite Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Also, when making your devotions, you need not bow facing the

sutra [the Gohonzon]" (MW-6, 13).

It is perfectly acceptable just to chant daimoku without reciting the sutra. Moreover, the Daishonin says that we need not necessarily do gongyo or chant daimoku in front of the Gohonzon. Here, the Daishonin also takes into account the case where a person [incapacitated by illness or other reasons] might do gongyo or chant daimoku lying down. In this way, he always showed great flexibility toward the formal aspects of practice. He always taught that "faith alone is what really matters" (MW-1, 246).

Of course, we must not take this as license to be negligent and lazy in our practice. It goes without saying that we must always diligently strive to carry out the basic practice of doing gongyo and chanting daimoku. If you purposely use the Goshu to justify neglecting your Buddhist practice, it will only result in your own loss. It is not for anyone else, but for our own happiness that we practice faith.

The Daishonin's statement that it is all right simply to chant daimoku is based on the premise of the great benefit of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

At the beginning of this same writing, he says: "In the case of the Lotus Sutra, one may recite the entire sutra of twenty-eight chapters in eight volumes every day; or one may recite only one volume, or one chapter, or one verse, or one phrase, or one word; or one may simply chant the daimoku, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, only once a day..." (MW-6, 3).

In other words, he says there are many possible ways of reciting the Lotus Sutra. He then continues: "Or [one may] chant it only once in the course of a lifetime; or hear someone else chant it only once in a lifetime and rejoice in the hearing; or rejoice in hearing the voice of someone else rejoice in the hearing..." (Ibid.).

The sound of daimoku can even cause others to respond with joy when they hear it. Therefore, let us al-

# Studying 'The Human Revolution'

By Gary Russell  
Indianapolis, Ind.

While helping gather info for a timeline of the three Soka Gakkai presidents for this year's Day of Indiana, I was embarrassed by how little I know about the Soka Gakkai's history.



Sure, I knew who the three presidents were and was at least aware of some of the chain of events that shaped our organization's history, but not enough to fill a timeline. And so the research began. I began rereading *The Human Revolution* and when I finished, there was plenty of information for the timeline.

But it didn't stop there. I continued reading *The Human Revolution*, devouring each chapter and volume. And when I finished, I wanted to talk about it. This stuff was too good to keep to myself. So a few months ago, a small group started reading *The Human Revolution* together.

Each of us would become passionate as we shared our impressions on second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's release from prison and his single-minded vision to rebuild the organization in war-torn Japan. How he never wavered in the slightest as he struggled to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism. How he set out to accomplish this mission the very day he was released from prison. How he stood alone with a collapsed business empire and no money in his pocket.

Our group has already learned much from the study sessions together. For example, how we should study. On page 64 of *The Human Revolution's* first volume, Josei Toda said: "You can't grasp the Lotus Sutra just by studying. How can I explain it? Perhaps because I had to face persecution—anyway, once I grasped the core of the sutra, I could read it easily. It's incredible."

When I read *The Human Revolution* for the first time years ago, I read it as a history book, nothing more. But as my faith deepened over the years, I suddenly began to grasp the purpose of studying *The Human Revolution*. It teaches the importance of the Soka Gakkai and how crucial is its preservation. Not

to mention how practitioners of this Buddhism should face struggles.

And much can be learned from Toda's struggles. At a time when anyone could reasonably be in a state of total despair from the malnutrition, illness and poverty Toda experienced, Toda's sense of mission was unshakeable. Obstacles were no match for his strong spirit. Because he never lost sight of his mission, Josei Toda persevered and won.

The more I read *The Human Revolution*, the more I am compelled to focus less on my problems and more on protecting the Soka Gakkai. The three Soka Gakkai presidents endured the harshest of circumstances to build and protect this wonderful organization. So whenever I balk at study or organizational responsibilities, I remind myself of *The Human Revolution*. Because of Josei Toda's selfless efforts, the Soka Gakkai exists today. The least I can do is help protect this organization so that future generations can encounter this wonderful organization and discover true happiness based on the Daishonin's Buddhism." **WT**

ways strive to chant such invigorating and refreshing daimoku that draws forth this response in others.

Through hearing our voices chanting the Mystic Law, hearing the confidence that resonates therein, it is possible to inspire joy in others and make a strong impression upon them of how wonderful and energetic the SGI members are, and of how coming in contact with them always leaves us feeling happy and refreshed. Others, again, may simply rejoice when encountering the happy, glowing faces and the beautiful smiles of our members.

In this respect, our outward appearance is important. This accords with the principle that all phenomena manifest the true aspect of life (*shoho jisso*). Indeed, such a joyous response is truly evident among friends of the SGI. One person after another responding with joy in a chain reaction — this principle lies at the root of our movement to introduce others to the SGI.

The Daishonin continues: "And so [this chain of rejoicing continues] on to fifty removes from the original individual who first chanted the daimoku."

"In such a case, of course, the spirit of faith would become weak and the feeling of rejoicing much diluted, like the vague notions that might occur to the mind of a child of two or three, or like the mentality of a cow or a horse, unable to distinguish before from after. And yet the blessings gained by such a person are a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand times greater than those gained by persons of excellent innate ability and superior wisdom who study other sutras: persons such as Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, Monju and Miroku, who had committed to memory the entire texts of the various sutras."

"The Lotus Sutra itself tells us this, and the same opinion is expressed in the sixty volumes of commentary by T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo" (MW-6, 3-4).

So great is the benefit of chanting



daimoku. Chanting Nam-myoho-rengo-kyo even once produces tremendous benefit, eternal benefit. This is the essence of our faith. We should have great confidence in this point.

Basing his remarks on a passage of the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin states: "And yet we read that the blessings acquired by one who recites no more than a single word of the Lotus Sutra are the one thing alone [the Buddha wisdom] cannot fathom. How, then, could ordinary persons like ourselves, who have committed so many grave offenses, be capable of understanding such blessings?" (MW-6, 4).

This is the great benefit of chanting Nam-myoho-rengo-kyo even once. A single arrow, shot by a great archer, will unerringly hit the mark. Similarly, a strong and deep prayer offered with unwavering *ichinen*, or concentration of mind, will, in accordance with the principle that a single life-moment contains three thousand realms (*ichinen sanzen*), move the entire universe.

Since such is the benefit of chanting a single daimoku some of you might feel puffed up with pride because you managed to chant at least three daimoku today! Of course, it is impor-

tant to feel such joy from practice. And it doesn't say anywhere in the Goshu how many daimoku or how many hours a day a person should chant.

It goes without saying, of course, that if you chant a lot of daimoku, it is all to the good. However, ultimately each of us must decide for ourselves the amount of daimoku we chant based on our awareness and determination. The amount of daimoku we chant is certainly not a matter of obligation or formality.

For instance, from time to time I hear of people chanting eight or ten hours in a single day. I bow my head to the intensity and earnestness of faith of these members. If, however, they neglect their responsibilities and commitments and just chant away, they cannot be said to be practicing in accord with the principle, "faith manifests itself in daily life." You must not allow your daily life to fall by the wayside or cause others, including members of your family, suffering and inconvenience because of your chanting many hours of daimoku. Nor should you go around boasting of the long hours of daimoku you have chanted in a day.

Carrying on in such a way can easily give rise to various misunderstandings among those around you. A person who has such an attitude may be viewed by neighbors as something of a fanatic. The result may be that the person loses others' trust and degrades the Law.

The same is true within the organization. There are instances where an organizational unit formally conducts a "ten-hour daimoku campaign" or the like. While there is nothing wrong with an activity of this kind if it is voluntarily undertaken by two or three willing people, difficulties arise when an attempt is made to impose such a rigid regimen equally on many people. For people have different daily schedules, they have different amounts of time available to them, they have different physical stamina and so on.

Consequently, it is possible that holding such an activity might impose unreasonable demands on any number of people. It is always necessary to exercise careful consideration. Moreover, we must never attempt to make participation in such activities compulsory. You must not goad people into attending activities by making extreme statements, such as saying, "If you fail to attend, you will not be following the way of the SGI."

It is important that people derive joy, peace of mind and hope from their practice of faith. We must strictly refrain from giving guidance that oppresses people or causes them suffering. In giving guidance, leaders should always take into account the circumstances and conditions of their members.

Thus, I hope that leaders will give clear direction that, while based on firm recognition of the great benefit of chanting daimoku, also demonstrates wisdom and common sense so that all may joyously advance in accord with the principle of "faith equals daily life." If a leader wishes to launch a major daimoku campaign and get a rhythm of more chanting going, the important thing is that that person lead by offering deep and strong prayers." **WT**

# THE SPIRIT OF LEADERS

## Words to the Wise



**Someone reported to me that you had fallen ill. Day and night, dawn and dusk, I prayed for your recovery to the Lotus Sutra; dawn and dusk, I prayed to the heavens. Today I learned that you have recovered, and my joy knows no bounds. (Gosho Zenshu, p. 1298)**

FROM SGI PRESIDENT DAISAKU IKEDA:

*The following excerpts of SGI President Ikeda's guidance on leadership were taken from Faith Into Action (now available in SGI-USA bookstores and by mail order).*

Leadership is not a matter of ordering people around but of first taking action yourself. By initiating action yourself, you will win others' trust, and they, in turn, will take action.

✱

It is important for leaders to have the spirit to bring out each person's potential. Leaders shouldn't judge others based on outward appearances or decide from their own narrow perspective that someone is unsuitable or no good. Racking your brain over how to uncover and bring out others' strong points is the true measure of a leader. This is the art of leadership.

✱

Even if all the leaves on a tree should fall off in a strong wind, as long as the branches and trunk remain in tact, in time the tree will again produce flowers. Like wise the spread of Buddhism will continue as long as there remain people of genuine faith. The important thing, therefore, is to raise one person of genuine faith.

✱

Prayer is most fundamental in raising capable people. You pray earnestly to the Gohonzon that the person you have found will become an able person important to the SGI-USA. And then with this prayer, you take the utmost care to help that person develop.

✱

A single person is important. Everything starts from treasuring just one person. This is the eternal formula for the development for kosen-rufu.

✱

Small-scale discussions or dialogues are important, the kind where you can talk directly, face to face, close enough to sense each other's warmth. Discussion that is not unilateral but convincing—discussion carried out this way can revive weary hearts, open closed minds and change the cycle of bewilderment and despair into one of conviction and hope.

✱

To whomever you are speaking, if you have a broad mind and the magnanimous spirit to embrace and understand their feelings, their hearts will open up, revealing understanding and sympathy. Your ability to do this depends on your state of life. If you develop a state of life that enables you to be flexible, you can easily open the door to other people's hearts, stirring or soothing their emotions, developing on the situation. This is the essence of a dialogue based on a profound understanding of human nature.

✱

When youth are awakened to a sense of mission, their power is limitless. Ultimately, we have to entrust our hopes and visions for the future to the youth. This is a golden rule. Youth is pure. Youth will rise up to fulfill their ideals without calculation or self-interest. The fundamental spirit of a leader must be to reach out to such young people, to work with them and bring out their capabilities and direct their youthful energies in a positive direction.

✱

If leaders make constant efforts to study hard, grow and maintain a sense of freshness, the organization will advance and be filled with dynamism. An organization will change and develop to the extent that leaders change

and develop themselves. The advancement of kosen-rufu in the community and country proceeds likewise.

✱

The most important condition for leaders is sincerity. By contrast, an authoritarian air will only serve to alienate people, and intelligence alone may not produce anything of lasting value. Sincerity is what touches people's hearts, forges bonds of trust, and imparts a sense of security. A person of sincerity creates a relaxed, almost springlike atmosphere about him or her.

✱

It is natural to encourage the person standing right in front of you. However, the true worth of leaders is determined by the extent to which they direct their attention toward those supporting that person at home or behind the scenes. Behind each individual is a network of connections with many others, including family members and friends. What is important is how much consideration we can show toward these people.

✱

The Soka Gakkai's second president, Josei Toda, often said: "I have lost my beloved wife. I lost my beloved child. That's why I can be president." Someone who has not had to struggle in life, someone for whom everything has gone favorably and as they desired, cannot help others become happy. Unless we have suffered ourselves, we cannot truly understand other people's feelings or the real power of Buddhism.

✱

Guidance in Buddhism is aimed at the very depths of life. It is an all-out challenge to motivate people to change their lives. Unless our own lives overflow with vitality, nothing we do or say will penetrate others' lives.

Photos by: AMANDA BENZAKEN



# Reviving a Sense of Mission

Experience by David Rush Morrison, Los Angeles

I'm a cinematographer. I shoot feature films, commercials, music videos and documentaries. I've been practicing this Buddhism for five years. I started for two reasons. First, I wanted to activate my career as a cinematographer. Second, I wanted to feel happiness again. My life at 27 had become so career-obsessed that my life-condition was based on how well my career was or wasn't going. The frustration that I experienced felt like an ever-hardening shell that drained any enthusiasm and joy out of life. I started to feel like a shadow of my once vibrant, youthful self. I needed to change desperately and that is when I was introduced to the practice by my girlfriend and her friend Lendon. I remember going to my first meeting, hearing gongyo and seeing the determination and compassion in people's eyes. I knew that this had to be a valid practice. I decided to give it three months.

At first I started practicing on the fringes of the SGI. Coming from the South had made me somewhat cynical about organized religion. I was distrustful of organizations, especially ones with presidents. I didn't understand why we needed an organization to attain enlightenment. My idea of enlightenment was that one could be totally immune from life's ups and downs. I used my chanting to attain a "Zen" quality. In hindsight I was aiming for the world of Rapture, and I was easily discouraged when circumstances knocked me out of this state. After going to group meetings I formed connections with a few members who encouraged me greatly. I was asked to lead meetings and give experiences. That was about the extent of

it. I didn't attend any functions on a large scale or volunteer my time for any events.

Studying is what started to open my eyes to the profundity of this practice. *Ichinen sanzen*, the ten worlds and dependent origination were all concepts that I tried to absorb with my life. I started to become impressed by President Ikeda's knowledge of all of these areas. Even in the areas outside of Buddhism. He seemed so well read and informed on many topics. My determination and commitment grew through study, which in turn expanded my *ichinen* and then deepened my prayer. I started to see changes in my environment. Yes, Buddhism worked for me, too. However I was still distrustful of the change in our lives. We had a beautiful baby Buddha girl whom we named Keely. We bought our first house, and my career, while not yet fully realized, was moving along and I could definitely see progress. I got an agent, a few more feature films under my belt, and my name was starting to get around town. The distractions that one would associate with Hollywood really didn't get in my way because my practice kept me "real," so to speak. The process of building this career, being a new father, a husband and a homeowner didn't leave much time to be a Buddhist. My chanting started to lessen and my attendance to meetings began to drop. I faded even further toward the fringes of the SGI.

After completing another film this past spring my chanting was at an all time low. "Why do I chant?" I asked myself. Life will continue to progress as it does for many others who don't practice. I saw successful, happy peo-

ple who didn't chant, so why did I need to? I felt my contribution to *kosen-rufu* was staying at home raising a peaceful, loving family. I started to feel that Buddhism may have been something that presented itself in my life for a short period of time and maybe I should move on and dedicate my energies elsewhere. However, I just couldn't bring myself to do it. "Why do I chant?" I thought.

That's when the phone rang. My friend Beth Lemure called to ask if I would be interested in shooting some footage for the 1999 Youth Grand Culture Festival. I usually do anything that Beth asks because she always deeply encourages me. She's a gem. The effect of hanging out with her always makes me want to chant more. One night she and Cory Taylor came to my house to relay their vision of the event. After hearing their explana-

tion of what the culture festival meant for society — bridging the gaps between cultures — I was hooked. It would be an enormous cause for unity in the 21st century. Los Angeles is the perfect place for this to begin because of our diverse cultures. I thought of my daughter growing up in an environment where there were no boundaries between people, far from my experience as a child of the South. I knew that I had to sign up. It was my responsibility as a father and as an Angelino and as an absentee Buddhist. What would my job be? What do I need to do?

My job was to go to Hawaii, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, Dallas and Denver to follow President Ikeda's footsteps on his first trip to America in 1960. My mission was to

*("Seeking..." continued on page II)*



David with his daughter, Keely (pictured here and more recently above).

# Rocky Mountain Region Goes Day Trippin'

By Sven Hillering

How can I make a difference?" This was the theme for the junior high and high school members' picnic at the Eldorado Canyon Resort in Boulder, Colo., Aug. 22. The purpose of the gathering was summed up by Casey Denton of Boulder, "I made new friends!"

During the meeting itself, members met in groups and filled out "personal pages" expressing their hopes and frustrations through poems, pictures or however they felt comfortable. These pages, an SGI-USA-wide effort, will be compiled and sent to SGI President Daisaku Ikeda.

High School Division YMD Region Leader Kiyotaka Komatsu stressed that the meeting was for the teenage participants to work on their human revolution. "Many times people feel powerless," Kiyotaka said. If we support one another, he continued, we can live President Toda's spirit of changing society by changing ourselves.

The meeting was followed by a summertime picnic lunch complete with hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, etc. Members from all four divisions cooked and cleaned, leaving the picnic area "cleaner than we found it," said men's division member Ken Friedman.

After a brisk hike, everyone went down to the resort's pool, enjoying a long, leisurely (more like rambunctious) swim. The day was a total success. ♪

**"Many times people feel powerless," High School Division YMD Region Leader Kiyotaka Komatsu said. If we support one another, he continued, we can live President Toda's spirit of changing society by changing ourselves.**



*"Seeking..." continued from page 1*

capture the fruits of his labors for kosen-rufu by photographing all of the youth. Chanting had never been so easy or purposeful. I started to feel what kosen-rufu meant with my whole being. What I hadn't understood intellectually, now suddenly made perfect sense. I understood it with my life. My muscles and cells existed for one purpose. My life depended on it. Cory gave us wonderful context by reading passages from *The New Human Revolution*, volume 1, and showing us archival photos from President Ikeda's trip. I learned that President Ikeda was 32 at the time. I was 32 as well. I kept reading and chanting. "Get closer to President Ikeda" was my determination.

On the morning that we left for Hawaii I had a mystic experience. I saw my good friend Lendon at the airport. He was also leaving for Hawaii but was going on vacation. It was amazing to feel this rebirth in my practice and see the person who helped nurture me in the practice. While flying to our assigned cities, Darrin and I read about President

Ikeda and how he inspired all of the pioneer members with heartfelt warm encouragement and stern reinforcement when it was needed. The many dimensions of President Ikeda's compassion and his intuitive sense how to best encourage people were illuminating and inspiring for me. I was so energized by his life. His efforts were absolutely tireless in propagating kosen-rufu on our continent. Six cities in six days: I determined that my efforts would be tireless, too.

We met so many inspiring bodhisattvas who spared nothing in their efforts to help us, all of them vibrant with smiles and shared determinations. I started to see what the SGI was made of. My respect deepened immensely. When President Ikeda was in Chicago he witnessed racism toward an African-American child. This event deeply saddened President Ikeda; heartbroken but determined, he chanted sincere daimoku to foster a society in which this did not exist. Thirty-seven years later I witnessed members in Chicago of all races unified for the same purpose. Color wasn't even an issue. President Ikeda literally penetrated the environment with

his prayer and I witnessed it manifest in my life. It's an amazing experience to see someone's determinations realized years later, right in front of your eyes, and being captured by your lens. There is nothing more important than the lives of people. I kept chanting that these images would inspire everyone by showing how vast but sincere our organization is.

We had the fortune to meet the pioneer members that President Ikeda personally encouraged. On the journey my life had never felt so dynamic. If it weren't for gravity I would have flown!

After our video was shown at the culture festival, a new friend from San Francisco told me that she was so inspired by seeing all of the members around the world. Others said that they cried when they saw our footage. I'm deeply grateful for the experience. I've never before felt like I was receiving great benefit and making great causes at the same time.

I now know why I chant and why I'll continue to chant. Buddhism is truth and reason. The most noble cause to represent! I haven't met or seen President Ikeda but that's not

important. I feel him in my heart. I try to emulate his actions by encouraging people. After this experience I often think about him wherever I am and I try to realize his wisdom and life force in my own life. I literally try to penetrate my environment with daimoku and prayer. I think understanding the spirit of President Ikeda is the spirit of Buddhism. In exerting myself for the cause of enlightening others I illuminate my own path. I now see the SGI for what it is — brilliant members, bright, intelligent, and courageous people who are committed to realizing a safe and nurturing environment. I am so honored to be a part of you. As a Buddhist, I feel that I have arrived. I want to play that old disco song, "I'm coming out, I want the world to know, I want to let it show." I'm down for the struggle. I will dedicate my life, creating a better world for our children and their children. With my life I will set an example. I will embrace struggles courageously. Time is of the essence and I know our vital cause for world peace is at a crucial time. I am deeply honored to share this most sacred mission with all of you.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. ♪

# 'CREATING A CULTURE OF PEACE' FESTIVAL CELEBRATES DIVERSITY IN SAN FRANCISCO



By Mairone Daniels  
San Francisco

The aisles were clear and the room was dark. A single piece of blue paper bordered with white

clouds floated on a current of air across the room and landed neatly on the auditorium's floor. The Victory Over Violence youth summit at the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center was over, but people were once again being summoned to the "Creating a Culture of Peace" festival in the San Francisco Bay Area. On Sept. 18, a coalition of more than 20 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) collaborated with the Northern California Youth Division of the SGI-USA to host the festival at the SGI San Francisco Culture Center. Presented as a continuation of the Victory Over Violence campaign and a celebration of the Hague Appeal for Peace, the festival was a vehicle to further propel the movement for a more peaceful world.

The morning festivities began with opening remarks from various NGO

representatives followed by energetic performances from local artists that blew the crowd away. Linda Imperial with her soulful sound mixed with hip-hop beats and R&B flavor set a terrific tone for a show-stopping performance from the Young Women's Taiko group.

The second half of the day consisted of workshops on issues ranging from nuclear disarmament to respecting and cherishing all people as individuals. The SGI-USA presented a workshop on Victory Over Violence, which included a presentation of a personal pledge for non-violence and small group discussions where members of the community shared their struggles and determinations toward overcoming the violence in their lives. "The Promise of World peace" hosted by the San Francisco Baha'i Community, focused on youth. One girl, of Latin decent, stated in video presentation, "It's scary and exciting to be a Baha'i right now... We are the last ones to tell everyone about the Baha'i faith." The Baha'i faith is supportive of a culture where everyone can be recognized as individuals as well as cherished and celebrated



because of their individuality.

Among the keynote speakers for the day was the Honorable Le Tagaloa Pita, M.P., of Samoa, whose sincere and humanistic words conveyed the spirit of the festival. He said: "We have no preconceived ideas about who the authority comes from. The authority, it comes from you. Meaning you must stand up and make the change first with yourself, then in your community." He went on to say, "The only way to create peace is to stop war," and ended his remarks with an open invitation to host the first Global People's Assembly in Samoa next year.

As the day's festivities closed, everyone danced to the sounds of Orquestra Kalichin, a Latin Salsa band from the Mission recreation Center and the San Francisco Ikeda New Century Brass Band. Both performances furthered the unity of the festival's 1000-plus participants through their music as people celebrated the success of the day. The essential theme emerged: You must make individual effort, change and liberate yourself before anything in your environment can or will reflect that. It was definitely a good way to bring organizations together to celebrate diversity. ♪



## 'I Couldn't Believe It!'



Experience by DeShawn Wilson, Baltimore

My name is DeShawn Wilson, and I have been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for 11 years. I already knew that the SGI was an amazing organization, however, my trip to LA enlightened me to a higher degree as to how great and fortunate we are to be practicing this Buddhism.

About a year ago, I had made a determination to attend one of the conferences held at the Florida Nature Culture Center. I had heard people giving experiences about how encouraging the conferences were and I wanted to find out for myself why these conferences were so encouraging. Due to the movement in Los Angeles, all of the conferences for the summer were cancelled and activities were geared toward Los Angeles. I thought to myself that it would be nice to get chosen to attend the culture festival in Los Angeles; however, I did not think too much about it. Life went on and I continued to do my regular activities. When asked if I would be interested

in attending I said sure, but I didn't really think that I would be chosen to represent Baltimore. When I was told that I was chosen to go, I was so surprised. I couldn't believe that I was chosen. As the days drew closer to Sept. 23, I still could not believe that I was going to California. As I was at Dulles International Airport checking my baggage, I still could not believe that I was going to California. As the plane was taking off the runway, I still could not believe I was going to California. As I was landing at the airport in Los Angeles, I couldn't believe I was IN California.

First thing coming off the plane, we were welcomed by screaming Los Angeles members. And what I didn't know then was that the screaming Los Angeles members were everywhere. When we arrived at the hotel, there were more members screaming. We went to the Los Angeles Friendship Center, there were more members screaming. When we went to the Pasadena Convention

Center to see the culture festival performance, there were more members screaming to welcome us. It was such a warm feeling. I have never felt so important. Everywhere we went, people were looking at us like Who are they? Where did they come from? I even had a chance to talk to people about the SGI. Because we were wearing ID tags, and many people saw these people walking around with different color tags around their necks, a lot of people were curious as to what group we belonged. Of course this was a chance for me to practice up on my propagation skills, and I did so.

The entire four days were encouraging and I felt like I was in SGI utopia. The performance was amazing and it was a real eye opener for me. I cried through the first 20 minutes of the performance because the performances were really touching. I know the guys don't want to mention it but they were crying, too. No words can explain it. All I can say is wait for the video. It helped

me to realize that one person CAN make a difference by standing up for what one believes in. Look at Martin Luther King. He was one man and look what impact he made to society. Look at Rosa Parks. She was one woman and look what impact she made to society. Mandela, Malcolm X, Thomas Jefferson, Linus Pauling, 2Pac Shakur, all have made some type of impact on society and I don't think that any of them had the Gohonzon. We have the Gohonzon, so think about how much more of an impact we can have on society. One person can make a difference. WE can make a difference.

President Ikeda says that he wants the youth of the SGI-USA to lead the 21st century. I know that we have the capability to do so. Why do you think everyone wants to come into the United States and capture the American Dream? I believe we are already leading the 21st Century. Listening to people's experi-

("Believe..." continued on page IV)

GET REAL!



by Shan Serfin,  
SGI-USA Vice High School  
Division Leader

**ALIGN ALONG THE SPINE**

People shared a wealth of wisdom with me this past summer. I thought it would be nifty to distill some of their wisdom into a few pithy paragraphs. Hence comes a theme: Align along the spine. (a sort of chiropractic rap lyric)

All of us struggle. We struggle hard. It seems as if being

young is a never-ending onslaught of trials and trips — stinging relationships, money blues, self-hate, cancer, fears. What is the point of all this pain?

The point is we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Look around and see wars waged, congressional pettiness, violent video gaming, greedy consumption of oil and soda pop and so on. Who's going to change all this?

We are. Bodhisattvas. We, because we struggle as others struggle. We struggle and thus we relate to others. People will watch us, will scrutinize our moves. When we struggle and win, they will witness Buddhism in action.

The greatest episodes of this winning come when we are directly involved with a unified peace effort. Take one such effort — the recent Grand Culture Festival in L.A. Each of the 700 L.A. performers, 300 nationwide participants and hundreds of other American youth faced their own individual hardships. But, these youth said they emerged from that mystic campaign with amazing change in their lives, change that echoed in their daily existence. They got great grades, nailed new jobs, found treasured friendships, and more.

The actual script of the culture festival depicted an epic drama. Throughout history humankind has drenched itself in a flood of violence and tyranny, a flood which is at full surge in present day, the dawn of the new century. But, it is here that the youth will flat-out reject the bloody trend. We bodhisattvas enter the world stage and come out kicking butt (non-violently, of course — gentle kicks with soft-sole shoes). We march forth and generate a new generation of culture. We slam on the brakes of that speeding train called the Lesser Self and usher all disgruntled passengers onto the great cruise ship Life and Peace — a big ship with shiny mirrors and cool carpeting.

If we don't stand up against evil, absolutely no one else will. Decades from now, when today's teens have turned into tomorrow's 50-year-olds, our current politicians will be retired or deceased. One would think we'd then have a clean slate, but society tends toward repeating itself. In a downward spiral, we find ourselves approaching an extreme of, what former U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali terms, New Isolationism — a destination toward which we spiral with fierce momentum.

Changing this destiny will be brutal work, but that's where the splendor comes in. All of our struggles will serve as key ingredients for success. Consider the Words of the Week in the Sept. 21 *Seikyo Shimbun*:

*Problems are like textbooks  
for learning about the Mystic Law.  
Because we have problems,  
We can understand the greatness of this Buddhism!*

Getting a great job, polishing an attractive personality — every aspect of winning in our daily life is guaranteed. When we as individuals align along the spine of our unified movement, we maximize our power to affect our own lives. It's a precious opportunity. In the next few months on into the next decade, our SGI-USA joint effort is to stand strong against injustice. It'll take guts. It'll take sweat. But, those who fight hard will come away in total triumph. And total triumph is quite nice. ♪

# Revitalization

A poem by San Francisco member Joshua Wolper, 18  
(inspired by his experience during the Youth Grand Culture Festival)

We are tired.  
Scared,  
Yet, we are excited;

Excited of the unknown.  
We anticipate the arrival.  
Wait, wait.  
I feel it.  
Can you?  
There is energy,  
Hanging thick in the air.  
Can you feel it?  
It is seeping into my pores.  
I feel the energy,  
Like fresh, cold water on my face.  
I am revived.  
I am tired no more.

I am thinking.  
Pondering;  
And out of the blue, emerged  
The golden glowing  
Light of red passionate:  
Peace.  
Peace, which serves the  
Society.  
Youth, of thundering applause  
And smiling faces.  
Happy, happy faces.

We are observing.  
To catch a glimpse of unity,  
Together,  
Fighting for the universe.  
We hear the echoes,  
The resounding lub-dub of heartbeats.

Heartbeats; beating in each and every core  
of us all,  
And linking; joining in the flow, a continuous momentum.  
Lub-dub, lub-dub.  
The simultaneous rhythm  
Of joy and hope.

Steady and strong.

We are receiving,  
Accepting a responsibility.  
Briefed on our mission  
Through the sensation of the five senses.  
But look deeper into the gift.  
We are blessed with one more  
Sense: the sense of mission.

We are energetic, smart  
Observant and giving.

Yea' we arise,  
Emerge to touch the  
Hollow souls,  
And make them hopeful,  
Hopeful once again. ♪



Josh stands with poise at the site of SUA, Aliso Viejo.

(“Believe...” continued from page III)

ences and what people have overcome, I know that we are capable young people waiting and ready to tackle any obstacle that comes our way.

I want to thank everyone for allowing me to have this experience and broaden my view on what the SGI is working toward. This experience has shown me what kosen-rufu is all about. It's not about getting everyone to become Buddhist, but enlightening everyone to what it means to become happy and live in

peace. I think that it is amazing that the SGI members have so much compassion for one another. I now realize that you can go to another state, or go to another country, meet an SGI member and have that special bond with one another and an instant friendship. This is an experience I will never forget, and I hope that I can carry that compassion and strength to everyone I meet within and outside of the SGI.

I am determined to become stronger in my practice and as an individual. Thank you for allowing me to share my experience. ♪



Shan keeps good company with five great bodhisattvas, (l-r) Tony, Diana, Vicky, Tim and Miklos.