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EXPERIENCE:

Amy Lowe fulfills her dreams as a singer/song-writer.

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November 18 Celebrated

Day of Soka Gakkai's Founding commemorated nationwide

Photo by JONATHAN WILSON



Philadelphia members respond to MC turned comedian Hironori Oka at Center City District's meeting, held Nov. 21.

'Achieving a Life of Victory' in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Scottsdale District commemorated Nov. 18, Day of the Soka Gakkai's Founding, with a meeting held on Nov. 14 that focused on the theme of "Attaining a Life of Victory." District leader Jared Goldman honored the stand-alone

spirit of first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makigu-chi and the unshakable mentor-disciple relationship that developed between Mr. Makiguchi and Josei Toda, which continues today between SGI President Ikeda and SGI members.

District members divided into five groups to discuss the SGI organization, health, relationships/family, work and education. At the end of the meeting, representatives of each group summarized the discussions.

Kim Masumi reported for the group that discussed the SGI organization. It was agreed that SGI activities should center on the interests of the members,

The Answers Are In!

Photo by DIXON HAMEY



Members at the Seattle Culture Center take the Intermediate-level Exam, Oct. 25, which was held nationwide and overseas. See pages 4-5 for the exam questions and answers, and page 2 for commentary by Eugene Hirahara, SGI-USA Study Department leader.

not the organization. In addition, the organization should use all methods of communication, including modern technology to accomplish that goal.

College student Denise Stinnett, 20, reported on the discussion about work, which focused on how Buddhist philosophy relates to work and how to solve problems. "It's really encouraging to hear people talk about using Buddhist practice in the work force, since having a real career seems so far off to me right now," she said. "I know how to use Buddhist philosophy in school, and it's nice to know I can use the same techniques to tackle problems at work."

What are important for relationships and family, according to group facilitator Carol Ehrenreich, are respect, commitment and communication. Sheethong Ho's group discussed health, the oneness of body and mind, and how prayers work.

The discussion on education centered on how the education system does not have the values it should. "We can still practice Buddhism and chant, and bring the practice in the school to influence the environment," said Jassandra Nanini, 16.

"It was a fantastic success," Jared said of the meeting. "The planning was good, and everybody pulled together beautifully. Every group was active, with members speaking freely. The meeting was a fitting close to the millennium, ushering in the new."

—DIANA DECKER

Photo by EDWARD CLARK



San Fernando District meets in Arleta, Calif., Nov. 19.

Photo by DIANA DECKER



Scottsdale District's youth took charge of planning their district's Nov. 18 commemorative meeting, held Nov. 14.

Photo by DIANA DECKER



Changing Our Lives Through Study

By **EUGENE HIRAHARA**
SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT LEADER



The SGI-USA Study Department Intermediate-level Exam was held Oct. 25 at approximately 160 locations throughout the United States and the Caribbean, and in Okinawa and Tokyo for the members of Japan's SGI International Group. More than 4,300 members participated.

The exam candidates challenged the circumstances of daily life, taking the time to study in the midst of very busy schedules. It's most likely that hardly anyone had an easy time preparing for the exam. Perhaps some had very hectic work schedules and/or children to care for, as well as attending SGI-USA activities in the evenings. Students had to set aside time for study between classes or after their school study in the evening. Each examinee's circumstance differed, but even with very little energy left at the end of a long day, I imagine many stayed up late to study, even sacrificing some of their precious sleep time.

Those who have not taken a test in a long time may have felt quite nervous. Despite such difficult circumstances, so many members challenged them-

selves in studying for the exam.

And in addition to the challenges faced by the examinees, we cannot overlook the efforts of many other members who supported them in their efforts. Many studied regularly with someone who would be taking the exam, for as long as three months or more. Some districts conducted more than 20 preparatory study meetings.

Study department examinations have been a precious tradition of the Soka Gakkai since the time of second president, Josei Toda. President Toda urged members to approach Buddhist study with a spirit like that of a master swordsman seeking to sharpen and hone his skill. This means that in spite of our difficult daily lives we must exert ourselves in our practice and seriously pursue the study of Buddhism in order to sharpen our "sword" of faith.

SGI President Ikeda wrote in his foreword to the newly published *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*: "The Goshō is a

work of faith, of philosophy, of daily living, of eternal peace, and of boundless hope. It is set with myriad jewels of guidance. SGI members have read a single passage of the Goshō with their entire life, and they have not only changed their lives for the better but have also achieved their human revolution." Also he wrote, "It is practice and study that deepen and strengthen that faith. For us, study must never be a mere accumulation of knowledge. It must be strictly a practical study to deepen one's own faith and elevate one's own state of life."

The purpose of study is not to pass an exam; the exam is merely a means, and expedient, to inspire and motivate us in our study of Buddhism. Frankly speaking, I wonder if there were no intermediate exam, how many of over 4,300 members who took the exam would have studied as hard as they did, with the seriousness and challenging spirit of a "master swordsman" in training.

Also the exam presents each of us with an opportunity to reflect on our own study habits. How many of us who did not have to take an exam this time have been studying steadily every day? Some have, to be sure. But most of us—or at

least I can speak for myself—find it difficult to be motivated to study without some kind of goal or objective in mind. In "The True Aspect of All Phenomena," Nichiren Daishonin clearly emphasized the essential importance of study in the following passage: "Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism" ("The True Aspect of All Phenomena," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 386). In that sense, all of those who have challenged studying in the midst of difficult daily lives have deepened and enriched their lives.

In the process of taking the exam, regardless of the score, all are winners in faith. Many examinees did not achieve the test score required to pass, and both the examinees and those who helped them study may feel discouraged at this. However, I believe those who did not pass the exam this time will make an even stronger determination for future study. In this respect, their growth will far surpass those who received a passing score but slacken in their study of the Daishonin's teachings. This is because, as I mentioned before, the test exists to help us deepen our understanding of Buddhism.

Those who continue to study with a seeking spirit will be the winners regardless of whether they pass any particular exam.

I have heard from many people who took the exam who have expressed their appreciation for this opportunity, regardless of whether or not they passed. Some of their comments are:

"I liked reading the 'Life Span' chapter. Now I can understand, when we do gongyo, we're in the original moment of life, with no beginning or end."

"Studying 'The Opening of the Eyes' for this exam, I gained an understanding of true action and what it means to be a leader, not just someone who says whatever they want to say. In other words, the true aspect of a leader."

"Preparing for the Intermediate study exam gave me a new perspective on the temple issue. Instead of asking myself, 'What can I do?' I began asking myself 'What must I do?'"

An Entrance Exam and an Elementary Level Exam are scheduled for the year 2000 and another Entrance Exam and an Advanced Level Exam are scheduled for 2001. Regardless of our study level, let's all involve ourselves in studying together to deepen our faith, to develop the impetus for kosen-rufu activities and to sink the roots of a new humanistic philosophy in the soil of America in the coming century. **WT**

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EXPERIENCE—AMY LOWE, CHICAGO, ILL.

Singer/Songwriter Wins Prestigious Awards

By VERONICA EVANS
CHICAGO, ILL.

Anyone who meets Amy Lowe can feel her passion for connecting with the world through her music. Her bright eyes and focused nature don't reveal a clue to her past difficulties. As an accomplished singer/songwriter—the vehicle for this passion—it has taken her on a road no one could have foreseen.

When Amy was 16, she faced the most traumatic event any child can suffer—the loss of a parent. Her mother drowned during a sudden storm while sailing with Amy's father. "My whole life changed overnight. I felt trapped in a terrible nightmare. Each day I would wake up and hope that it had all been a mistake—that my mother was really still alive. But instead my sense of security—my safety net, my view of the world—shattered. Things would never be the same again. In vain, I hoped, waited and wished I would wake and discover that my mother's death had just been a bad dream. Instead, my family fell apart."

As death can do, the stability, love and direction that was a constant, vanished overnight. Being the last child living at home, the support she desperately needed was unavailable because her father was equally suffering from the loss. These events led her on worldwide journeys far too complex for her age. "At 18, I worked and saved enough money to buy a backpack, a plane ticket and a train pass and left for Europe; I went as far away from home as I could go."

Her education, music and soul were virtually without direction until she met the Daishonin's Buddhism in 1982. As she chanted to fulfill her dreams of being a singer/songwriter, she was asked to work for the Chicago Public Schools' Urban Gateways Program and eventually became an artist in residence. Even though working with children never occurred to her, she accepted the challenge and set about writing concepts she thought would be fun and appealing.

A chance meeting and subsequent collaboration with a comedy writer resulted in the musical comedy, "FunStuff," which

was performed at The Chicago Improv for five years.

"Since 1982, I practiced Buddhism diligently. One constant in my life has always been music, so one of my first prayers was to be able to make my living through my art. Soon the doors opened as I continued to chant about my career and my mission. I wanted to create value through my work writing music and performing in ways that inspire and bring joy, reaching the hearts of both children and adults."

After that successful run, she began expanding her repertoire and performing for children at schools, libraries, bookstores and festivals. This expansion eventually led her to Al Strutz of Emphasis Entertainment Group, who assisted in the production and nationwide distribution of her first CD entitled *I Like Gum*.

It seemed the more Amy chanted, the more her musical career ventured into uncharted waters. And along with her successes, came the inevitable twists that surface as one endeavors to move forward in life.

This entire time, with the encouragement of many friends in faith, she was able to weather the loss of confidence and hope that can cause us to think our dreams are impossible to achieve. Amy was inspired also by the following passage from SGI President Ikeda: "Nothing is wasted in faith. One never loses out. Please be confident that all your efforts to help others and promote Buddhism are accumulating immense treasures of good fortune in your life. This is what is meant by inconspicuous benefit" (*From Today Onward*, p. 111).

As Amy continued to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, she found her writing and performances were better than ever. She was able to put her mother's death into perspective and find her place in the world. In fact, for the first time in her life, she was also able to remove the painful cycle of her experience and help heal her family's suffering.

"I chanted to have so much appreciation for my parents that I would choose them again in another lifetime. Like dew melting in the morning sun after 16 years of Buddhist practice, I felt in the depths of my heart true appreciation. I was so glad to have the parents that I did. Without

them, I wouldn't be alive or have encountered Buddhism." She began to realize how this tragic event in her life allowed her to connect more strongly to different kinds of people and transform that experience into song.

Five years ago she was approached by Urban Gateways to put together a performance for children about the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. She united with storyteller Megan Wells, and after nine months of research "Fire In Boomtown" was born. "Megan and I work very differently, so shortly after we became partners in the creation of 'Boomtown,' the struggle began—along with doubts about our partnership. As a songwriter I am very verbal; I thrive on discussing and sharing ideas as they develop, molding and shaping them with my partner. Megan, on the other hand, says nothing, takes her time to gather information, until she has something substantial to share. Before I became confident in her work, the waiting fostered a lot of conflict for me. The initial process was very frustrating. But through chanting, we have grown to love and respect our partnership. And, although at times we still butt heads, we know each other better, and the years of growth and hard work have paid off.

"We now call ourselves 'Story and Song' Amy Lowe and Megan Wells.' She brings out the best in my art. People say we have a magic."

Because of the overwhelming success of "Fire In Boomtown," they were asked to produce a similar show on the history of Arizona. Then the Chicago Historical Society also commissioned another show on Chicago and the American Expansion entitled "Go West." In addition, last November, she was interviewed by the *Chicago Tribune*, resulting in an article in the Nov. 8 Womenews "Turning Point" section.

Unbeknownst to Amy, "Fire In Boomtown" and Emphasis Entertainment Group were nominated for the 1999 Ed-



Amy Lowe with young audience performing 'Lickety Split' from her first CD 'I Like Gum.'

Press (Association of Educational Publishers) Distinguished Achievement Award in Electronic Media. The other nominees were World Book Encyclopedia, MacIntosh, Edmark and IBM.

Because no one from her team thought there was a possibility of winning against such giants in media, they didn't bother to attend the awards banquet, which took place at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. However, because of Amy's experience in making the impossible somehow possible, and encouragement from a close friend, she went to the banquet armed only with her daimoku and feelings of appreciation for just being nominated. To her utter surprise, after being reviewed by 39 judges with prestigious educational and media affiliations, Boomtown won!

"For years I chanted to create award-winning work that would inspire people and reach their hearts. In addition to the Ed-Press award, 'Fire In Boomtown' recently won the Parent's Choice Gold Award as well. I love finding and telling important historical stories, giving voice to those who have none, sharing rarely told tales that raise questions and show courage and strength to rise again—stories that reveal the array of human foibles, mistakes, victories and trails. I believe that my mission as a musician is to share songs that inspire, entertain, bring joy, awaken, cause dialogue, stir memory and educate."

While being interviewed, Amy spoke of the importance of artists being recognized in their field. More than that, she spoke of the tremendous journey she was able to take because of her practice of Buddhism. She also spoke of Nichiren Daishonin's

teachings and their meaning in her life, her favorite quote being: "A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith. Then he will be as strong as a demon armed with an iron staff....Kyo'o Gozen's misfortunes will change into fortune. Muster faith and pray to this Go-honzon. Then what is there that cannot be achieved?" ("Reply to Kyo'o," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 412).

Currently, Amy is receiving support from the Illinois Arts Council as a resident artist and tours various schools and communities. Last year she was asked to help "build community" within a particular school through developing a multicultural holiday program. Through songs and storytelling, Amy facilitated communication among parents, faculty and students.

"By trying to find stories about their heritage, parents and teachers learned things about each other that they never knew before. The community felt the spirit. I felt like this opened doors and dialogue." More recently, she has been working with developmentally challenged kids to find their voice through storytelling and songs.

"Ever since I was a little girl I wrote songs to express my emotions; I always wrote songs—that was my dream. Now my dream is to have my songs performed by major artists—people that reach hundreds and thousands of people.

"I struggled for years but I now make a living from my music. It wasn't easy. Just because you have talent doesn't mean that you're going to get there. You have to have persistence and fortune. And you may be persistent but if you don't have fortune.... It took a lot of daimoku." **W**

SGI-USA Study Department Intermediate Level Exam

The answer(s) to each question from the Oct. 25 exam are underlined.

PART I: Ten questions from Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra, Volumes 2 and 3.

Q1. In the "Life Span" chapter (16th chapter) of the Lotus Sutra, the revelation that Shakyamuni attained Buddhahood in the inconceivably remote past stands in marked contrast to the view that he attained enlightenment for the first time in his present lifetime beneath the bodhi tree in India, a view maintained up to and throughout the first half of the Lotus Sutra. What is the significance of this revelation? Select the TWO CORRECT answers. (2 points each.)

- a. Shakyamuni has a much longer life span than a common mortal.
- b. Shakyamuni explains the eternity of life in terms of his own existence.
- c. Enlightenment in this lifetime is merely theoretical; the enlightenment in the remote past is the true enlightenment.
- d. Eternity is the true aspect of the lives of all living beings.
- e. "Beneath the bodhi tree in India" indicates this saha world, while "inconceivably remote past" indicates the Buddha's world.

Q2. The appearance of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter (15th chapter) of the Lotus Sutra has profound significance. From below, select the ONE statement that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. Shakyamuni entrusts the Bodhisattvas of the Earth instead of the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching with propagating the Lotus Sutra after his death.
- b. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are bodhisattvas who possess the eternal Mystic Law in their lives.
- c. Of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, the Lotus Sutra says that "in this saha world they dwell in the empty space in its lower part."
- d. Those who practice with faith in the Gohonzon and advance kosen-rufu with the same mind as the Daishonin are at the level of practice that will one day qualify them as followers of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.
- e. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth endure great persecution in the polluted world of the Latter Day of the Law.

Q3. Why is the interpretation of the "Thus Come One's secret and his transcendental powers" important from the viewpoint of the Daishonin's Buddhism? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. Because without the clarification of the Law originally enabling all Buddhas to attain enlightenment, that is, of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the path for all people to attain Buddhahood could not be opened.
- b. Because Shakyamuni's true identity is revealed as the Buddha who attained enlightenment in the

distant past of gohyaku-jintengo.

c. Because it is alluding to the ultimate cause behind the Buddha's enlightenment in the remote past.

d. Because it is the crystallization of the contents of the entire "Life Span" chapter, which points to the path for ordinary people to become Buddhas.

e. Because Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the true Buddha and all other Buddhas are provisional Buddhas who manifest functions of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Q4. What is the meaning of "time without beginning" (Jpn *kuon ganjo*) from the viewpoint of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. "Time without beginning" means a point in time when Shakyamuni made the original cause for his enlightenment, even more distant than the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo*.
- b. "Time without beginning" means the "original moment" at which the Mystic Law was created by the original Buddha.
- c. "Time without beginning" means the point in time when Nichiren Daishonin attained enlightenment, after the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo* when Shakyamuni attained enlightenment and before the "Latter Day of the Law" when we ordinary people attain Buddhahood.
- d. "Time without beginning" means that life exists eternally and is eternally endowed with the ten worlds. When we awaken to this, every moment becomes for us this "original moment" or "time without beginning."
- e. "Time without beginning" is the same as "Time without end." It is this cyclical nature of time that prompts all Buddhas to "turn the wheel of the Law."

Q5. What does the principle of "true cause" and "true effect" in the "Life Span" chapter mean from the viewpoint of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. Shakyamuni's bodhisattva practice in the remote past, which became the cause of his enlightenment, is the true cause. And the result, his attaining Buddhahood, is the true effect.
- b. Bodhisattva practices (true cause) lead beings of the nine worlds to a realm of Buddhas (true effect), where they extinguish the nine worlds within their lives and dwell only in the world of Buddhas.
- c. Both the true cause and the true effect are contained in Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and exist simultaneously in our lives at each moment we have strong faith in the Mystic Law.
- d. The nine worlds are all present in beginningless Buddhahood (true effect) and Buddhahood is inherent in the beginningless nine worlds (true cause).
- e. Shakyamuni, the common mortal of the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo*, attained Buddhahood (true effect) as a result of practicing Nam-myoho-enge-kyo (true cause).

Q6. What does the sentence

"They will fail to realize how difficult it is to encounter the Buddha and will not approach him with a respectful and reverent mind" in the "Life Span" chapter indicate concerning the relationship between mentor and disciple in Buddhism? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. It is extremely difficult to encounter the Buddha (mentor). Therefore, the disciple must appreciate and sincerely worship the Buddha (mentor). To be worshipped in this way is the purpose of the Buddha's appearance in this world.

b. When the disciple possesses a strong seeking spirit toward and sense of appreciation for the Buddha (mentor), who has attained a supreme state of life as a human being, the disciple will develop the same supreme state of life. This is the Buddha's (mentor's) intent.

c. The Buddha (mentor) does not easily reveal himself to his disciples when the disciples are many. When the disciples are few, the Buddha (mentor) begins to teach in earnest.

d. The mentor's potential for Buddhahood is always superior to the disciple's potential for Buddhahood. For this reason, the disciples should depend completely upon the mentor in all matters.

e. The Buddha (mentor) will dedicate himself to the people (disciples) only when the people dedicate themselves to the Buddha and serve the Buddha with a respectful and reverent mind.

Q7. What are the three enlightened properties? From below, select the THREE CORRECT answers:

- a. Property of the Buddha
- b. Property of the Law
- c. Property of appearance
- d. Property of wisdom
- e. Property of entity
- f. Property of action
- g. Property of nature

Q8. "The Three Treasures" mentioned in the "Life Span" chapter are revered in Buddhism as treasures that lead people to happiness. What does the SGI recognize as the correct three treasures of the Latter Day of the Law? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Treasure of the Law (the Gohonzon), Treasure of the Wisdom (the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra) and Treasure of the Action (action of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth).
- b. Treasure of the Buddha (Shakyamuni), Treasure of the Law (the Lotus Sutra) and Treasure of the Priest (Nichiren Daishonin and, in the broad sense, all priests who uphold the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra).
- c. Treasure of the Buddha (Nichiren Daishonin), Treasure of the Wisdom of the Buddha (his writings) and Treasure of the Action of the Buddha his propagation effort).
- d. Treasure of the Buddha (Nichiren Daishonin), Treasure of the Law (Nam-myoho-enge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws) and Treasure of the Priest (Nikko Shonin, and in the broad sense, the harmonious gathering of believers who correctly uphold and spread the

Daishonin's Buddhism).

e. Treasure of Gohonzon (Dai-Gohonzon), Treasure of Daimoku (Nam-myoho-enge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws) and Treasure of the High Sanctuary.

Q9. In the phrase of the "Life Span" chapter "single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha, not hesitating even if it costs them their lives," what does "single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha" mean from the standpoint of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. It means that people single-mindedly desire to see Shakyamuni Buddha, even after his death.

b. It means that, since the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo*, people had been single-mindedly desiring to see Shakyamuni appear in this saha world.

c. It means to single-mindedly view Nichiren Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

d. It means to see the Buddha in one's own mind.

e. It means that people must single-mindedly desire to see the Buddha's protection, especially when their lives are in danger.

Q10. What does the phrase "I am always here preaching the Law" mean in the Latter Day of the Law from Nichiren Daishonin's perspective? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. That the Buddha is always preaching the Law in the Ceremony in the Air.
- b. Chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo in this saha world.
- c. That the Buddha is always in the treasure tower desiring our salvation.
- d. The eternal teaching of the Lotus Sutra.
- e. The Buddha's compassion to propagate the Law.

PART II: Five questions from "The Opening of the Eyes" (1) from Learning From the Goshu: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin).

Q11. In "The Opening of the Eyes," Nichiren Daishonin proclaims, "I, Nichiren, am the richest man in all of present-day in Japan." The next sentence in this passage suggests that the Daishonin developed this rich inner state, which President Toda described as "invincible" and "free from fear," because of what? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Because he was not beheaded at the Tatsunokuchi Persecution and felt immense relief that his life was no longer in danger.
- b. Because he arrived safely on Sado Island with the protection of the Buddhist gods despite the fact that many Nembutsu believers were intent on killing him.
- c. Because he was able to finish writing a number of important doctrinal works despite the severe environment on Sado Island.
- d. Because he was able to realize that he was the reincarnation of

Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (Fukyo), whom Shakyamuni predicted in the Lotus Sutra would appear in the Latter Day of the Law and experience the same persecutions the Daishonin did.

e. Because he had dedicated his life to the Lotus Sutra and waged a life-and-death struggle to propagate its teachings as the sutra's true votary.

Q12. Quoting the Nirvana Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin points out that even a "good" Buddhist practitioner becomes "an enemy of Buddhism from within" if he or she sees someone slandering Buddhism and fails to do what? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. To pray for their happiness.
- b. To ignore them.
- c. To befriend them.
- d. To reproach them.
- e. To avoid them.

Q13. At the end of "The Opening of the Eyes," the Daishonin addresses the confusion of many followers by posing the question: In propagating this teaching, what merit does it bring, what can you gain, if you arouse the enmity of those around you? How does the Daishonin answer this question? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. You must select the right time and right place to propagate this teaching, otherwise you arouse the enmity of those around you.
- b. You must always speak mildly and befriend others, otherwise you will arouse the enmity of those around you.
- c. You must disregard those around you whose enmity you arouse.
- d. You must continue to propagate this teaching, pointing out the truth, even if you arouse the enmity of those around you.
- e. If you arouse the enmity of those around you, you should have the courage to apologize.

Q14. With what intention did Shakyamuni, Taho and the various Buddhas from the ten directions gather in one place in the "Emergence of the Treasure Tower" (11th chapter) of the Lotus Sutra? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. To see the emergence of the treasure tower.
- b. To ensure the future propagation of the Lotus Sutra.
- c. To protect the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.
- d. To attend the Ceremony in the Air.
- e. To listen to a lecture on the Lotus Sutra.

Q15. Had the Daishonin not spoken out and proclaimed the correct Buddhist teaching for the Latter Day of the Law, he may have led a peaceful life, but what, in his own words in "The Opening of the Eyes," would he have been lacking? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Courage
- b. Fortune
- c. Compassion

- d. Faith
e. Action

PART III: Six questions from "The Opening of the Eyes" (2) from Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

Q16. What was the Daishonin's purpose in writing "The Opening of the Eyes"? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. To clarify the true three virtues of sovereign, teacher and parent.
b. To reproach the theoretical teachings of the Lotus Sutra.
c. To explain the true method for performing the eye-opening ceremony, which is based solely on the Lotus Sutra.
d. To clarify that he alone possesses the true three virtues of the Law, Wisdom and Emancipation.
e. To "open the eyes" of the rulers of Japan to the cause of the calamities and disasters afflicting the country.

Q17. What is the relationship between the three virtues and the SGI's movement of peace, culture and education? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. The virtue of sovereign lies in closing off the paths of evil, thus saving people from misery. This accords with the SGI's peace movement.
b. The virtue of sovereign accords with the SGI's cultural movement, because the function of a sovereign is diplomacy, without which there can be no true cultural exchange.
c. The virtue of parent accords with the SGI's cultural movement, because like a parent, culture fosters people's inner lives.
d. The virtue of the teacher relates to the SGI's movement of education.
e. The passage from the Lotus Sutra "This, my land, remains safe and tranquil" indicates the virtue of sovereign. Therefore, the SGI's peace movement accords with the virtue of sovereign.

Q18. The first president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, said that, "Of all the Nichiren schools existing today, Nichiren Shoshu most closely resembles the Tendai School of the Daishonin's time." In looking back, why can we say that this observation has proved to be true? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Because Nichiren Shoshu had carried the correct lineage of Buddhism from the Daishonin in the same way as the Tendai School carried the correct lineage from the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai.
b. Because Nichiren Shoshu is the largest sect of all the Nichiren schools existing today, just as the Tendai school was the largest school of Buddhism in the Daishonin's time.
c. Because the Tendai School transmitted the Lotus Sutra to Japan, and, in the same manner, Nichiren Shoshu transmitted the Daishonin's teaching to modern society worldwide.
d. Because the Tendai school had carried on only the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, as

Nichiren Shoshu had carried on the theoretical teaching of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

e. Though the Tendai school was aware of the superiority of the Lotus Sutra, they not only failed to reproach evil, but took the side of the Daishonin's persecutors. Nichiren Shoshu, similarly, has repeatedly obstructed kosen-rufu, an undertaking for the people's happiness.

Q19. What can we learn from "The Opening of the Eyes" about being "praised by fools"? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Those who act in exact accord with the Lotus Sutra are sure to be praised, even by fools.
b. To be praised by fools means to be persecuted by fools.
c. Even those who are ignorant of Buddhism will praise the greatness of the true teaching.
d. True practitioners of the Lotus Sutra are praised by fools first, then praised by the great sage eventually.
e. To be praised by fools is the greatest disgrace, while to be persecuted by them is the highest honor.

Q20. T'ien-t'ai states that the method of propagating Buddhism

- "should be that which accords with the time." What is it that should not change with the time? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:
a. The essential rituals of Buddhism.
b. The form of Buddhist practice.
c. The nobility of the Buddha's disciples.
d. The method of propagating Buddhism.
e. The spirit of dedicating oneself to the Law and people's happiness.

Q21. In light of the Daishonin's teachings, how can those who propagate the Mystic Law in the Latter Day of the Law be described? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. They are far nobler than even the practitioners of the Former and Middle Days of the Law.
b. They are greatly extolled by Shakyamuni, Many Treasures Buddha and all Buddhas of the ten directions.
c. They will always experience comfortable and easy circumstances.
d. They must be the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.
e. They stand amid storms of obstacles and calumny.

PART IV: Six questions from the "Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue" pamphlet.

Q22. What action does Nichiren Daishonin state in the Goshō that believers should take at "a time when truth and error" in Buddhism "stand shoulder to shoulder"? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Devote one's attention to rebuking slander of the Law.
b. Look for the saint or sage who can make a correct judgment.
c. Chant daimoku to protect the essential teaching.
d. Avoid developing slander on one's own mind.
e. Question oneself objectively

about one's attitude toward the truth.

Q23. Nichiren Daishonin states, "There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myōhō-rengē-kyō in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women." In contrast to this, what did Nichijū Fujimoto, Nichiren Shoshu's general administrator, state in a letter to the Soka Gakkai in January 1991? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. To talk about men and women with a sense of equality is an expression of great conceit.
b. There are no nuns in the modern history of Nichiren Shoshu.
c. Men and women, whether clergy or laity, are fundamentally different and live differently.
d. To talk about the priesthood and laity with a sense of equality is an expression of great conceit.
e. Priests and lay persons have exactly the same status, except during ceremonies or on Buddhist holidays.

Q24. Nichiren Daishonin states: "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who chant Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō." In contrast, what is the assertion of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. The Gohonzon outside yourself is a manifestation of the Daishonin's life as an enlightened human being, but the Gohonzon within means the enlightened potential within all ordinary people.
b. The Gohonzon is the embodiment of the Buddha's wisdom and compassion.
c. One's power of faith and practice to the Gohonzon enables one to tap the power of the Gohonzon within.
d. The Law of Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō exists nowhere but in the physical object of the Dai-Gohonzon.
e. To claim control over the power of the Gohonzon is the basest form of exploitation of the Daishonin's teaching.

Q25. Nichiren Shoshu has claimed that the Gohonzon issued by SGI is counterfeit because the high priest has not performed the "eye-opening ceremony" upon it. What was Nichiren Daishonin's view of the "eye-opening ceremony" as expressed in the Goshō? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. The eye-opening ceremony performed upon the Gohonzon is essential to empower it.
b. The eye-opening ceremony is an essential formality passed down from provisional, esoteric Buddhism.
c. The eye-opening ceremony gives power to statues of Shakyamuni Buddha and other Buddhist objects.
d. A formal eye-opening ceremony by good priests is necessary but not by evil priests.
e. In performing the eye-opening ceremony for painted or wooden Buddha images, the only authority to rely on is the Lotus Sutra.

Q26. In his letter "On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings," the Daishonin states, "From the very day you take faith in this teaching, you should be fully prepared to face the

three kinds of persecutions." According to the text, how should we respond to criticism and attack by entrenched authority? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. We should be fully prepared with precise legal strategy to sue those authorities who are criticizing and attacking us.
b. We should be confident that they will be defeated spontaneously by the Buddhist gods.
c. We should pray for the happiness of those authorities who are attacking us.
d. We should take pride in being subjected to such opposition, for it is proof that we are on the right track.
e. We should humbly reflect on our attitude, and put a stop to those actions that cause those authorities to want to attack us.

Q27. Nichiren Daishonin writes, "It is important to speak with even greater conviction to those who slander." What should our attitude or behavior be toward temple members? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. We should act with compassion toward those destined to suffer, even if they have denounced us.
b. We should naturally try to help them escape such misery with our strong and consistent prayer.
c. We should seek to see great misfortune befall those who slander.
d. We should speak with great conviction about the reality of the temple issue so that we may eventually convince temple followers to disassociate from the temple.
e. We need to use common sense and approach them with warmth and respect because each person is unique.

PART V: Six questions from "An Explanation of Nikko Shonin's Twenty-six Admonitions" by SGI President Ikeda.

Q28. What was Nikko Shonin's primary motivation in writing his "Twenty-six Admonitions"? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. It was for the eternal salvation and protection of humankind.
b. It was to be sure that future generations would correctly conduct the formalities and rituals of Buddhism.
c. It was so that later students of Buddhism, specifically priests, would carry on their practice correctly.
d. It was to be sure that the Daishonin's golden words regarding kosen-rufu would be treasured.
e. It was for the sake of encouraging people to dedicate their lives to the path of the Mystic Law.

Q29. What is the similarity between the "five senior priests" of the Daishonin's time and Nikken? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Both excommunicated large numbers of lay believers.
b. Both physically demolished a temple that was to be the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism.
c. Both promoted the worship of statues of Shakyamuni Buddha.
d. Both betrayed their masters, differing in every regard from the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and

Nikko Shonin.

e. Both became engaged in lawsuits over their alleged inappropriate behavior.

Q30. The essential spirit of Article 3 of Nikko Shonin's "Twenty-six Admonitions" is to treasure and base oneself on what? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. The Gohonzon.
b. The daimoku.
c. Action for kosen-rufu.
d. The writings of Nichiren Daishonin.
e. The Three Treasures.

Q31. Presidents Makiguchi and Toda refused to follow the high priest's instructions to incorporate worship of a Shinto amulet into Soka Gakkai members' practice. They based their refusal on Article 17 of the "Twenty-six Admonitions." What does this article state? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Unless you have a thorough understanding of and firm faith in the teachings, you should not study T'ien-t'ai's doctrines.
b. You should be inclined to engage in discussion or deliver lectures, and you should refrain from pursuing secular concerns.
c. You must not accept offerings from slanderers of the Law.
d. You should not sit together with slanderers of the Law for fear of suffering the same punishment as they.
e. Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha's Law and propounds his own views.

Q32. Why does Nikko Shonin tell us not to "accept offerings from slanderers of the Law" in Article 22 of his "Twenty-six Admonitions"? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. Because one suffers the same retribution as do the slanderers.
b. Because one already owes a debt of gratitude to slanderers.
c. Because to accept offerings made by slanderers is to condone their slander.
d. Because one becomes guilty of the same offense as the slanderers.
e. Because one will be placing the amassing of wealth above upholding the teachings.

Q33. Article 16 of Nikko Shonin's "Twenty-six Admonitions" states, "Even though they may be lowly, you should deeply respect and regard as your teachers those _____." From below, select the ONE phrase that CORRECTLY completes the above sentence:

- a. who have stronger faith in the Gohonzon.
b. whose practice of Buddhism is longer than yours.
c. who entered the priesthood before you.
d. whose ability at giving lectures is beyond your own.
e. whose understanding of Buddhism surpasses your own.

Note:

- Q7. Korean:** B, C, D.
Q23. Spanish: E
Q27. Spanish: E

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

'EARLY SPRING'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 3, PARTS 25-26

'The beauty and strength of the Soka Gakkai,' Shin'ichi Yamamoto tells members in Switzerland, 'are to be found in the way seniors in faith treasure and care for younger or newer members, devoting themselves wholeheartedly to supporting, encouraging and nurturing them with utmost sincerity.'

Shin'ichi Yamamoto continued: "I came to Switzerland especially to see you two, Mrs. Motosugi and Mrs. Takayama—I mean, Mrs. Bruno. I am so happy to see that both of you and your families are well. Let's not talk about difficult issues today. Just tell me how you're doing."

Sachi Bruno happily told Shin'ichi about the events leading up to her wedding: "After you gave me advice the last time you were here, I seriously chanted daimoku. I also wrote a letter to my son in Japan, telling him honestly about my feelings. Fortunately, he readily agreed to my marrying again. We are planning on eventually bringing him to Switzerland to live with us."

"I am so moved that you have made this effort to come all this way, and in this cold, to visit us in Switzerland. I don't know how to express my gratitude..."

"Thank you," replied Shin'ichi, "but I am only doing what a Soka Gakkai leader should. To willingly go anywhere to visit and encourage even one fellow member should be the spirit of the Soka Gakkai president and all Gakkai leaders. And this is all the more so when members are working hard under trying circumstances in areas where our membership is still small."

"I'm sure that it won't be long before we see a progressive increase in our membership in Switzerland. When that day comes, I hope you two will do your best to visit and encourage the members with the same spirit and commitment as myself."

"The beauty and strength of the Soka Gakkai are to be found in the way seniors in faith treasure and care for younger or newer members, devoting themselves wholeheartedly to supporting, encouraging and nurturing them with utmost sincerity."

"If I can communicate that to you, then my trip here will have been more than worthwhile—then there will be two more people who share that spirit with me."

The number of those attending the Geneva discussion meeting may have been small, but—in contrast to the freezing weather outside—the atmosphere was warm and convivial. It was as if spring had come early.

After staying overnight in Geneva, the group flew to Rome. From the plane, Switzerland was a sea of snowy mountain peaks, but when they entered Italy, the green earth spread beneath them. Several members met them at the airport in Rome and accompanied them to their hotel. And soon after they arrived, a Study De-



partment exam for the Italian members was held. When that was finished, the group went to the home of Masao Yamagishi, the Soka Gakkai contact person for Italy.

After doing gongyo with Mr. Yamagishi's family and a small gathering of Italian members, Shin'ichi announced the formation of Rome District. He appointed Mr. Yamagishi the new district leader, and his wife, Kimie, the district women's division leader. Shin'ichi also appointed Sumiko Kojima, a young Japanese woman studying painting at an Italian art college, as a staff member of the young women's division in Europe.

The previous August, after finalizing her plans to study abroad, Ms. Kojima had visited Shin'ichi at the offices of the *Seikyo Shimbun* in Tokyo. Matsuko Takaishi (the ear, nose and throat doctor, who would be studying in Germany), accompanied her. To celebrate the young women's departure overseas, Shin'ichi had given them each a copy of the *Gosho*.

Shin'ichi had worried how Ms. Kojima would fare abroad. To stand on one's own feet and live in a foreign country requires a certain toughness, like that of a weed which needs to sink deep roots and hold to the earth with a tenacious grip. But he didn't sense that toughness in Ms. Kojima. Now he was seeing her for the first time in five months.

"So, have you learned any Italian yet?" Shin'ichi asked her.

"Yes, a little. Enough to get by, anyway," she responded.

"I see. Please make gaining a thorough grasp of the language your first priority. You're a graduate of the student divi-

sion, so I hope you'll become so fluent that your name becomes synonymous with being fully bilingual in Japanese and Italian. You have come to Italy because you have a mission here, and mastery of the language is indispensable to achieving that mission. If you put sincere effort into learning it now, it will definitely stand you in good stead in the future."

"By the way, tomorrow I'm planning to visit the ruins at Pompeii. As you know, the city of Pompeii was destroyed by a volcanic eruption some 1,900 years ago. The historical novel *The Last Days of Pompeii*, which describes the tragedy, was one of Mr. Toda's favorite books. He used it as a text for the young women's division training group, the Flower-Sun Society. Why don't you come with us to Pompeii tomorrow? You could be my interpreter."

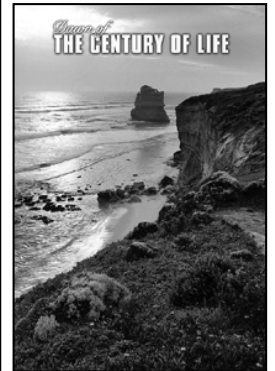
Mr. and Mrs. Yamagishi, who also spoke Italian, would be accompanying Shin'ichi to Pompeii, but he wanted to provide Ms. Kojima with an opportunity to improve and polish her newly acquired language skills.

At 9:00 the next morning, Shin'ichi and his party left Rome by train, arriving in Naples before noon. It was a beautiful city, well deserving of the famous slogan "See Naples and Die." The group headed for Pompeii in two taxis, driving south along the coast with scenic views of the Bay of Naples to their right.

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



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Understanding Others: Why First Impressions Are Often Misleading

PERSPECTIVE

By STEVE DOTY
WASHINGTON D.C.



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we have in common.

I was wrong. Mr. Zaitu sat up front with me, Ian got in the back, and no, he didn't go to sleep. Upon leaving the airport, Mr. Zaitu began asking me questions about the area where we were going, the members we would be visiting, their situations and many other questions. I told him what I knew, but on more than one occasion I responded with "I don't know."

I thought to myself, "This isn't getting off to a very great start."

Mr. Zaitu was nice in his response, saying: "That's OK. You are a new region leader. You will learn all of these things."

During our drive Ian and Mr. Zaitu worked on his editorial for the next issue of *Living Buddhism*. I listened to them discuss various points and kept thinking, should I be listening? I better pay attention to the road. Am I driving too fast? Is Mr. Zaitu worried about my driving? All of these wonderful thoughts screamed through my mind. Then, to my surprise, Mr. Zaitu asked Ian to read the editorial to me to see what I thought. I gave my honest opinion and thought this was a timely editorial. (Glad I had been listening!) Upon concluding their discussion, Ian phoned the *Living Buddhism* staff and discussed the changes so their deadline was met.

My impression of Mr. Zaitu was beginning to change. Or actually, I began to realize my perceptions had been wrong; from his sitting up front in the van, to the hamburger discussion and now asking for my thoughts on his editorial. In the book, *For Today and Tomorrow*, SGI President Ikeda states: "There is no other means than faith by which to open our lives and our inner state of Buddhahood. Faith is the most 'open' state of mind of all. Infinite clusters of good fortune will spill forth from this unbarred treasure house of life" (p. 106). I must develop this "open" state of mind.

That day we visited two fam-

ilies whose homes had been damaged by floods. I watched Mr. Zaitu reach out to these families with warm words of encouragement and a request for them to ask any questions that might be troubling them. He really made himself available.

In the evening, we attended a meeting in Jacksonville, N.C., with more than 70 members in attendance. Mr. Zaitu talked about many things, but the point that stuck in my mind is that wherever we go, we as leaders need to provide hope, courage and a sense of security to the members.

As we left, it became apparent that someone had inadvertently taken Ian's shoes. Ian was not upset in the least as he had an extra pair with him. We then left for Raleigh where we would be staying the night. In the van, we joked about Ian losing his shoes; it was a funny and warm atmosphere. Ian's shoes were returned the next day with a note that apologized and told Ian he was so fortunate to have such comfortable shoes!

From Raleigh, we traveled to Norfolk, Va.; this was his first visit there. Mr. Zaitu encouraged all of the members who were taking the study exam and afterward we attended an enthusiastic meeting with over 350 members. A youth division member shared an experience about attending the Youth Grand Culture Festival in Los Angeles. He then read a very moving poem he had written. The poem is in reference to the new millennium. In the opening he poses the question: "Where will you be?" And, in the conclusion he states: "I know where I will stand/ Here with you hand in hand/ So together let's strike, with the bold sword of courage/ At the mystery of the future/ And as youth promote the heart of peace."

After the trip, I struggled for the two weeks trying to put into words what I wanted to say about my experience and the realizations I had. I called Mr. Zaitu and told him I would like to write a *World Tribune* article and perhaps call it "A Weekend with the General Director." He told me that if I thought it would encourage the members, to go ahead. He also said he enjoyed the weekend very much and thought that perhaps he should

write an article and call it "A Weekend with Steve Doty!"

What I really learned from this trip was that it is so easy to form opinions and judge others based on just seeing them at meetings. I realized how shallow my impressions of Mr. Zaitu had been. It also became clear that it is often only by spending time with another person that I can see the richness of his or her life.

I can't help but wonder how many members and fellow leaders, family members, co-workers and temple members I have judged without really getting to know what was in their hearts. I formed my opinion of them based on brief encounters and seldom made any efforts beyond that. In *Faith into Action*, President Ikeda states: "Those who make friends have greater opportunities for growth and self development; they make society a better place and lead happy, satisfying lives. In every situation, human relations — communication and personal interaction — are vital. We need to initiate and nurture friendships and contacts with many people, both within the organization and in society at large. Our lives will open and be enriched to the extent that we do so" (p. 221). I am determined to open my life by making efforts to share the uniqueness and richness of the members, their families, and their friends in the Virginia/Carolina Region as we advance our movement of peace. **WT**

Leadership Appointments

Virginia/Carolina Region

Steve Doty
Region Leader

Jo Reed
Region WD Leader

Jerry Hicks
Vice Region Leader

Caroline Morgan
Region Vice WD Leader

Charlotte Hurdle
Region Vice WD Leader

Keli McHale
Region YWD Leader

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Publisher
Fred M. Zaitu
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
ssydney@sgi-usa.org

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
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READERS COMMENTS

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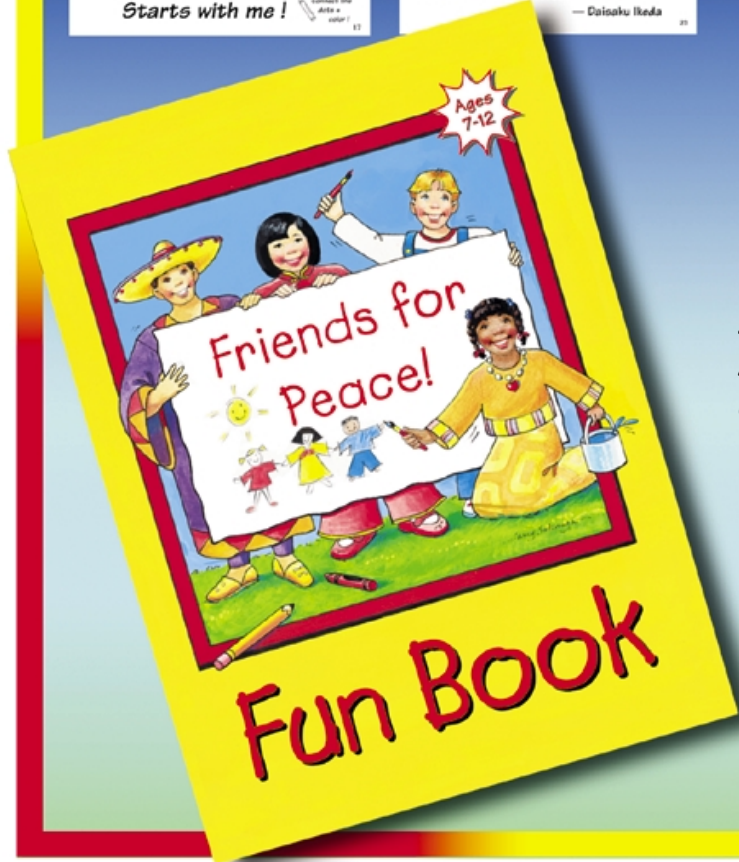
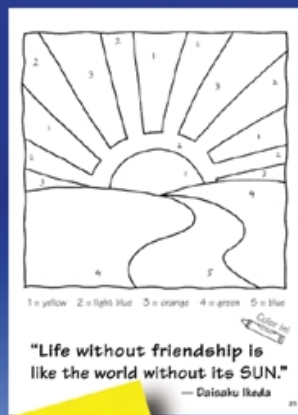
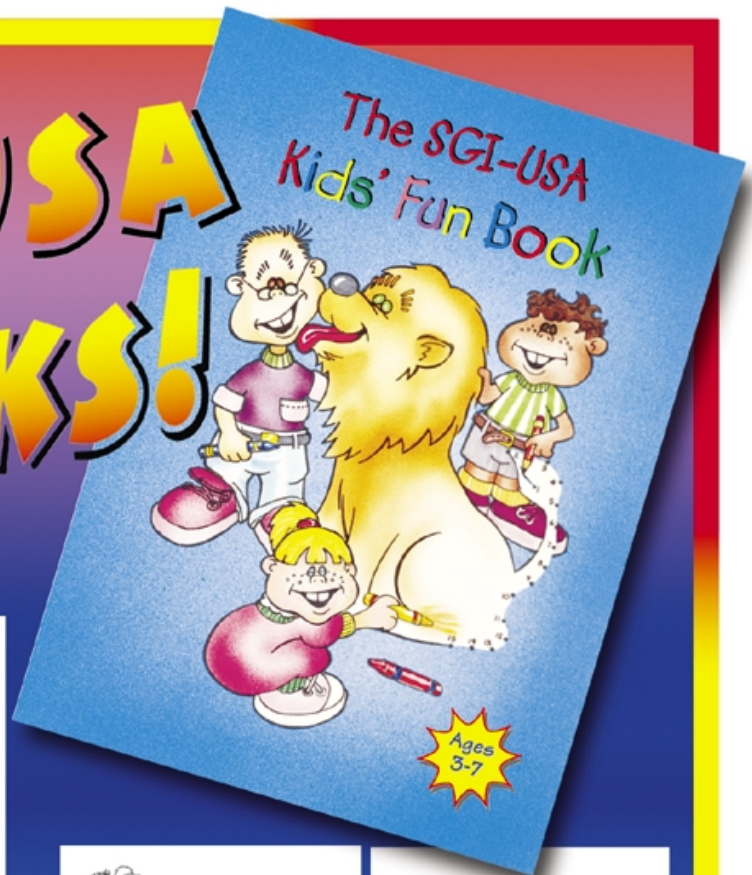
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Amy Sadanaga

SGI THEME FOR THE YEAR 2000:

'RAISING THE CURTAIN ON THE 21ST CENTURY— THE YEAR OF YOUTH'

★ What Are Your Goals for Today?
For the Year 2000?

SGI President Ikeda encouraged all youth in his July 24 speech:

Once we have embarked on an enterprise, we must have a firm resolve to see it through to the finish. We must not become discouraged, lose heart or give up along the way. Nor should we let ourselves be carried away by emotion or become consumed by strategy.

The only way to succeed is to strive to the end with sincerity, tenacity and unflagging spirit. This is the kind of person I want each of you youth division members to become.

As members of the Boys and Girls Group, let's make a

Congratulations to all of the members of the Boys and Girls Group who participated in the "How Can I Make a Difference in Society" album project.

We received almost a thousand inspiring responses! We made three large binders and covered them with felt in the three SGI colors — blue, yellow and red.

A FOLLOW-UP TO OUR PROJECT:

HOW CAN I MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN SOCIETY?

Then we glued letters and toys to the front of the albums and sent them off to SGI President Ikeda!

Thank you to Denise Williams, a women's

division member in Los Angeles, for her creativity and inspiration in putting these albums together!

On Nov. 18, we received this message

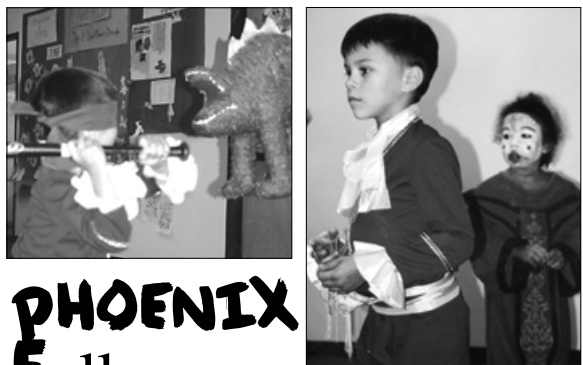
from SGI President Ikeda:

Thank you so much for the beautiful albums. I looked at them. Please give my best regards to everyone who partici-

pated. Let's introduce these albums in the Seikyo Press!

Thank you for your contribution. Now, let's take action on the determinations we made to "Make a Difference in Society"!

— *Palma Odano and Cass Wilson, SGI-USA Boys and Girls Group Coordinators*



PHOENIX Fall Family Festival Focuses on Fun

By Diana Decker
Phoenix, Ariz.

Clowns, ballerinas, fairy princesses, witches, skeletons and other costumed creatures celebrated Halloween at the Fall Family Festival at the Phoenix Culture Center on Oct. 31.

Highlights of the Boys and Girls Group activities included balloon charades, a treasure hunt and a piñata bash. Braver festival-goers endured the harrowing horrors of the Haunted House. Festivities also included musical and dance entertainment, a costume parade and an art exhibit.

Victory Over Violence, an ongoing presentation devoted to the goal of ending violence at all levels of our society and sponsored by the SGI-USA youth division, was on view throughout the festival.

A program called "Buddhism 101" — an informative session on the basics of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and the SGI-USA — was also included in the festivities for the benefit of special guests, the members of the Inter-Faith Action Coalition. 🌸

EXPERIENCES

AILEEN MOKURIA, 8

Dallas, Texas



I like this organization because people help people that are suffering or having problems. We believe there are Ten Worlds. Some of them mean you're happy, and some of them mean you aren't so happy. We do not believe in war. We believe in world happiness, so you might want to be in the SGI. 🌸

NIRVANA HOPKINS, 9

Las Vegas, Nev.



Dancing in Las Vegas

By Patty Jacobs, Las Vegas, Nev.

Nirvana Hopkins took her love of dancing to the public recently when she performed with a group of 39 youth at a community benefit in Las Vegas. Nirvana, who has been in the practice all her life, learned to dance with the SGI-USA Las Vegas Boys and Girls Group and decided to join the West Las Vegas Arts Center dance camp.

The youth collaborated on a large landscape mural, as well as exhibiting arts and crafts that they made. Nirvana said: "It was a lot of fun. We got to show our personalities, and I wanted to share my dancing with the community." 🌸



When the boy was seven years old, his mother entrusted him to a temple in the mountains, but the other boys who were his companions in the temple made fun of him because he had no father. He returned to his home and asked his mother to tell him about his father, but she was unable to speak and could do nothing but weep.

The boy pressed her, saying, "Without the sky, the rain does not fall, and without the earth, plants do not grow. Even if I have a mother, without a father, I cannot become an adult. Why do you hide my father's whereabouts from me?"

Confronted in this manner, his mother replied, "I did not speak of the matter because you were too young. But this is what happened." [She told him the whole story.]

Weeping copiously, the boy said, "Did my father leave no mementos behind when he went away?"

"There are these," said his mother, producing a written record of the Ohashi family ancestors and a letter that the father himself had written for the child who was still in his mother's womb. Seeing these, the boy longed more than ever for his father, and, unable to do anything but weep, said, "What am I to do now?"

"When your father set out from here," his mother replied, "he was accompanied by many followers, but because he had incurred his lord's wrath, they all deserted him and went away. Now there is not even anyone to send me word whether or not he is still alive."

At this the boy flung himself face down and wept harder than ever, and would not stop even when chided.

The mother said, "The reason I sent you to the mountain temple was so that you could repay your filial obligation to your father. You must offer flowers before the Buddha, read a scroll of the sutra, and in this way fulfill your duty!"...

The son returned to the temple, where day and night he recited the Lotus Sutra. When he turned 12, he ran away to the city of Kamakura, where he went to the Hachiman shrine and began to recite the Lotus Sutra, praying to know whether his father was alive or dead.

His beautiful childlike voice echoed through the sacred hall of the shrine and struck the hearts of all those who heard it, so that those who had come to pay their respects all forgot to take their leave, but instead gathered around like a crowd at a market-

The Story of Ohashi no Taro's Determined Son

(from *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 676-78)

The follow Gosho excerpt tells the story of the determined son of Ohashi no Taro. Before the son is born, Ohashi no Taro — who has incurred the wrath of the shogun, leader of Japan — is sent to prison for 12 years. As he is leaving, his wife tells him she is pregnant. She later gives birth to a son, their only child....



place. When they looked to see who was reciting, they discovered it was neither a priest nor a woman, but a young boy.

Just at that time, Lady Kyo-no-nii [wife of the shogun] arrived to visit the shrine. She had come in secret to avoid the eyes of others, but because the recitation of the sacred scripture was even more beautiful than usual, she remained listening until the end. Then she returned home, but she was so reluctant to depart that she left an attendant behind. When she reported to the shogun what had happened, he had the boy summoned, and set him to reciting the Lotus Sutra in the image hall attached to his residence.

The following day the boy was once more ordered to recite the sutra for the shogun. Just then, some persons began making a commotion at the western gate of the shogun's palace. When it was asked what was the cause, a harsh voice shouted, "Today the prisoner is to be beheaded!"

The boy, hearing this, thought to himself, "Alas, I do not suppose that my father is still alive, but when I hear this talk of cutting off someone's head, I cannot help feeling as though it were some personal sorrow of my own!" And tears sprang to his eyes.

The shogun, observing this and thinking it strange, said, "Come, boy, tell me the truth — who are you?" The boy thereupon revealed all the events of the past just as they had happened. The greater and lesser lords who were in attendance, and the ladies hidden behind their curtains of bamboo, all wet their sleeves with tears.

The shogun then summoned Kajiwara [a general and military advisor to the shogun] and said, "Have the prisoner Ohashi no Taro brought here!" But Kajiwara replied, "He has just now been led away to Yui Beach to have his head cut off. The execution is probably taking place right now." At this the boy, though in the presence of the shogun, could not help collapsing in tears.

"Kajiwara!" said the shogun. "Go in person as fast as you can, and if the execution has not yet taken place, bring the prisoner back with you!"

Kajiwara raced off as fast as he could to Yui

Beach. Even before he reached the spot, he began shouting for the execution to be stayed. He arrived just as the executioner had drawn his sword in preparation to strike.

Kajiwara brought Ohashi no Taro, still bound with ropes, to the palace and seated him in the courtyard. The shogun ordered the prisoner to be handed over to the boy. The boy rushed down

into the courtyard and untied the ropes, while Ohashi no Taro, not realizing that this was his own son, could not understand why he had been spared.

The shogun summoned the boy to his side again and presented him with various gifts. He not only released Ohashi no Taro into the boy's custody, but also restored the family domains.

The shogun said, "From times past I have heard various reports regarding the power of the Lotus Sutra, and on two instances I myself have received proof of that power. The first was when my late father was beheaded by the grand minister of state and lay priest. My misery was beyond expression. I did not know what god or Buddha to appeal to, but the nun Myoho of Mount Izu taught me to read the Lotus Sutra. When I had read it a thousand times, the priest Mongaku of Takao brought me the head of my late father and showed it to me. After that I was able not only to revenge myself on my father's enemies but to become the military commander of all the warriors in Japan. All of this was due solely to the power of the Lotus Sutra.

"The second instance is this strange event today in which this boy saved his father. I personally looked upon this Ohashi no Taro as a thoroughly despicable fellow. I would have had him beheaded even if it had meant violating an imperial decree. So great was my hatred for him that I kept him shut up in a cell dug into the side of a hill for no less than twelve years. And yet this strange event has occurred. The power of the Lotus Sutra is marvelous indeed! As a commander of warriors I have piled up a great many sins, yet I put my faith in the Lotus Sutra, and so I believe I will be spared punishment." He spoke these words with tears in his eyes.

And that's just one story about the power of our practice, no matter what age we are!

Some questions to think about:

- Do you know of another story about a determined boy or girl? How about YOUR story?
- What do you think Ohashi no Taro and his son talked about together on their way home?
- What does it mean to put your faith in the Lotus Sutra?

JANUARY 2000 STUDY TOPIC:

**DETERMINATION
AND CONVICTION**



**ON DETERMINATION
AND CONVICTION**

Because the Han emperor believed completely in his retainer's words, the river froze over. And Li Kuang was able to pierce a rock with his arrow because he fully believed it to be the tiger that had killed his father. How much more so is this true in Buddhism.

— "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,"
The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 833

Nichiren Daishonin states in this phrase that one's strength of faith is what decides whether or not he can attain enlightenment. The Daishonin cites two stories from Chinese history to stress the importance of faith.

Once, when the future emperor was still struggling for power, he was retreating from a battlefield in the dead of winter, hard pressed by the enemy. Knowing that a broad river lay ahead, he dispatched his most reliable captain to see if the river could be crossed. The officer found the river uncrossable, but not having the heart to relay this devastating news, he falsely reported that it was frozen over. The future emperor, having complete faith in the report, advanced with his army. According to legend, when he reached the river, he found it frozen solid.

The second story concerns a noted general of the former Han dynasty. It is said that mistaking a boulder for the tiger that had killed his mother, he shot at it with such fierce determination that the arrow embedded itself in the rock.

SGI President Ikeda encourages us:

When your determination changes, everything will begin to move in the direction you desire. The moment you resolve to be victorious, every nerve and fiber in your being will immediately orient itself toward your success. On the other hand, if you think, "This is never going to work out," then at that instant every cell in your being will be deflated and give up the fight. Then everything really will move in the direction of failure. (*Faith into Action*, p. 109)

So, it's important to keep making a fresh determination. And each time you become discouraged or feel defeated, pick yourself up and renew your determination. 🙏

From SGI President Ikeda:

I want to raise champions, genuine champions who will fight for the people with indomitable resolve. I want to foster champions who possess courage, champions who will defend freedom, who are warm human beings yet uncompromising when it comes to fighting evil. (*Dialogue on Youth*)

* * * * *

When you encounter a wall, you should tell yourself, "Since there is a wall here, a wide open expanse must lie on the other side." Rather than becoming discouraged, know that encountering a wall is proof of the progress that you have made so far. I hope that you will continually advance in your Buddhist practice with this conviction blazing ever more strongly in your heart. (*Faith into Action*, p. 104)

* * * * *

WORD SEARCH

S E I O A J E H C P V C Q T A C
 N M F I R S T F O R W A R D T H
 O T R A T S U H B A M V U M G A
 I V O N W B L T P E P O H C E N
 T A Y N P G O A L Y B S E I S T
 A K F T A Y S G O W E T M R W O
 R W Y A N C E C D E D S V F I T
 I Y D E T E R M I N A T I O N I
 P Z S J Q N W R P Y K Z C M L R
 S W L N O T Y T Z P A W T Y I I
 A E K W X U E L K P L H O O C P
 G N I H C R A M R A D E R S B S
 A R T Z H Y O P S H L A Y T H O

All these words are about "Determination and Conviction." Can you find them all in the puzzle above?

- | | | |
|---------|---------------|----------|
| Chant | Marching | Resolute |
| Forward | Determination | Start |
| Hope | Win | Spirit |
| Victory | First | Goal |
| Century | Aspirations | |

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 90406.

Victory Over Violence: Arun Gandhi Visits the National Civil Rights Museum

Arun Gandhi shared two key points for overcoming violence that he gained from the teachings of his grandfather, Mahatma Gandhi, when he was a child. First, we must understand and control our anger. Second, we must build meaningful relationships.

Excerpts from an article by Gertrude Moeller and Richard Sadler.

Many people think, "As long as I am not using physical force against people, I am nonviolent." Not true, says Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi. "I learned very early in my life that we practice many kinds of violence...economic violence, social violence, gender violence, religious violence.... Unless we look at those different forms of violence and do something to change them, we are not going to be able to create peace and harmony in the world."



Gandhi shared with us two key points for overcoming violence that he gained from his grandfather's teaching when he was a child. First, we must understand and control our anger. Secondly, we must build meaningful relationships. He explained why most of us do not know how to do these things.

The materialism of our culture, says Gandhi, results in an animalistic "jungle law" mentality. We are selfish and greedy, so we get angry very quickly. Anger is very powerful — "as powerful as electricity" — but we are never taught how to channel and control it. In fact, few of us ever devote any time or thought to strengthening our minds and our self-control. This is the source of today's violence and destructiveness. "Grandfather taught me



Arun Gandhi speaks about nonviolence.

that, just as we have been able to channel electricity and use it for the good of humanity, we must learn to channel anger effectively so that we can use it positively."

Gandhi's grandfather also gave him two practical ways to gain mental control over anger: a meditation exercise and the use of an anger journal. The meditation exercise is to focus completely on a pleasant object for one minute, then close your eyes and see how long

you can clearly visualize the object. As you repeat this exercise and gain control over your mind's ability to focus, Gandhi says, your mind becomes stronger and you will naturally gain control over your anger. Keeping an anger journal can be very helpful too, but only if you focus on its purpose — understanding the triggers to your anger and finding a solution. An anger journal is useless or harmful if all it does is help you feel angry all over again when you read it!

The second tool for developing a nonviolent way of life lies in our approach to building relationships. Gandhi says: "Today our relationships are very selfishly motivated. We are constantly thinking about the self and about what I am going to gain from the relationship. If I don't stand to gain anything from it, then I'm not interested in it." His grandfather told him, "Meaningful relationships are built on the four principles of respect, understanding, acceptance and appreciation." To be truly effective, this respect must be extended not only to ourselves and to others but to nature and all of creation as well. Everybody and everything has a purpose, Gandhi says. When we accept that we are part of nature, and that each of us has an indispensable role in the social and natural machine, we will realize that we cannot disregard or discard anybody. We will appreciate each person and understand that no one is expendable. That is the true basis for a culture of nonviolence. ♣

San Diego Seminar/Workshop on Sources of Teen Violence

by MJ Warrender, San Diego Chief Correspondent

More than 250 students, educators, community leaders and SGI-USA members participated in San Diego's first Victory Over Violence seminar/workshop at the Kearny Mesa Community Center. The event opened with two speakers who were disabled by gang violence, R.B. Bogstad and Cruz Carrasco.

Mr. Bogstad is the founder of "Think! Stop Teen Violence" and has transformed 11 neighborhoods from gang warfare to safety and harmony. His poster campaign, television commercials and one-on-one conversations with gang members have created more peaceful, drug-free communities.

Mr. Carrasco is a former high school football running back who was shot by a gang member and is now paralyzed. His wife, who was initially his occupational therapist, now visits schools and community centers with him to speak against drug and gang activity. Cruz just recently received the M.K. Gandhi Peace Award from the M.K. Gandhi Institute for NonViolence in Tennessee.

Video clips of Bogstad's television commercials, news clippings and excerpts from talk shows were

combined with his experiences and a question-and-answer period afterward. Cruz's speech was heard through a microphoned computer, since when he was shot, the bullet pierced through one side of his head and lodged in the opposite side of his brain, damaging some of his memory, critical thinking and speaking abilities. His pre-recorded speech entitled, "Their Bullet, My Life," recapped the experience of having his life and dreams, as he knew them, taken away in one brief moment as a result of making wrong decisions and surrounding himself with the wrong friends. He pleaded with all the youth participants to "please stay away from guns, drugs and gangs. Don't give up! Stop the violence and increase the peace. We are all in this life together."

After the seminars, participants were given the opportunity to share in groups their feelings concerning sources of violence and how violent experiences in their own lives shaped their attitudes and destinies. Discussion groups were facilitated by leaders in the community: educators, a school psychologist, a school counselor, directors of San Diego's domestic violence



R.B. Bogstad (fourth from left) sits among the 750 listeners at the seminars.

police force, the street gang task force, and SDYCS's community developer. Group participants included former gang members, students, teachers and many guests who continually face acts of violence in their homes, on their streets or in their schools. Youth representatives were selected by participants to come to

("San Diego Seminar," continued on page II)

KUSH'S EXPERIENCE: ASPIRING TOWARD NONVIOLENCE IN MY COMMUNITY

by Kush Mirchandani, Boulder, Colo.

As members of the community, we have a duty to educate ourselves about why violence occurs. In addition to education, we need a plan for action. Even if we know all about nonviolence, if we do not take action and teach others, nothing can be accomplished.

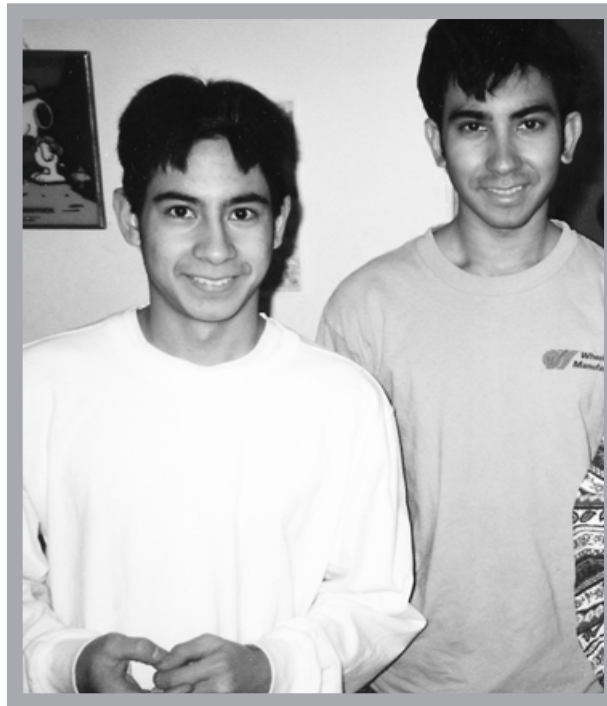
My experiences with nonviolence in my community have involved both enlightening education and revolutionary actions.

In Rocky Mountain Region, we have been using an article in the April issue of the *SGI Quarterly* entitled "Nonviolence for the 21st Century: Challenges and Choices," by Arun Gandhi. With a small group of other youth division members, I read and discussed issues presented in the article for several hours. We did this activity in preparation for a presentation given at a World Peace Prayer Meeting by our group. In the presentation we illustrated two main ideas presented in the article.

The first idea was that passive violence is the cause of physical violence. Arun Gandhi defines passive violence as oppression in all its forms: name-calling, teasing, insulting and any disrespectful behavior. He goes on to say that to stop violence we need courage. We have to have the courage to stand up for what is right, no matter what others may think of us. This is essential if we want to achieve world peace.

Through participating in that meeting I gained a higher level of understanding about nonviolence while sharing ideas with others.

Soon after that meeting, I got the chance to take action in my community. That community was my high school. As my senior year of high school was



L. Kush Mirchandani, with his brother, Arjune.

coming to an end, I was asked to vote for which senior had the best smile, was the funniest person, etc. I had a problem with one of the categories in particular, that being the vote for who was the "biggest tree-hugger." I felt that this category expressed a lack of mutual respect among students. A school community cannot exist harmoniously with this type of passively violent mind-set. I recognized this as being a poten-

tially destructive situation because I had learned about what passive violence means by participating in the youth division discussions.

I went on to take action, correcting this wrong, despite the numbers of other students telling me that "It is only a joke," and, "You're really overreacting." These students may not have realized that such a vote could be hurtful or discriminatory toward others. I wrote a letter to the editors of the newspaper in which the votes were to be printed, letting them know about my concerns. I made sure to do this in a polite and unassuming manner. When the newspaper came out, the title of "biggest tree-hugger" was changed to "most environmentally aware." When I read the title, I realized that my efforts had helped turn something potentially hurtful and destructive into something positive and constructive.

This type of action against violence in our daily lives is where creating nonviolence begins. In the youth division group I mentioned earlier, we created another action plan. Our determination was to get the article by Arun Gandhi into our schools.

I brought the article to the peer counseling advisor at my school, and talked with her about the ideas it presented on nonviolence. This was not hard because I had talked about it so much by this time! She gladly accepted the article and told me that it would serve as a guideline for discussion as soon as school started again.

Through these efforts I was able to promote the creation of nonviolence. To create nonviolence we must learn from the violent experiences we see. We need the wisdom to recognize violence in all its passive forms and the courage to stop it when we see it. I hope my experience can serve as an example for how to win a victory over violence in the future. ♪

(*San Diego Seminar,* continued from page 1)

the main microphone and give a summary of what was shared in their groups. Youth shared how many of them were victims of extreme acts of violence. It caused some to be fearful, they said, and some to be angry and others to be more determined to avoid violent situations and create more peaceful relationships with their own families. Other youth spoke about how friendship was the most important thing and how essential it is to see into a person's life, not judging them solely by their appearance. One youth said how important it was to think before one spoke, and the last asked all the participants to think with their hearts, not with their heads.

The day's activities finished with an interactive group exercise, one-on-one discussion and refreshments outside in the community center's courtyard. Partnerships were solidified among members of the community. ♪



San Diego seminar participants engage in discussion.

MATERIAL REQUEST

SEND IN YOUR STUFF

Our youth publication is only as strong as what you bring us.

Poems, Articles, Pictures, Stories, Commentaries, Pulitzer Prize insight ...whatever you got, get it to us.

HOW?

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Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427

Email:
seize@sgi-usa.org

First Youth Division Conference at FNCC

by Wendy DeSouza,
Los Angeles

On the morning of our trip to the Florida Nature and Culture Center for the first-ever Youth Division Conference (Nov. 11–14), we were at the Los Angeles International Airport when a member of our group realized she had forgotten her purse at home. The rest of us had to board the plane without her. As our plane moved toward the runway, I grew worried about her situation and chanted for her under my breath. Suddenly, a passenger aboard the plane fell ill, so the pilots were advised to return the plane to the terminal gate. My friend, who was still waiting there, was then allowed to board the plane with only a copy of her ID that a friend of hers had hurriedly faxed to her.

In the three days I spent at the conference, I heard such countless testimonies of youth overcoming financial, health or family problems to go to the Florida Nature and Culture Center. A young woman shared how this trip was the first time she had ever left home due to difficulties she experiences with cerebral palsy. One young man was going through a painful divorce and wanted to gain hope and wisdom from the conference to create value from his pain. Another youth, born into the practice, had just recently decided to chant after being virtually paralyzed from a back injury. Three young women also shared their determination to triumph over traumatic experiences of abuse, and related fighting injustice in their personal lives to stand up for justice on the temple issue.



Youth at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, in front of Toda Lake.

The mentor-and-disciple session, as well as the session on the temple issue, were workshops of constructive and straightforward dialogue. What struck me the most was the countless unique perspectives embraced and addressed by the participants. Most importantly, many youth were determined to study more and get more involved in their local activities.

During the conference, I was moved by how Renu Jiandani, SGI-USA young women's division leader, worked

tirelessly to give encouragement to individuals, literally until dawn each day. The warm support and friendship among all the participants were awesome, and most of us left with strained vocal chords from cheering, laughing and crying.

On the final day of the conference, SGI President Ikeda sent us the following message: "To my Young American Comrades: I extend my sincerest best wishes and prayers for your continued good health, happiness and prosperity as we advance into the new century—the Century of Life."

My final memory of the Youth Division Conference was when I was walking on the campus late one night. I could hear a chorus of daimoku being chanted by youth who had gathered at the Amphitheater, with the glow of the lake in front of them and the pink hues of a flat, Southern sky above. I felt as if I were walking inside President Ikeda's heart. ♪

POEMS

Everyone has problems,
I can't accept mine,
I need to pray,

Who's out there to solve them?
I know it takes time,
I need to pray,

Can I please free my Spirit?
From the devils on earth,

Self conscience tells me not to fear it
but I had fear since birth,

For every right, there's a wrong,
Cause and effect,
Can't stop the cycle,

I knew this all along,
Why am I in such a wreck?
It's just part of life.

I Know I will overcome
I Will Pray!

Chris Cabanilla, Monterey, Calif.

Revitalization

- 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 heart-
beats.
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.

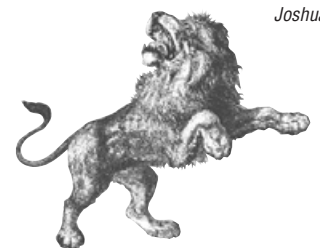
Steady and strong.

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.



Joshua Wolper

GET REAL!



By Nobuko Kobayashi,
SGI-USA High School Division Leader

Recently, on the way to a meeting, I was talking to friends who are YWD members. One is a high school student and the other girl is just a little older. The topic of our discussion was friendship, especially the friendship that we experience in the SGI and how it impacts our lives. Both were expressing their appreciation for the SGI and the members who supported them during very challenging circumstances in their lives.

My high school student friend talked about the time in her life when there didn't seem to be any hope. She was having severe family problems and problems in school—everything was just not going right. She didn't really have any feeling for Buddhism and no motivation to change her circumstances. But what she did have were some very "cool" friends in the organization who never gave up on her. They really supported her when she needed it the most and stuck by her until she was able to have great victories in her life. She expressed that she loves practicing now and she is putting 100 percent into school, the Fife and Drum Corps, her district and Junior High and High School Division's activities. Now she is, I am proud to say, giving support and friendship to many young people and impacting their lives.

The other young woman I was talking about earlier shared something very similar. She has had many challenges to overcome in her life, but through the constant support of the members and her friends, she has been able to create a life filled with courage and hope. Recently, she was able to visit the Florida Nature and Culture Center for the November Youth Division Conference. It took great effort for her to attend that conference, especially financially. She managed to save enough money for the conference, and, after an intense struggle, her plane fare. She is currently doing her best for her chapter and encouraging and impacting many people's lives. During the conversation she said something that really made me think. She said, "It's nice to know that wherever you go, if there are SGI members, you have friends and family."

These are only a few examples of how friendship and heart-to-heart dialogue can impact people's lives. Through this I was able to reflect on my own experiences and all the support I have received. For that, no words can express my appreciation. The friends I have made are honestly my greatest benefit. Thanks to SGI President Ikeda and all my friends for their encouragement! As President Ikeda states in *Discussions on Youth*: "The tie that links the intangible heart of one person to another is friendship.... Friendship is the most beautiful, most powerful and most valuable treasure in life. It is your true wealth." ♪

Indiana Holds First VOV Seminar

By Gary Russell, Indiana

School violence was the theme of the Victory Over Violence seminar held at the Indiana Community Center on Oct. 23.

In an intense skit, John Fox was an American student who displayed racial animosity toward an Asian classmate, portrayed by Shinichi Hisano. Words were exchanged, the Asian student's sister, played by Caisy Lun, was attacked, and a showdown with a gun resulted in the sister's inadvertent murder. The skit was performed throughout the room, with characters walking up and down the aisles. This made the audience a part of what was happening.

Caisy Lun later shared a personal experience about a classmate who pointed a drill two inches from her forehead and turned it on.



A skit portraying an attack is performed, examining racial animosity.

Rather than helping, kids circled the scene and laughed. "You are so cool! Look at her face!" students said to the young man with the drill. At first Caisy considered the mat-



ter no big deal since no one was physically hurt. But then she wondered how anyone could think threatening someone's life could be cool or funny.

Caisy's experience segued into a presentation on school violence. The statistics were alarming: Between 1996 and 1999, 21 school shootings had occurred in the United States. Taking personal responsibility and recognizing passive violence are crucial to stop the epidemic, she said. "Once we understand where negative feelings are coming from, we can stop from acting on them."

Guest speaker Charley Wiles, director of the Peace Learning Center at Eagle Creek Park, spoke of the center's conflict resolution curriculum for elementary school children. Mediation skills are taught at the center, to show students how to peacefully resolve conflict on their own.

The seminar will soon move to schools around the state, followed by seminars on other violence-related topics. ♪

Temple University Professor Gives Anti-Violence Address

by Wanda Flowers Peacock, Philadelphia

Philadelphia Region's Youth Division kicked off its anti-violence campaign Aug. 7 with a seminar featuring a Temple University professor who provided attendees with some eye-opening statistics and insights.

During the seminar, guest speaker Dr. J. Christopher Bernat, who specializes in the field of cultural anthropology, noted that the United States is one of the most violent cultures in the world. But, he explained, that many in the U.S. mistakenly believe that the most prevalent form of violence in the nation is racial, when, in fact, it's gender based.

Gender-based violence, he said, does not only involve individuals, but also America's institutions.

To illustrate his point, Dr. Bernat discussed the treatment of rape victims in the U.S. Rape victims, he said, are treated violently by the police departments who investigate the crimes as well as by medical personnel who examine them following the crime. Their bodies are

treated like evidence in a most inhumane manner.

In response to a question from the audience, the professor said that the U.S. must create a greater balance of power between the sexes and races. Women and non-whites who gain positions of power, he said, must express their feminine side and not maintain patriarchal attitudes.

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Dr. Bernat also described several cultural justifications for violence, including the protection of resources and matters of honor. Cultures, he explained, routinely reward their members with honors for engaging in acceptable forms of violence.

Roughly 80 people attended the seminar, which also included an educational presentation on the value-creation theory of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and a panel discussion by individuals who experienced violence personally or who worked with either the victims or perpetrators of violence.

Before leaving the seminar, participants signed a personal pledge to fight against violence. ♪