



FEATURE:
**Encouragement by
 Norimasa Saito,
 SGI North
 America Bureau
 director.**
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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S NOV. 20 SPEECH

If the Mentor Is a Lion, So Must Be the Disciple

SGI President Ikeda explains: 'Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda were true mentor and disciple. Mr. Toda and I were also true mentor and disciple. If the mentor is a lion, then the disciple must be a lion, too.'

SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 39th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Nov. 20.

Congratulations on Chubu's brilliant general meeting! And friends from Hokkaido, congratulations on your triumphant Hokkaido Glory General Meeting! We are joined today by

priests genuinely committed to the cause of kosen-rufu. We have with us representatives of the Association for the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu, the Association of Priests Concerned for Nichiren Shoshu and

the Protection of the Law, and the Association of Youthful Priests Dedicated to the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu.

Also present are SGI members from 16 countries and territories. Welcome, and thank you for traveling such long distances to be here with us!

My deepest appreciation also to members of the Makiguchi and Toda families who have come all this way to attend today's gathering.

In addition, I extend my congratulations in advance to the Kansai members, who will tomorrow hold their Grand Kansai General Meeting. The event will take place at the Osaka Castle Hall, and representatives from all 12,000 districts in the Kansai area

will attend. It will be a kickoff for a new century of continuous victory. I have the highest expectations for the Kansai members. I will be there with you in spirit, and I am praying for your meeting's great success.

People of truth and justice are often persecuted.

I am today reminded of two courageous individuals in the pages of history who were persecuted on this date, Nov. 20.

The first was on Nov. 20, 1823. This was the day that José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, the great "patriarch of Brazilian independence" to whom the Brazilian Society of Heraldry,

PLEASE SEE MENTOR, 4



The Real Battle in Life

The following points were shared by Norimasa Saito, SGI North America Bureau director, at meetings he attended during his recent visit to the United States, including the mentor-and-disciple relationship study conference held Nov. 18–20 at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

❖ It is important to win in our daily lives. What I mean by winning is achieving each of our specific goals. First be determined to win, you can then specify your personal goals one by one. I personally have some 33 things I am praying deeply to achieve. With a strong determination to win and an earnest desire to accomplish each goal, your prayer as you chant daimoku will be focused. This means you will tap greater wisdom, giving you insight about how to face your problems, and bring forth more courage to do what you need to do.

❖ When you need to achieve a major breakthrough in your life, I suggest you start with what is most essential, and that is faith. In other words, you can first ask yourself whether you have a personal determination or pledge you aim to fulfill for the sake of kosen-rufu. I think we should each have our own specific pledge or goal for kosen-rufu. We should be able to say to ourselves that “This is what I will achieve for kosen-rufu” or “I will help this person begin practicing Buddhism” or “I will help this person develop into a capable leader for kosen-rufu.”

❖ Since Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon for the happiness of all humanity, our lives should be geared to the objective of all people’s happiness. The Daishonin did not establish the Gohonzon simply so that we can wear nice clothes or own a fabulous car. We need a higher sense of purpose, and when we have a higher sense of purpose, our prayers about personal matters are more easily answered.

❖ Then, it all boils down to effort. When your life is well geared to the objective of kosen-rufu, you are contributing to the purpose for which the Gohonzon was established, which means you belong to the world of the Gohonzon or Buddhahood. Firmly positioned in this world of great fortune and



Norimasa Saito, SGI Headquarters North America Bureau director, speaks with participants at the recent mentor-disciple relationship study conference held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

dynamic rhythm, we then take the actions necessary to win in our personal struggles. In this way, the protective functions of the Mystic Law will become clearly apparent in our day-to-day existence. In Buddhism, this approach is called the “Strategy of the Lotus Sutra.”

❖ President Toda described the two types of circumstances in which we derive benefit from our Buddhist practice. The first occurs at the very initial stage of our Buddhist practice. It arises naturally from the pure faith and pure joy we experience over the fact that we have encountered the Gohonzon. Of course, this is always a source of benefit and fortune.

The other type of benefit comes from our earnest prayer. In “On Rebuking Slander of the Law and Eradicating Sins,” Nichiren Daishonin writes, “I am praying that, no matter how troubled the times may become, the Lotus Sutra (Gohonzon) and the ten demon daughters (Buddhist gods) will protect all of you, praying as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood, or to obtain water from parched ground” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 444). At a time of crises, or any crucial juncture in our lives, such determined prayer is necessary. And the Daishonin describes the sweeping power of such prayer when he says, “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is like a gale” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 742).

❖ At times we may feel overwhelmed by our personal problems. However, we have to realize that Buddhism teaches us to

expand our capacity rather than trying to get rid of our problems. Some problems may be with us for quite some time. However, as our life-capacity and our capability grow, we can more easily cope with our problems.

❖ Down the center of the Gohonzon is written “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nichiren.” In a sense, this expresses Nichiren Daishonin’s encouragement to us that we, too, should put our innate Buddhahood in the center of everything. When we manifest and solidify our inherent Buddhahood through our daily practice of faith, all the other nine worlds within our lives—which are represented by various Buddhist figures present on the Gohonzon—will be illuminated by the Mystic Law. Put another way, everything in our daily lives will fall into place and we will enjoy the real protection of the Mystic Law in everything we do. When, based upon this, we fulfill our personal goals, we thus deepen our confidence in the power of the Gohonzon and in our own inner greatness.

❖ Suppose you have a leader in the organization who is difficult to work with. Or someone who you just do not like. I would say that the first step in dealing with this is to elevate and develop your state of life to the point where you will not be swayed or discouraged by that person’s presence. Your direct connection with the Gohonzon, the Gosho and the heart or spirit of the successive presidents of the Soka Gakkai

should be your foundation. If everyone surrounding such a leader is growing in faith and demonstrating the joy of faith in their attitude and behavior, this leader’s shortcomings and weak points will be overshadowed. It is also ideal if you, as a concerned member, can talk straight to him or her and reconfirm what both you and the leader need to do to improve the situation. But if such straightforward one-to-one dialogue can’t take place for various reasons, it may be advisable to ask a higher leader to meet with all involved to discuss the situation. In any event, a strong sense of responsibility to improve the situation and the pursuit of dialogue are key.

❖ We have to remember that the organization of the Soka Gakkai was created by a humanistic bond between its first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and his disciple, Josei Toda. The world of the SGI should be one of humanism and humanity. It is always important to remember that human-to-human bonds are the basis of this organization for kosen-rufu. It is our constant challenge to deal with negative elements that sneak into the kosen-rufu movement and in each case to create a “win-win” situation for the advancement of each individual’s faith and happiness.

❖ In this defiled age of the Latter Day of the Law, when negativity prevails and destructiveness is commonplace—as the current condition of the priesthood expresses—it is vital for us to grasp the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin, who states in “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” “Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil” (WND, 15).

❖ What “this one evil” represents differs according to the times. In the days of Nichiren Daishonin, the Nembutsu sect, which robbed the people of Japan of life-affirming hope and energy, clearly represented “this one evil.” Also, Ryokan, a high priest of the Ritsu sect who held a personal grudge against Nichiren Daishonin, and Hei no Saemon, head of the military under the Kamakura government who was also emotionally biased against the Daishonin, fulfilled the function of “this

one evil.” In the time of President Makiguchi and Mr. Josei Toda, the Japanese militarist government, which forced Shintoism upon the entire populace of Japan and brought the nation to devastation, constituted “this one evil.” In modern times, when the kosen-rufu movement has advanced on a global scale under the leadership of SGI President Ikeda, political leaders and elements of the media in Japan have been engaged in attempting to destroy the Soka Gakkai. And since 1990, Nichiren Shoshu High Priest Nikken Abe displayed his true nature as that of the devil king of the sixth heaven and joined the ranks of those fiercely attempting to destroy the SGI’s precious kosen-rufu movement. His life thus manifests the function of “this one evil.”

❖ The real battle in life, as well as in the temple issue, is the fierce struggle between the function of the devil and the function of the Buddha, as indicated by Nichiren Daishonin when he said, “I have been waging war against the ten armies of the devil...” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1224). It is important to realize that this devil can take any shape, can possess our lives and even enter into our organization. Buddhist practice to attain Buddhahood means a ceaseless battle against the function of this devil within us and in our environment.

❖ However, the devil will cease to function once we successfully identify it as such. To cite an analogy, while a perfectly made counterfeit bill can fool many people, no one will accept a bill that is obviously a fake. Since the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood does chant

PLEASE SEE BATTLE, 3

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Believing It

By TORILENYA JEFFRIES
HOUSTON

Are you saying that besides these bodhisattvas, the persons of the two vehicles who obtained their enlightenment by destroying their illusions, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the four wheel-turning kings, and the immense flames of the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering — all beings and all things in the ten directions are inherent in the Ten Worlds and in the three thousand realms of our own lives? Even if you say that this is what the Buddha taught, I still cannot believe it. —“The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind.” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 361

Why is it sometimes difficult to acknowledge the great aspects of



IN MY LIFE

NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS IN
ACTION

in this passage are functions within my life, I imagine them to be mythical beings who can fly and, with a wave of their magic wand — “Poof!” — make a person's sufferings disappear.

The functions of the Four Heavenly Kings as described in the sutras are actually to protect the world; to discern evil and punish those who commit it; to listen to the sutras and protect the place of practice; and to re-

lieve people of their sufferings.

These characteristics remind me of SGI members! Just without the magic wand and the flying ability. So both Hell and Buddhahood exist within my life.

Confident as I am most of the time, I found that not believing in my own world of Buddhahood had crept into my life in the form of thinking others would not listen to me. I noticed that a new acquaintance, whose religion was different from mine, was having a difficult time at work. Yet I did not tell her about chanting, thinking she would not listen.

Another friend wanted to talk, but she was so angry that I thought once more, if I tried to encourage her, she wouldn't listen.

Recently, I received a phone call from a friend I had not seen in 10 years. During our warm-hearted, laughter-filled conversation, he told me he had been a temple member for eight years.

Through his confusion at the outset of the priesthood issue, he had visited a local temple to find some answers. The priest convinced him that the only way

to enlightenment was by sticking to the people who “owned” the Dai-Gohonzon.

But Nichiren Daishonin teaches us that the Gohonzon is found in faith alone. Furthermore, the priesthood's so-called ownership of the Dai-Gohonzon amounts to nothing more than ransom.

How compassionate can Nikken, the current high priest, be, when he does not allow the world access to such a precious object of devotion as the Daishonin intended? The priests may as well just say: “Follow me. Get enlightened for a fee!”

None of these thoughts did I share with my friend at the time. I thought, he has been with the temple this long, he probably will not listen to me.

With each of my friends, I did not believe in my own power to encourage them or to relieve their sufferings. Relieving the suffering of others is the primary characteristic of the Buddha! I had denied the Buddha nature in myself and my friends. Believing that the world of Buddhahood exists

within us is crucial, because human beings base their actions on what they believe to be true. Once I acknowledged the Buddha that I am, I realized the great qualities of the Four Heavenly Kings within my life.

So I initiated a dialogue campaign with my friend who joined the temple to discuss the correctness of the SGI based upon the Daishonin's teachings. I spoke to my acquaintance with the problems at work and shared how I solve problems through my Buddhist practice. And my angry friend was grateful that I called her back and told her what was on my mind.

I believe they all listened to me because I care about them.

Buddhism teaches that there are many noble aspects to our lives. With the awareness that Buddhahood is my life itself — that “all beings and all things in the ten directions are inherent in the Ten Worlds and in the three thousand realms of our own lives” — I am now taking responsible action.

“I still cannot believe it?” I find now that I can. **WT**

FROM BATTLE, 2

the same daimoku to the same Gohonzon and on the surface, dressed in robes, presents an air of nobility, they can effectively deceive people. The fact is, however, Nikken has been doing everything possible to destroy the SGI's kosen-rufu movement, and the many priests who chose to follow him represent the function of “this one evil.” No person today in the realm of Buddhism is so vehemently destructive as Nikken. His flagrant demolition of the Sho-Hondo, the edifice of peace that his teacher, the former high priest, Nittatsu, once declared to be the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism at the time of kosen-rufu, is clear evidence of this.

❖ This is the time for us to sharpen our “sword” of faith. We can say that “this one evil” represents our fundamental darkness or ignorance, which prevents us from clearly perceiving and identifying a devilish function for what it is. The part of ourselves that prevents us from wholeheartedly fighting against the function of “this one evil” actually is “this one evil” within ourselves. When I recognized this aspect within my own life, I came to realize that I did not yet understand the true nature of the temple issue even though I thought I did.

❖ Conversely speaking, I can now see that once I am fully

engaged in my battle against “this one evil” within myself, I can have all my “ten thousand prayers” answered. Since nothing is wasted in Buddhist practice, the current temple issue must have profound and great significance for our individual Buddhist practice and for our ultimate happiness.

❖ In understanding the mentor-disciple relationship, we should first bear in mind that this relationship exists in the realm of humanism and compassion. It is a beautiful bond of humanity, camaraderie and true friendship.

❖ As the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, Nichiren Daishonin is the mentor or teacher of all humanity. As such, he inscribed the Gohonzon as the object of devotion for the happiness of all people. The compassionate way of life he exemplified put him in the position of mentor in the hearts and minds of those who practice his teaching.

❖ We should not have a rigid view or understanding the mentor-disciple relationship. It is a very simple concept. Today, through showing great actual proof in promoting kosen-rufu, President Ikeda has come to be cherished by many as the mentor in faith and practice. The mentor-disciple relationship is something formed from the seeking spirit of the disciples. In Buddhism, a mentor never appoints

himself or herself as a mentor.

❖ The basis of this relationship is a wonderful human bond. It is a spontaneous relationship, not a forced one. If you regard President Ikeda as your mentor in faith, it is helpful to ask yourself: “What would President Ikeda do if he were in my shoes?”

❖ Unless we are concerned with the objective of kosen-rufu, we can't achieve oneness with our mentor. This is because kosen-rufu — securing happiness for humankind through disseminating the humanistic principles of Buddhism — is the life of Nichiren Daishonin, and it is also the sole purpose and intent of President Ikeda. Making his heart, his spirit and the common goal of kosen-rufu our own, is the primary point in pursuing the mentor-disciple relationship. While President Ikeda is devoted to kosen-rufu on a global scale, we can be devoted to the same goal in our communities. Even though the scope of our activities differs, we can work beautifully together like concentric circles with the same center or focal point of faith. I feel I have personally learned from his example how great a Buddhist can be. As the Daishonin states in “The Three Kinds of Treasure,” “The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being” (WND, 852). **WT**

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FROM MENTOR, I

Medals, Culture and Education looks upon as a model, was driven into exile by an authoritarian government. It is an unchanging reality of human society — past, present, East and West: People who champion truth and ceaselessly pursue justice are often cruelly persecuted.

However, José Bonifácio, a leading advocate of Brazil's independence from Portugal, was willing to lay down his life for his cause if need be. He advanced calmly on his chosen course, never being swayed by the fickle winds of praise or blame.

The second story was 120 years later, in 1943. It unfolded in Japan. It was on Nov. 20 that year that our eternal mentor, Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, then already in prison, was unjustly prosecuted by the militarist police authorities. One of the charges against him was that he had held discussion meetings around the country — the motivation for which had simply been his desire to enable all people to become happy.

The prosecution's indictment against Mr. Makiguchi stated, "From around May 15, 1941, to June 30, 1943, the accused held more than 240 discussion meetings..."

At a time when Japan's journalistic and literary circles — and the large majority of reli-

gious groups — were actively supporting the war, President Makiguchi's adherence to his convictions remained as steadfast as Mt. Fuji.

The teaching of mentor and disciple is very strict.

Mr. Makiguchi died in prison a year later, on Nov. 18, 1944. And his funeral, strangely enough, was also held Nov. 20. It was a small, forlorn funeral conducted with only a few people present.

Mr. Toda was still in jail. Yet unaware of his mentor's death, he prayed fervently that all the charges might be placed against him, Toda, alone — and that the elderly Mr. Makiguchi might be released as soon as possible. This is how a true disciple behaves. This is the Soka Gakkai spirit. If this spirit were to be lost, the Soka Gakkai would no longer be the Soka Gakkai.

Later, whenever Mr. Toda recalled the sad nature of Mr. Makiguchi's funeral, he wept bitter tears of rage and grief. His voice thundering with fury, he railed against "those despicable priests who were alarmed by Mr. Makiguchi's persecution for the sake of the Law and spoke ill of him, those cowards who discarded Nichiren Daishonin's teachings and deserted Mr. Makiguchi!"

It has been the deep, passionate wish of both President Toda and myself to someday,

without fail, gain international recognition for the true greatness of Mr. Makiguchi, a philosopher of rare stature whom the authorities of the day labeled a traitor and tried to consign to oblivion.

Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda were true mentor and disciple. Mr. Toda and I were also true mentor and disciple. If the mentor is a lion, then the disciple must be a lion, too.

Where today, I ask, are the true disciples to follow in my footsteps? The SGI has no need for cowards who just stand by and watch while their mentor is persecuted, who try to cleverly sidestep criticism and attack.

Mr. Makiguchi died for his beliefs. Today marks the 55th anniversary of his funeral. On this highly significant day, distinguished guests from Brazil, a country celebrating spring on the other side of the world, have come to conduct a solemn, deeply meaningful ceremony. [At this meeting, President and Mrs. Ikeda were conferred the Grand Cross of Civic and Cultural Merit and the titles of Dom (Sir) and Dama (Madam) by the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education.] My wife and I humbly accept the honors that have been bestowed upon us today together with our fellow SGI members in 128 countries and territories around the globe who share our sufferings and joys. As a disciple who embraces his mentors' vision as his own, I dedicate my medal to Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda.

The teaching of mentor and disciple is very strict in the Daishonin's Buddhism. The Daishonin writes: "If a teacher has a good disciple, both will gain the fruit of Buddhahood, but if a teacher fosters a bad disciple, both will fall into hell. If teacher and disciple are of different minds, they will never accomplish anything" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 909).

Let us therefore proudly report to Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda the honors we have received today, these laurels of victory of the SGI's path of mentor-disciple crowning the 20th century!

My deep appreciation to President Galdino Cuchiaro of the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education, his wife, Mrs. Mercia Maria Cuchiaro, and other members of their delegation here today. Thank you all very much.

Dogged determination is needed to change the times.

José Bonifácio, whom I mentioned earlier, waged a head-on

New Statue of Leonardo da Vinci

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



SGI President Ikeda views a new statue of Leonardo da Vinci in the main lobby of Soka University's new Central Tower in Hachioji, Tokyo, Nov. 3.

struggle against arrogant, high-handed despots. "Tyrants!" he cried. "Monsters that threaten to bring down humanity! Beasts!" He fought relentlessly against evil, never retreating a single step, never letting up in his attack on injustice. He was a person of outstanding humanity, always taking a strong stand against arrogant villains while showing infinite gentleness and compassion to decent, upright ordinary citizens. This is also the spirit of Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai.

José Bonifácio called out, in the moving poem "O Brasil":

*Enlighten your people;
give them succor,
Swiftly and surely, to the
Indios, to the Negros,
To the poor abandoned —
Then wealth
Will fill your treasure-house.*

We of the SGI have also been ever ready to extend a hand, to reach out to those who are suffering. It was with this spirit that José Bonifácio, a great pioneer of Brazil, battled tirelessly

against "base enslavement" by tyrants who sought to deprive the people for generations to come. He also condemned the schemes of those whom he described as "hypocritical tricksters who assert that black is white and white is black."

José Bonifácio's selfless, indomitable spiritual struggle is directly inherited by the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education, and by President Cuchiaro himself. From his student days, Mr. Cuchiaro was active as a journalist who championed the cause of the people. When his homeland was under military rule, he fought energetically for democracy. His activities during this time are well known in Brazil.

Mr. Cuchiaro has experienced unjust imprisonment at the hands of the authorities. I was put in prison, too. It is impossible to change the times unless one fights against authoritarian power with such dogged determination that one might even land in prison. While the authorities were holding him, Mr. Cuchiaro was subjected to

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Kosen-rufu

From This Speech:

It is crucial that we bring an end to the war and conflict that have resulted from religious and ideological differences and that until now have been reenacted again and again in the pages of human history. The true purpose of religion is to enhance education and culture, and to enable society to prosper in a more peaceful way. This will be the golden rule of the 21st century. I therefore reaffirm that making sincere, steady efforts to spread understanding, friendship and trust in our local communities — to expand person-to-person links and heart-to-heart bonds — constitutes kosen-rufu.

- 1) SGI President Ikeda talks here about the true purpose of religion. Do you think that many people today view religion in the same way he does?
- 2) How do you think religion will be different in the 21st century from what it is like now?
- 3) How do your own "steady efforts to spread understanding" help to end war and conflict?
- 4) Have you had an experience where you could see this kind of a correlation between your efforts and the world changing?

cruel torture to get him to reveal the names of his colleagues. But he endured all that was inflicted upon him and did not betray his friends. That is the kind of noble, courageous person Mr. Cuchiario is.

Earlier, he gave an animated speech, his voice and gestures communicating a sparkling vitality. Mr. Cuchiario, together with his wonderful wife and comrade Mrs. Cuchiario, is a leading bastion of conscience, one who has rigorously defended the path of peace and justice for humanity. He has honored the work of individuals who have dedicated their lives to good. A Buddhist writing cites the just meting out reward and punishment as a requisite of leaders in society.

Tireless activists, Mr. and Mrs. Cuchiario have made valuable contributions to causes such as environmental protection, disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons. Let us give them a hearty round of applause as an expression of our sincere appreciation and praise!

Understanding, friendship and trust constitute kosen-rufu.

All human beings, irrespective of who they are, possess inherent dignity. What is most important for us to let this dignity shine forth fully? It comes down to this: the philosophy we embrace, the principles we follow and the way we behave and conduct ourselves.

Brazil is a great nation of hope that has taken the lead in creating a humanistic culture of peace. As President Cuchiario has so generously acknowledged, SGI-Brazil has been making admirable contributions to local communities as a cultural and educational organization. SGI-Brazil has won such overwhelming trust and applause for its activities that people throughout the South American country are heard saying: "If you have a problem, go talk to SGI-Brazil!" "If you want to bring joy and happiness to people, consult SGI-Brazil!"

The honors my wife and I have received today are also in recognition of the tremendous efforts of our fellow members in Brazil. This morning, I offered special prayers for the health, happiness, good fortune and safety of all our SGI-Brazil members.

In any event, it is crucial that we bring an end to the war and conflict that have resulted from religious and ideological differences and that until now have been reenacted again and

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S NOV. 21 ENCOURAGEMENT

Good Fortune Comes From Taking Action

The evening of Nov. 21, SGI President Ikeda attended a conference with Tokyo No. 2 Joint Territory representatives at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji. He emphasized the following points:

"We gain good fortune in response to our spirit to challenge something, to take action, for kosen-rufu. Nichiren Daishonin teaches us this when he says, 'Our heart is the most important thing' (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1192).

again in the pages of human history. The true purpose of religion is to enhance education and culture, and to enable society to prosper in a more peaceful way. This will be the golden rule of the 21st century.

I therefore reaffirm that making sincere, steady efforts to spread understanding, friendship and trust in our local communities—to expand person-to-person links and heart-to-heart bonds—constitutes kosen-rufu.

With us today we also have a number of SGI-Singapore representatives, who are visiting Japan on a special training course.

The young Chinese-Singaporean resistance leader Lim Bo Seng, who during World War II fought the cruel invasion of Malaya and Singapore by the Japanese army and died a heroic death in prison at age 35, said, "Life is happier and more meaningful when one can be of service to society." What wise words these are!

While in prison, Lim also wrote, "My duty and my honor would not permit me to look back." In other words: "I will look ahead! I will not regret what's past, nor will I complain! That is how a person of true courage should live!" This was his spirit.

As the curtain rises on the coming year, in which we—along with friends throughout Asia and the world—will celebrate the Soka Gakkai's 70th anniversary, let us, too, keep advancing with "Forward, ever forward!" our motto! Our true challenge begins now. It's time for us to make a fresh departure.

Science is approaching the vast Buddhist view.

The new age of spiritual discovery that will commence in the 21st century will be a stage

"If we look down on or choose to ignore such a spirit, we will gradually lose our life-force and joy. No matter how much wealth or status we may acquire, without joy, we cannot be truly happy.

"Only when we struggle and exert ourselves to advance kosen-rufu can we forge a supreme life-condition, one where we can look at both life and death with joy. This is the purpose of our faith and SGI activities." **WT**

opening onto a vast universe.

Just a few days ago, American astronomers for the first time confirmed the existence of a planet outside the solar system, attracting worldwide attention. Scientists from the University of California at Berkeley, which I visited in 1993, contributed to the planet's discovery.

Buddhism expounds that throughout the universe there are countless ideal worlds, which it calls Buddha lands, where the Mystic Law has spread. We can perhaps say of this latest discovery that science has yet again approached the vast Buddhist view of the universe and life itself.

The existence of planets outside the solar system has been indirectly detected in the past, but scientists have now succeeded in capturing direct photographic images of a planet around another star. From astronomical data collected, there is little likelihood that life exists on this particular planet, but clear proof of the existence of a planet beyond our solar system gives credence to the possibility of planets resembling our own existing elsewhere in the universe.

President Toda often used to say, "The more science advances, the more it proves the validity of the teachings of Buddhism." Many scientists, in fact, are looking with increased interest to the Buddhist view of the universe.

The Daishonin encouraged one of his followers, Lady Nichinyo, telling her that it was nowhere but in her own heart that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the entire universe were gathered (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 915). Faith in the Gohonzon contains

Mentor-and-Disciple Series Begins at FNCC

Photo by PETE PETERSON

The first Mentor-and-Disciple Relationship Study Conference was held Nov. 18–21 at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. Highlights of the gathering, which was designed to fully explore this important issue to our faith, included a surprise visit by Baseball Hall of Famer Orlando Cepeda, who shared how SGI President Ikeda's guidance helped him change his life, and a lecture by Norimasa Saito, SGI North America Bureau chief, on the *Gosho* "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land."

Wendy Clark, SGI-USA women's division leader, made the point that each person's relationship with his or her mentor is unique, just like each person's relationship with the Gohonzon is unique. She shared personal experiences of how she has struggled to develop her relation-



Orlando Cepeda shares his experience at the FNCC, Nov. 19.

ship with her mentor, President Ikeda, over the many years of her practice.

Two more mentor-and-disciple conferences will be held next year at the FNCC, one May 18–21 and one Oct. 19–22. For information on attending, contact your regional office.

—JEFF FARR

the benefit of all Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The power inherent in our lives is far greater than the ominous power of nuclear weapons. As we work to enable all people to realize the full, vibrant potential of their lives, we must continue to build a solid alliance of world citizens and promote exchange based on the culture of peace to ultimately even overpower armaments expansion. This, I assert, is our challenge toward ushering in a Century of Life.

Youth should never lose their sense of adventure.

It was on April 22, 1500, that the young Portuguese navigator and fleet commander Pedro Álvares Cabral boldly crossed the ocean—surmounting the terror and uncertainty of sailing in unknown waters—and arrived in Brazil, land of promise.

I was deeply honored this April to receive an award named after this great explorer—the Cross of Merit of Discoverer of Brazil, Pedro Álvares Cabral—from the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education. SGI-Brazil General Director Eduardo Taguchi accepted the medal on my behalf. I take this opportunity to reiterate my profound appreciation to the society.

That first journey to Brazil was

thus achieved by a youth. It is always the courage and solidarity of youth that open a new world, a new age. When youth lose their sense of adventure, their spirit grows old and their lives become little more than a living death. At this time that will never come again, I call out to you: "My beloved youth! Boldly leave behind an immortal history!"

Next year, 2000, Brazil will celebrate a momentous milestone—the 500th anniversary of its "discovery." And we of the SGI will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Josei Toda's birth.

To respond to the deep expectations of the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education, we of the SGI will continue working for a world of peace and prosperity with even greater courage and enthusiasm.

Let's make a promise to each other to gloriously adorn the Soka Gakkai's 70th anniversary in good health, with all of us having won every challenge.

In closing, I offer my sincere prayers for the unending development of the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education, and for the happiness and success of Mr. and Mrs. Cuchiario and everyone present today.

Muito Obrigado! ("Thank you very much!" in Portuguese.) **WT**

Puerto Rico Youth Hold Culture Festival

Photos by ANGEL DOMENECH, ALINA MARRERO AND FRED ZAITSU



The Puerto Rico Community Center in San Juan was painted and the garden areas renovated in time for the Youth Culture Festival on Nov. 21.



Youth from the city of Ponce offer a martial arts presentation.

By DELVIS GRISELLE ORTIZ
PUERTO RICO

SGI-USA Puerto Rico Area marked a new beginning toward kosen-rufu with its first Youth Culture Festival held Nov. 21 at the community center in San Juan. With the firm purpose of making an important cause for the development of the members in Puerto Rico, the youth, with the unwavering support of everyone in the organization, embarked on the task of organizing the festival.

SGI-USA General Director Fred Zaitzu attended, along with Southern Zone leaders Cliff Sawyer, Ingmar Soto and Sheila Edwards.

Many were the obstacles that arose, even the announcement of Hurricane Lenny's arrival days before the event. Yet, there was no challenge that could defeat the members' strong resolve. In the face of such determination, the hurricane passed by and didn't touch the island.

It wasn't long before benefits occurred. Besides spending a wonderful afternoon enjoying the talents of the members and sharing with guests on the day of

the festival, as a result of people's efforts toward the gathering, the community center was painted, and the garden areas renovated and conditioned. Yet, the greatest of benefits was the increased unity among the members.

Under the theme "Creating Value Through Music," the Soka Gakkai spirit reigned on Sunday afternoon as children, teenagers and adults united to reaffirm values and educate others about the struggle to create harmony and peace. To create peace we must count on joy, friendship, tolerance, perseverance and excellence — that's why in the festival these "ingredients" achieved prominence; and in an amusing way, the artistic performances in which talented members acted, sang, danced and played lovely music all magically intertwined.

The youth, headed by José Luis Vargas and Abed Hernandez, were in charge of creating both the festival's theme and theme song, "Bonds of Friendship." In creating the theme song, youths Alexandra Rosa, José Daniel de Jesus, Edgar

Abraham and Ivette Pietri also participated.

Under the general direction of Luis Gonzalez and the artistic direction of Alina Marrero, the members went all out and offered the best of their talents in a beautiful, intelligent and motivating show that invited the audience to acknowledge the importance of art and culture in the development of human beings and the triumph of peace over violence.

Edgar Abraham, a teenager saxophone virtuoso, delighted us with his music, while the children widely displayed their acting abilities together with a group of youths and adults that accompanied them. Also prominent was the participation of singers Ana Baiana and Brenda Reyes, both SGI members.

Several musicians from the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra joined the members to offer a beautiful rendition of a classical melody and a group of

youth from the city of Ponce offered a martial arts presentation. The participation of these young men and women showed the integration of the SGI in the community.

While all this was happening on stage, another group of members oversaw the booth on "Victory Over Violence," while still others participated in selling books, distributing mementoes and preparing refreshments. All enjoyed themselves intensely in making a dream come true — their first Youth Culture Festival.

The festival had its grand finale with the participation of renowned flautist Nestor Torres, who was born in Puerto Rico and an SGI member for 20 years. "This is the effort of ordinary people toward achieving peace and understanding among human beings, respecting each person's identity," said Nestor, visibly moved by the vibrant energy of all those present.

SGI-USA General Director



Dancing during the grand finale.

Fred Zaitzu told those present that such effort represented a new departure for Puerto Rico to create peace and prosperity in the 21st century. He assured that SGI President Ikeda always prayed for the happiness and health of Puerto Rico members and announced that the SGI leader had a gift for them after the festival — ice cream for all. **WT**



There were many artistic performances by talented members who acted, sang, danced and played music.



Nestor Torres, renowned flautist, performs with the youth orchestra.

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 27-28

Shin'ichi Yamamoto tells a young women's division member in Italy: 'We need wisdom to survive in society. Wisdom is also vital for us to win in our efforts to spread Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and to win in life in general.'

On the way to Pompeii, the group stopped at a shop selling cameos, a famous Italian handicraft. As they watched a craftworker carving a delicate relief in a seashell, Shin'ichi Yamamoto said to Sumiko Kojima: "Such shells are usually just tossed away, but they use them to produce such exquisite, precious handicrafts. That is wisdom.

"We need wisdom to survive in society. Wisdom is also vital for us to win in our efforts to spread Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and to win in life in general. We can bring forth wisdom by thinking seriously about what needs to be done while tapping into our powerful life force through chanting daimoku sincerely, with a strong sense of responsibility and mission."

Shin'ichi bought some cameo broaches, cuff links and other handicrafts to give as gifts and presented one of the broaches to Ms. Kojima. He was concerned about the future of this young woman, who had come all alone to Italy to study. Ms. Kojima planned to stay in Italy after completing her stud-

ies, but Shin'ichi knew that trying to make a living as an artist would not be easy.

Moreover, the Yamagishis, who were in Italy because of Mr. Yamagishi's job, would return to Japan in a few years. Ms. Kojima would then have to become a key figure among the members in Italy. Shin'ichi was counting on her to establish herself firmly in Italian society, so that she could be an active, productive leader of kosen-rufu in that country. He wanted her to become strong.

They boarded their taxis again and, as they continued on their way, Mount Vesuvius, one of Europe's few active volcanoes, loomed on their left. It had last erupted two decades earlier, in 1944, but it presented a quiet, serene picture to Shin'ichi and his companions as they gazed at it from the car window.

"You all know the famous Italian folk song 'Funiculi-Funiculà,'" Shin'ichi said. "That song mentions a 'mountain of fire,' and that mountain is Vesuvius. The song was written, I've heard, to commemorate the completion of a cable railway



up the mountain."

Soon they arrived at the ruins of Pompeii. In Roman times, the city had prospered as a commercial center and resort for the Roman nobility. It was destroyed by an eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE and buried under a thick layer of volcanic ash. In the mid-18th century, it was rediscovered. Continuing excavations revealed its glorious past.

After viewing the exhibits in the museum at the ancient city's entrance, Shin'ichi and his party wandered the ruins. Ms. Kojima did her best to interpret in Japanese the explanations of their guide, an elderly Italian man.

Pompeii lay in roughly an oval shape about 1,320 yards from east to west and 715 yards north to south. Following a path through the ruins known as the via Marina, they came upon the Forum, the center of life in Pompeii, the site of the city's temples and public buildings.

They passed through the gate on the north side of the Forum and began to walk the stone-paved streets, which were lined with stone houses and public baths. The ancient buildings, though many of them roofless, presented a clear picture of the town's prosperity before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

The guide stopped in front of one of the houses and pointed out a lovely mosaic of a dog at the entranceway. "This is known," he said, "as the House of the Tragic Poet. It served as the model for the home of the hero in the famous novel *The Last Days of Pompeii*."

Edward Bulwer-Lytton, a

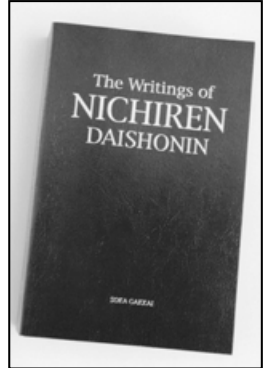
British journalist, poet, playwright and politician, wrote *The Last Days of Pompeii*. In the autumn of his 30th year, the London-born Bulwer-Lytton traveled to Italy and visited the ruins of Pompeii. Standing there, he envisioned the destruction of the prosperous ancient city and was overcome with emotion. He set down those imaginings and feelings in his epic historical novel.

Shin'ichi and his group went on to look at a number of other dwellings, shops, a theater and a subterranean prison. Beautiful frescoes and sculptures survived in many of the homes. As the small party made their way along the stone-paved streets, their steps echoed hollow through the ruins. But what bustle and noise must once have filled these streets, as the citizens of Pompeii went about their daily business!

Shin'ichi looked up to see the proud form of Vesuvius towering above the rows of houses. There were two peaks: The taller, with the active volcanic crater, was 4,198 feet high. To the right was a high semicircular ridge known as Mount Somma, the result of a previous eruption, its sides sloping gently downward. It was some 1,900 years earlier that Vesuvius' eruption had ended time for the city of Pompeii. Two thousand people, around 10 percent of the city's population of 20,000, are said to have died in the eruption.

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

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EXPERIENCE — CEPHAS RILEY JOHNSON, WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Difference Buddhism Makes in My Life

Introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism while in prison, Cephas Johnson reforms his life through chanting, and is released after 22 years.

I was born in Lynchburg, Va., on July 6, 1955. I spent my youth in Southeast Washington, D.C., the poorest section of the city. My father and mother always struggled to make ends meet. They raised seven children under tough conditions while living in the worst public housing project in the city.

Seeing other people enjoy a better life than ours dimmed my youthful hope for a better future by the moment, so I became reckless and sought refuge in the criminal life.

Eventually, I dropped out of high school, lost my girlfriend and then all hell broke loose. I was imprisoned at a youth correctional facility for burglary. There I came in contact with hard-core criminals. Upon my release in 1975 at age 19, I was vicious, mean-spirited and a danger to others and myself.

My family mistrusted me because they thought I would lead my sisters and brothers into using drugs. My environment was a source of great unhappiness and my life was full of hatred, pain and anger; I felt betrayed and lonely. I entered into a depression, and dug myself into a deeper drug habit all the while continuing to steal to support it. On Feb. 12, 1976, I was arrested, and on Sept. 29 that year I was tried, convicted and sentenced to prison for repeated robberies and first-degree murder. I was given a natural life term in the Maryland prison system and a consecutive 15-year term in the D.C. system.

In prison, I learned not to depend on anybody. I was tough and uncaring, and I lost all compassion and humanism. My family seemed relieved that I was in prison. They often said they were glad I was safe, especially when they would bring me news about the imprisonment or death of my friends and fellow gang members. All my former gang members continued with drugs; many were arrested and imprisoned; and almost all are dead by now.

I experimented with Islam



Cephas Riley Johnson

and Christianity while in prison, but I still wasn't happy. Then on July 25, 1984, I made up my mind to become healthy and on that day I quit taking drugs. I had been fighting my murder conviction all along, and in 1985, my appeal reached the Maryland State Supreme Court. That panel said they would not overturn my conviction, even though in 1976 a similar case (in which a person who was part of a burglary group was arrested and a member of that group had killed someone, though the person arrested had not himself committed the murder) was overturned. In spite of the bitter disappointment I felt on hearing the Maryland Supreme Court would not connect my case to that earlier one because it occurred prior to my conviction, I determined to continue to improve myself.

By this time I had earned my GED from prison. I had attended the mandatory psychological counseling and anti-violence programs and put my all into each, making a "grade A" effort. I continued to stay off drugs; I was not drinking alcohol; I was not smoking cigarettes. I read many books about positive thinking, thinking rich, and Black choice. I discovered a love for writing. I entered an essay competition on the subject of prison reform, and placed eleventh out of 300 entries. I am proud of this — a lot of the educated guys in prison gave me stiff competition!

After I'd served 15 years in Maryland, my case came up for parole. Still, I served 18-and-a-half years in Maryland before the outgoing Maryland gover-

nor, Donald Schaefer, signed my parole in 1994. I feel very fortunate to have been up for parole right at that time, because the incoming governor, Parris Glendonning, vowed he would never parole anyone convicted to a life sentence.

From the Maryland penitentiary, I was paroled into the Lorton Penitentiary to serve my 15-year term for burglary in the District of Columbia. It was at Lorton that I met Dr. Alwin Harding and my life changed forever.

In June 1995, a friend, Bruce Sterling, introduced me to the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. Bruce was paralyzed from a vicious stabbing and used to wheel himself around to attend the Buddhist meetings held at the prison hospital by Dr. Harding. Bruce encouraged me to open my mind and receive the teachings of Buddhism with a clear vision. I desperately felt I needed to experience the religion that seemed to bring so much joy into Bruce's life.

Each Monday, we met Dr. Harding in a group, and strengthened our faith, practice and study. Dr. Harding told us about his experience in faith, driving home to us that if we chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, things would change. I asked him hard questions, coming from my study of Christianity and Islam, but he never put down any other religion. He patiently explained Buddhism to us. The *World Tribune* and *Seikyo Times* (now *Living Buddhism*) gave me a different perspective on things than I'd ever encountered in the other religions I'd studied.

Still today, one of my favorite quotes from Nichiren Daishonin's writings comes from Dr. Harding's encouragement to me during these discussions. He would often recite from "Happiness in this World": "Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continuing chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens. How could this be anything other than the boundless joy of the Law?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 681).

It made sense to me that everybody, in all religions, goes through things, both good and bad, but how you deal with it determines whether you'll be stronger or not. I realized the choice is mine. When I'm doing bad, what do I do? Just resort to negativity? When I'm doing good, do I forget where my benefits came from? No. No matter what, I'm going to stay in front of the Gohonzon, and as long as I stick it out, I can't fail to achieve my goals and become happy.

When I decided to give Buddhism my all, something changed within me. I became calm and confident. I started being more open and receptive instead of defensive and arrogant. I had a powerful desire to get out of prison. I knew that if what Dr. Harding said was true, I could bring about the change I desired in my life. I resolved to chant, no matter how I felt. I would chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo every morning for at least 45 minutes to an hour, in the evenings for an hour, and at night for an hour. I felt great. The truth of having Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in my life was revealed on May 22, 1998, when, after 22 years, I was released from prison.

I received the Gohonzon on Sept. 4 of last year. I am now chanting and doing gongyo in Southeast District, and I have become the group leader of Trinidad Group there.

I am no longer a criminal on the streets. In fact, I now take care of the streets you drive on and walk through. I work for the District of Columbia Department of Public Works. What a difference Nam-myoho-renge-kyo makes! I became a permanent employee this year in October. The power of the Gohonzon, and my commitment to faith, practice and study, have allowed me to develop the material well-being I longed for in my youth. My

struggles to overcome my drug addiction were great, but the desire has not reared its old ugly head. My faith in the Lotus Sutra gives me the strength to realize the power I have inside.

The most important thing to me at this moment in my life is that I make a positive difference in the lives of my parents, family and friends. Many sleepless nights, I prayed that I would not die in prison. I vowed that if given a chance I would make a difference; I would create value and bring happiness to my life and that of others.

My parents' trust in me has returned to the point where I often do their banking. That would not have happened 22 years ago. I'm so happy that I can bring happiness to my parents by being a responsible and trustworthy person.

I often meet and contact friends from the past and present who are now encouraged by my new life. Every day that I succeed and win encourages other people to seek and embrace this Buddhism. This is my mission. I've learned to appreciate the real meaning of freedom, and will continue to polish my practice of faith to develop more humility. The practice of faith has helped me realize that my real purpose is to stay focused on the main things that got me here today: chanting and communicating with SGI-USA leaders and members alike, and keeping the principles of faith, practice and study as the focal points of my life.

In closing, I want to personally thank Dr. Alwin Harding for introducing me to this practice. I love him for his compassion and for this great opportunity to be a person of value. I would like also to thank Dan Durett and my fellow members in Southeast District for being there in the rough times. And my thanks to each of you for allowing me to share how Nam-myoho-renge-kyo has made a difference in my life. **WJ**

Correction: An incorrect Goshō title was cited in an article highlighting encouragement given by SGI Vice Women's Leader Yumiko Hachiya on page B (fourth column) of the Focal Points pullout section in the Nov. 19 *World Tribune*. The line "In a 'Letter to Sairenbo....'" should have read "In a 'Letter to Horen.'" We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

Note: Now that *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* is widely available throughout the country, we are using it as our reference source instead of the seven volumes of *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*. First reference in articles will cite the entire title of the book; "WND" will be used thereafter.

EXPERIENCE—ALWIN HARDING, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Unique Opportunities for Personal Growth

SGI-USA Medical Division Leader Dr. Alwin Harding, of Washington, D.C., gave prison inmates a means to change their lives, never realizing the difference it would make in his own life.



Photo by PHIL ROSENBERG

Dr. Alwin Harding (left) and Cephas Riley Johnson

In March 1990, I began working for the District of Columbia government as a health care provider for the prison system. Prior to my employment in the prison system, I had a distaste for law enforcement, especially prisons and the incarcerated. Somehow I was sought out, and the encouragement of SGI President Ikeda in 1990 confirmed my decision to accept the position. I was fearful, but the warm reception that I received from the staff and the prisoners quickly diminished my prejudices to a great degree.

The life of a prisoner as I saw it was beset by danger of every kind: Correctional staff trying to create order may at times mete out unusual cruelty; fellow prisoners are tense and can also be a source of harm. There is no trust: Individuals might stay awake all night and sleep only during the daytime hours. There is an atmosphere of absolute tension. One may say it is the condition of the four lower worlds—Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger.

Many efforts are made within the institution to rehabilitate the prisoners. There is psychological and psychiatric counseling to alleviate the effects of stress prior to and after incarceration. Other programs include academics, physical fitness and conflict resolution studies. The impact of these programs appears to be just nominal.

When I witnessed such and felt the unhappiness, I was unable to hold back from offering the only solution that I knew: the practice of Buddhism (I began my practice with the SGI in Washington, D.C., in 1968). As I explored further, I found former patients: Those whom I had treated when they were infants and toddlers were among this prison population; there were fathers and husbands of my patients; there were children of my Buddhist brothers and sisters. Opening my eyes more, I realized that my new environment was not as foreign

as I had at first thought.

I knew that it would have been foolhardy to propagate Buddhism in this so structured society. There was rampant suffering of every kind: illness, loneliness, anger, despair. Though I initially hesitated, I knew that I could not remain silent very long. Once I determined that I would make a difference, I began by simply suggesting to one person and then another that they chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, assuring them that they would see a difference in their own lives. That was the extent of my initial effort. I would later learn that many had heard of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and had been previously introduced to Buddhism; several had received Gohonzon and practiced for some time. Several patients were surprised that a practice they had so long ago deserted had come back into their lives.

Those early practitioners were receiving benefits and they began introducing the practice to others. They would chant in their dormitories and seek me out when they had questions. Despite the changes that had begun to occur, I was highly criticized for my efforts. To assist in the rehabilitation of these men, I ignored the criticism that I was getting and devoted my lunchtime and after-work hours to teaching gongyo or conducting small discussion meetings. Our weekly discussion meetings began with gongyo and included experiences, questions and answers, and final encouragement. I formed a library by making copies of the publications so that each person could have adequate materials for study. For those who showed exceptional interest, there was training as

leaders and they took responsibility for teaching others gongyo and conducting chanting sessions. They were also taught the art of encouraging one another. Many questions on the minds of these men related to how to practice nonviolence among their peers. With reading President Ikeda's guidance on the subject, they would try new approaches and the results were usually great successes.

I wanted to share the elements of Buddhism with these people because some of them had long sentences and there is a great process of transfers. I wanted to make sure that long after they were away from me, they could continue to develop peace and happiness within their lives and share their secret with others they might meet.

There is an inmate at Lorton

named Wayne Morris who has been striving for many months to establish a formally recognized SGI Buddhist chapter in the prison. He continues his efforts toward that goal despite many obstacles. I receive letters from distant states from some of these young men who continue to practice and share the Buddhist experience with others.

There was a Baptist minister who held weekly dialogues with me on the merits of Buddhism. He would tell me that I am a "good Christian and don't know it." I received similar comments from a fellow physician from India, who is a Muslim. She always sought my opinion on matters of family, religion, war and peace.

An attorney invited me and a group of SGI members to her house to hold a dialogue with her family during a crisis; one of the daughters has become a member of the SGI-USA and is practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism while she is away at college.

I was able to advance from providing basic medical care to supervising a large staff of physicians, nurses, physician assistants and counselors. As a manager, I conducted our monthly staff meetings so as to create an atmosphere of respect and appreciation for everyone. I made myself available at all times to resolve all discrepancies with compassion and to arrive at meaningful solutions. Many staff members would

comment on the friendly atmosphere in our workplace and say how much they enjoyed coming to work. I sought to bring about appreciation for our diversity—the staff was international with varied professions. I was adamant that our patients be made to feel appreciated and given the best treatment in an honorable manner. When family members called inquiring about the condition of sick imprisoned relatives, they were always treated courteously.

I no longer work for the District of Columbia government. So as I reflect on my nine years of duty there and on my experience, I ponder why I had this unique opportunity. I believe it was for my personal growth so I could develop my ability to touch the lives of persons from whom, under my usual way of thinking, I would have stayed away. Had this experience not occurred, my happiness could never be complete. I greatly appreciate having had that opportunity and thank President Ikeda, my mentor, for making this possible.

I pray constantly that my humble efforts will continue to bear fruit and that happiness will abound in the lives of those unfortunate brothers and sisters who have lost their freedom and that they will take on the mission of bodhisattvas saving others from suffering. If my experience is truly meaningful, I must, in my present circumstance, seize the opportunity every moment to make a difference. **W**

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Challenges for the 21st Century: A Global Perspective

PERSPECTIVE

By MUTHUKUMARA MANI
McLEAN, VA.

As we stand less than a month away from the dawn of a new century, it is important for us to recognize the enormous challenges that we face ahead of us in the 21st century and about how we can overcome them using our collective wisdom. I am going to focus on three major challenges that I believe we need to overcome: the environment, economic development and peace.

On Oct. 12 this year, the United Nations announced an important milestone that we crossed as a civilization: the birth of a 6 billionth person on this planet. Back in 1800 there were just 1 billion of us in a few dawning industrial cities. We hit 3 billion in 1960 and have doubled since then in the blink of a planetary eye.

Not only are there more of us, but each of us is literally bigger, as measured by the space we and our stuff take up, the energy and material we take from earth, and the pollutants and wastes we return to the earth. We now cover the globe with our lights and buildings and farms and roads and cars and planes and ships. We have made a global-scale impact; we have spewed out enough chlorofluorocarbons to eat away the ozone layer and enough greenhouse gases to change the climate; we are moving into the space and resources of other species and wiping them out in an extinction spasm greater than anything the earth has seen since the fall of the dinosaurs.

We are growing at the rate of roughly 78 million per year, the equivalent of a new Mexico City every six months, or a new Bangkok or Lima or Cairo every month, or a new Philadelphia or Guatemala City every week. Virtually all that growth is happening in the countries we delicately call "developing." This brings us to another major challenge that we face—that of "development." While much of the credit for the environmental destruction goes to few of us privileged to live in developed countries, it is important to recognize that there are still 3 billion people on this



Photo by MITA CHAKRABORTY

planet who are living under \$2 a day and 1.3 billion living under \$1 a day. In another 30 years there will be another 2.5 to 3 billion people in that group.

As many of these countries struggle for economic and social progress, where victory spells freedom from want, they are also at the same time constantly faced with struggle for peace and security—where victory spells freedom from fear. According to a U.N. estimate, five and a half million people have died in war during the 1990s. Many times that number have had their lives ruined—by injury, by the loss of their loved ones, by being driven from their homes, or by the destruction of their property. The vast majority of these conflicts occur in the developing world.

In spite of these nasty statistics, or perhaps because of them, as we come to the millennium, we should focus on the opportunities. The world is a rich place. It is a place of culture, of many cultures; it is a place where there are great experiences in the large cities, in the villages and great experiences in the jungles that we can learn from. There are great experiences throughout the world we can exchange.

As we approach the millennium, it is time for us to look at how we can protect our precious planet. It is time for us to think of new responsibilities and possibilities. It is a time when we should look at ourselves, a time when we should look at what we are going to leave our children, a time when we should reassess what we are doing and how we are doing it. It is time for us to leave a world that is peaceful and prosperous for our children.

The practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is for self and

others. This is the purpose of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo: happiness for oneself and for others. The Daishonin's Buddhism was known in his time as the Buddhism of the poor. The people took up this faith out of desperation; it was their last resort. These people were so desperate to be happy that they practiced. They were taught to chant not only for themselves but also for others—to share this faith with others.

In his 1997 peace proposal, SGI President Ikeda says: "Indeed, every one of us should realize that we possess the nobility of spirit to be the main actor in changing the course of history, and with that conviction, to undertake, the task we share of solving the global issues of our time."

He adds: "Humankind is at a major turning point: Will it simply extend the existing course of history and wait for self-destruction? Or will it open up a new horizon and create a truly 'global' and genuinely human civilization?"

"We must choose the latter. The crux of our challenge is whether to simply be a passenger on the ship of fate, leaving everything to others, or to take the helm and be responsible for that ship ourselves to search, with the help of all, for the most desirable course."

He further states: "Working together with people of good throughout the world, we will rally courage and pool our wisdom to overcome the crises of civilization, the greatest challenges humankind has ever faced, and open the door to a third millennium where the sanctity of every individual life shines with hope and glory."

My friends, let's greet the first day of the new millennium with the full combination of se-

riousness, hope, humility, inspiration and love the occasion deserves. By doing this, we might actually begin to demonstrate our capability to handle the challenges of our 6 billion.

I suggest that, we individual folks, each of us an infinitesimal drop in that huge sea, refuse to simplify or trivialize these issues—refuse to caricature each other as either the scourges or the conquerors of the earth, refuse to despair, refuse even to rejoice. We know better. We know of the tremendous problems we face along with the billions of other creatures that co-inhabit our planet. We also know of the incredible accomplishments we've already made and the hundreds of other solutions just waiting in the wings.

I hope we will have the courage to respect each other, encourage each other, reach out to each other, create and commit to the vision of all of us having enough resources to develop our talents, and participate and contribute to a great turning toward a diverse, sufficient, equitable, joyful and sustainable future. **WT**

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

World Tribune MAILBOX

Thanks to Amy Schor Ferris

I want to thank you so much for sharing your experience (Nov. 5 *World Tribune*) of honoring and loving yourself, i.e., honoring your Buddha nature. I am experiencing a similar obstacle with this and I read your experience twice and started chanting the way you did.

—DIANE LENNON
Barrington, N.H.

The Major Writings

I am so happy that *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* has been published. We, the members of the World Group, have been studying and memorizing passages of the Goshō every month. We read the Daishonin's words out loud over and over again until we commit them to memory both in Japanese and English. Thus we feel his compassion and his encouragement to hang in there no matter what. We are trying hard to become capable people as well as competent interpreters. We are also avid readers of the *World Tribune*.

—SACHIKO MATSUSHITA
Osaka, Japan
matsu3333@email.msn.com

Be Careful What's in Bold Print

I am deeply disturbed by your Oct. 8 issue, p. 5, whereby you used SGI President Ikeda's quote, "Rather than the older generation trying to draw the youth together, the youth naturally draw themselves together," as a subtopic in bold print. It makes sense when I read the sentence prior to this quote and the sentence that follows it; however, the inherent message sent to readers by using this quote as a subtitle seemed to me as saying, "Hey! Adult division, bug off when it comes to youth division activities."

I have chanted many hours to the Gohonzon as to how to best support the Junior High and High School divisions' activities in New York. With financial limitations, there have been many times I have to save a few bucks so that SGI young people can enjoy bagels or sandwiches after their CAP21 Performing Art workshops.... I have gained undeniable trust and friendship from the parents of these SGI young people. With their help and request, I am also embarking on a new SGI project in New York, which I hope will further bring the younger generation together, with many "older generation's" daimoku, efforts and joint discussion with the "younger generation" to make it happen....

What you put in the *World Tribune* has a decisive effect on the attitudes and relationships

among the membership, between the young and the old and the older and the "disappeared." You cannot be too careful especially when you single out one quote from President Ikeda as a title or subtitle.... Please keep up the good work and be careful what you put in bold print.

—PETER C. KUAN
New York City

Paper's Larger Mission

Reading the four impressions of the SGI Training Course in Japan (July 30 *World Tribune*, p. 8) brought home to me a point I have been wanting to make to you about the larger mission of our paper. As the sub-head notes, "members from 52 countries attended"; however, all four impressions, though wonderful and awe-inspiring, were American.

I have always wanted to see more about SGI in the other 127 countries I am constantly told we have members in. The third impression (Biteen Orillave's) touched on the global mission of America and of SGI-USA, which President Ikeda has spoken of so often. I believe to live up to its name, the *World Tribune* (rather than the American Tribune), our paper must be of and for the entire planet. Now that with the recent youth culture festival's amazing expression of our youth's (the leaders of the 21st century) determination to reply to pioneer for peace (nonviolence) and freedom (from oppression) throughout history and throughout the world by creating a new history of peace and freedom, not just here in America but worldwide, the 21st century—and with it, the second cycle of the seven bells that Eileen spoke of—has truly begun, it is time for us, starting with our paper, the *World Tribune*, to awaken to our global mission by being a link to members worldwide....

—MARC GINSBURG
Staten Island, N.Y.

Encouraged

I have really been so encouraged by every article of the Nov. 26 issue of the *World Tribune*. I am saving this one and trying to encourage more of the members in the Central Oregon District to subscribe if they aren't already. It's like a really good movie. Thanks so much for your encouragement behind the scenes.

—SANDY WALKER
Bend, Ore.

About the Environment

Many thanks to Frank Hotchkiss for his Perspective in the Oct. 1 *World Tribune*! "Some Good News About the Environment" read like the proverbial breath of fresh air. Cutting down trees to produce books to protest deforestation seems slightly contradictory. On the other hand, there are so many opportunities to get involved with local "green teams," recycling efforts and other programs. Positive action based on a high life-condition and knowledge of hard data will go much further in helping us care for the world than despairing over the predictions of eco-alarms.

—LEE VOGEL,
Kansas City, Mo.

I agree that we mustn't allow ourselves to feel hopeless in the face of enormous problems. I feel this is the most valid point Frank Hotchkiss makes in his perspective entitled "Some Good News About the Environment." But otherwise, the piece was weakened by triviality. Sweeping, inaccurate generalizations and simplistic conclusions are drawn about environmentalism and about at least two environmental scientists who are respected all over the world. But most importantly, the piece seems to encourage complacency and that is always dangerous. It is way too early in the game to pat ourselves on the back for a job well done. The facts presented in this article may or not be from credible sources, and both factoids and statistics are often used to tell whatever story we want them to.

Nothing else in nature produces waste that something else doesn't make good use of but we human beings, and our development and technology needs to focus on this problem for the sake of our children and their children onto the seventh generation. We cannot eliminate human impacts from production and consumption, but we need to find ways to responsibly come into balance and harmony with our world. Developing fields such as industrial ecology, for example, seek to engineer cost-effective plans to link businesses that can utilize each other's wastes to lessen potentially destructive impacts. All of our best technology is an imitation of systems and processes in nature that have worked with aston-

ishing efficiency for centuries. And as we have interfered with these intricate ecosystems in the name of so-called progress, growth and development, we are just beginning to wake up to what it is we have to lose.

As Buddhists we have learned about the oneness of life and the environment and the Middle Way. The concept of the Middle Way transcends the dualities we have learned, such as the separation of humans and their environment. We are intimately linked to all the life forms on this planet and the earth's life support systems. Nothing could be more fundamentally important if people were truly aware of this relationship. In the writing "On Omens," Nichiren Daishonin explains this, relating our five senses to the four directions and our mind to the center of the compass. He states "when the people's five sense organs break down, the four quarters and the center will be startled and shaken, and as signs of the consequent destruction of the land, mountains will collapse, grasses and trees wither and rivers will run dry" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 644).

But as President Ikeda says, we are living in a world afflicted by the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness. Many otherwise well-intentioned people are blind to the consequences of their actions. In their delusion they do great harm, and we are all involved in the many collective processes that defile the earth. I don't believe that any competent environmental scientist fails to take into account that the planet is trying to refresh and recharge itself, the question is do we give the Earth a chance to do this? Just as we each have our own unique mission to fulfill in life, so does every other species we share this planet with, whether we understand their usefulness or not. Human activity accelerating species extinction is not a scare or a hoax, it is a proven and disturbing reality. When the life support systems of Mother Earth go down, we all go down too. And if you believe in the Gaia theory, that the planet itself is a living organism, then it will then go on just fine without us.

If there is money to be made in dire predictions as Mr. Hotchkiss suggests, the opposite is also true. Consider who benefits from people being complacent and thinking every-

thing is OK. The people who benefit from continuing business as usual will think it's great if you relax and do nothing. Are people in underdeveloped countries really feeling hopeless and doing desperate things because of gloomy environmental predictions? I don't think so. They are feeling unempowered because giant, multi-national corporations from the Northern hemisphere are exploiting and exporting their resources while they are living in poverty and not seeing any gains or compensation from this activity. The alternative view to the current paradigm of development and growth and making money as the number one priority in life is not an ignorant or naive one such as Mr. Hotchkiss suggests by the example of screaming at the receding tide for the ocean to come back.

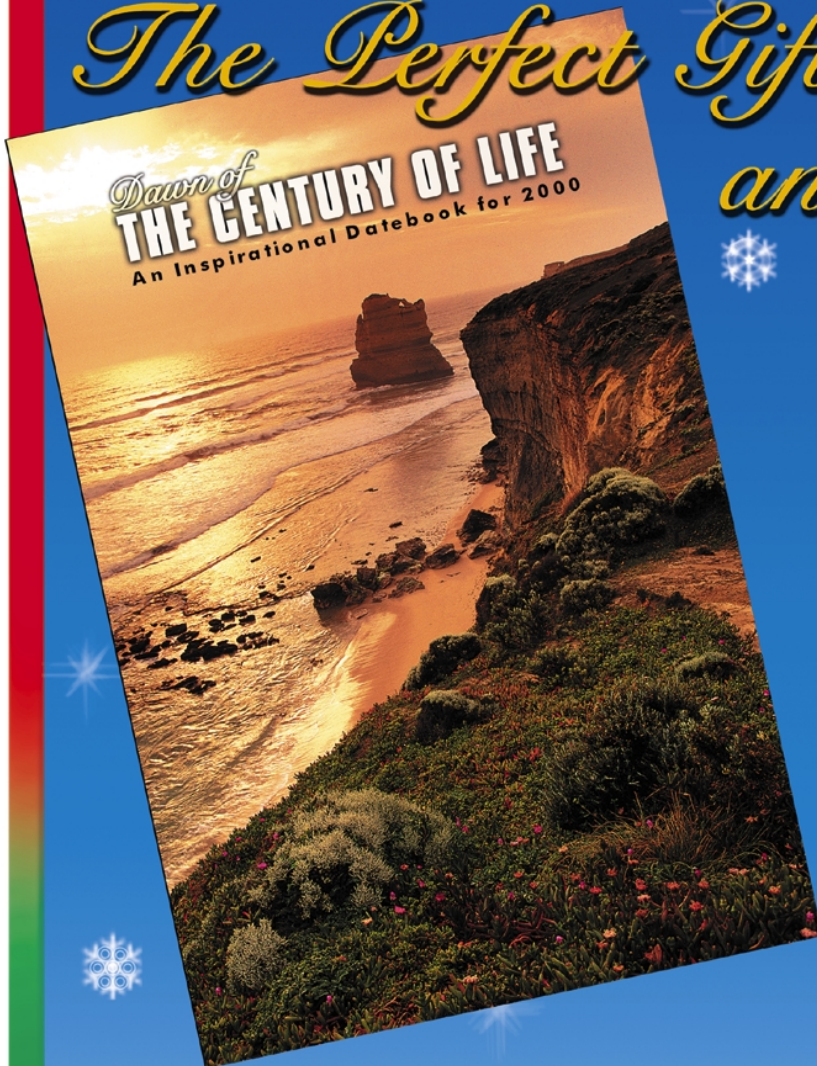
So by all means, let's act with awareness, and not in fear. But let's not go to sleep or choose to remain blind. A lot of busy people rarely take the time to gather information from a variety of sources, or go out and actually experience the natural world around them. We all stalk the Earth in ignorance unless we take the time to educate ourselves and do these things. Very few of us understand anything about the place where we live, the inputs and outputs, where the garbage goes, where our water comes from, what kinds of plants and animals are there. And it behooves all of us to make the effort to do this. Let's be truly informed, responsible, forward-looking citizens as we enter the 21st century. And let's pray to live, doing as little harm as possible, in this world where we see all too much violence against humans and nature, while we perpetuate what Gandhi called "commerce without morality."

The real good news about our environment is that it will clean up as we polish our lives through vigilant and assiduous efforts, talking and walking our prayers with conviction in this confused world we live in.

—DON SANDERS,
Los Angeles
dsanders@sgi-usa.org

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