

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Remembering Amelia Moran

I just finished reading the perspective from Amy Taliaferro in the Feb. 25 *World Tribune* about Amelia Moran. I couldn't help but cry (out of joy) reading about Amelia. She, too, touched me in a very special way. Her radiant smile and warm encouragement, especially to the youth—nationwide—touched my life. Amelia was an inspiration to me, an example of what kind of woman I want to be and could be. I was very happy that you wrote about her in the *World Tribune*. She will always be remembered.

—REIKO GROSELL,
Culver City, Calif.
rgroshell@sgi-usa.org

About the Environment

If the Paul Ehrlich Mr. Kawaguchi refers to is the same one who made his infamous “overpopulation predictions” in 1969 or 1970, he should not be throwing stones. Dr. Ehrlich's predictions were completely wrong. He is thoroughly discredited as a scientist. And my guess is that if it weren't for tenure, Ehrlich would probably be out of a job.

Mr. Kawaguchi should also read works by Dixie Lee Ray, a scientist who documents many of Mr. Hotchkiss' assertions.

P.S. Please tell President Ikeda there is no overpopulation problem, only a freedom problem in some countries. President Ikeda mentioned overpopulation again in one of the recent articles in the *World Tribune*. Sorry, I don't remember which one.

—JAMES RYAN,
Indianapolis, Ind.
JamesTRyan@aol.com

The Silent Prayers

Michael Lisagor's Feb. 4 *World Tribune* “Perspective,” which explains the silent prayers of gongyo, is so thought-provoking and useful. The article is insightful to me personally and I've used it to help explain the practice to people I'm introducing to Buddhism. I hope that soon these explanations are incorporated into SGI-USA study material we can use from now on. Thanks a lot for sharing a great article with us.

—M. LAVORA PERRY
E. Cleveland, Ohio
perryrich@juno.com

On Depression

I want to express appreciation for the discussions on depression subsequent to the publishing of my perspective in the Feb. 4 *World Tribune*. I did not truly understand the importance of the issue until receiving other members' overwhelming feedback both in

person and in writing. It is my hope that this discussion has illustrated the reality of depression as an illness that affects both one's chemical brain structure as well as one's mental thought processes and emotional well being. It was my goal to help my fellow members understand when they have it and what to do about it, as well as share my own victory over the illness utilizing the effective and well-rounded combination of my practice, psychotherapy and psychiatry. When we feel good, we are better able to serve as Votaries of the Lotus Sutra and Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Thank you so much.

—LORI A. McDANIEL,
Chicago
www.frymulti.com

I appreciated Lori McDaniel's "Using Common Sense in Facing Depression" (Jan. 28 *World Tribune*). I also appreciated Stu Clarke's response. Lori's perspective was, for me, a final encouragement to try using antidepressants (that I have for years been avoiding using every argument in the book to maintain my stance). I don't know what it is going to do. I don't know if it will help or hinder me, but for me now, I know I've got to try it and see. I've been practicing for 12 years. I have many benefits and believe in the power of the Gohonzon and I know I am taking the best action I can at this time. I want to be happy, and if some of my misery is caused by a chemical imbalance, then I want to know and if there is something I can do about it, I am going to do it.

—T. GREGORY,
New York City

I would like to respond to Stu Clarke's letter in the March 3 *World Tribune*, responding to Lori McDaniel's article, "Using Common Sense in Facing Depression" (Jan. 28 *World Tribune*).

I am not a doctor or medical practitioner. I am a common person, seeking to be the healthiest and happiest me that I can be. I have in the past, been diagnosed with "chronic depression." I used to believe that I could completely overcome my "mental" problems by chanting, and I believe that the jury is out, regarding whether it is possible to do so.

However, I can refer to my own life, and to what I have read, in responding to Stu Clarke's letter.

In my understanding, mental problems are caused—at the deepest level by our karma—and in actuality by brain dysfunctions that are sometimes referred to as "temporal lobe epilepsies." These brain epilepsies can be observed through pet scans, although doctors rely mostly on observations and interviews of patients.

In my own case, I have chanted consistently for more than 27 years, never missing a gongyo, not while in labor, or while traveling across times zones, or while lying in bed with a high fever. I have also consistently chanted 2 million daimoku per year, and have never strayed from the NSA or SGI organization. My consistent practice has undoubtedly enabled me to overcome enormous obstacles, to become much, much happier than I would be without the practice.

However, I was still plagued by ongoing depression which was unrelated to my environment. One of the symptoms or side-effects of depression is a fairly high degree of negativity and nihilism. No matter how hard I chanted or practiced Buddhism, when I got depressed (for no apparent reason, other than what was going on in my head), I tended to blame my environment, or to look to my environment to cure my depression.

When I was blaming my environment, I would also tend to, at times, harbor ill feelings toward fellow members, attempt to control the people in my environment, have great difficulty forgiving people for “doing me wrong,” take criticisms to heart, and sometimes even have difficulty chanting.

I tried taking Paxil, but didn't like the side effects. Then, I read in an issue of NARSAD Research Newsletter, published by the National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Affective Disorders: “Another herbal compound for depression receiving a great deal of attention has been SAM-e— a metabolic intermediate compound called ‘S-adenosylmethionine,’ SAM-e is found in all living cells...SAM-e reportedly enhances brain dopamine and serotonin neurotransmitter metabolism.”

I began taking SAM-e two months ago, and my deep-seated depression is completely gone, while I have experienced NO side effects from the supplement. I now seldom harbor ill feelings toward members and get over, fairly quickly, resentment against people who treat me badly. I have finally forgiven my parents for, what I used to consider to be, bad-parenting. I mostly think about the wonderful times in my childhood.

I have very little need to control people. I get over criticisms of me fairly quickly, and I find it easier to chant for long periods of time. Did all of this wonderful growth come about as the result of taking a pill? The answer is that the anti-depressant is the influence or expedient means. Last fall, I spent several months observing my mind while chanting, really looking at my depression, while realizing that my one fundamental fault was the tendency to become depressed and negative.

I also came to understand, from studying about mental problems that I very likely had a problem in my brain, and that chanting alone had not yet cured it.

Because I was using the strategy of the Lotus Sutra to cure my depression, chanting abundant daimoku, seeking guidance, studying, etc., I believe that I found the best solution to my problem. SAM-e is working synergistically, you might say, to support my life, my practice of Buddhism to help me become the best possible person that I can be. In addition to feeling happier, I also feel more naturally intelligent, as my depression would frequently mask or interfere with my natural abilities.

SAM-e works best for me. For others, it might be Prozac or Paxil. However, no anti-depressant can give a person true happiness, the kind that comes from getting in touch with your Buddha nature. Yet, now when I chant, I feel focused, joyous, and no longer encumbered by a brain that often caused me to have difficulty focusing on the Gohonzon. The Lotus Sutra is the best medicine for depression. However, in my opinion, the various anti-depressants now available are the expedient means.

This June I plan to attend a convention of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) in San Diego.

—LIZ GOLDNER,
Costa Mesa, Calif.
Lgoldner@earthlink.net