

Message to the Junior High and High School Graduates of 2000

You Are the Hope of the World!

Graduation Message

Many, many congratulations to the class of 2000! May you have a wonderful, unforgettable graduation.

We are very excited for you and we hope you can find a moment amid all the craziness to pause and enjoy the "view."

It's no secret how important this time is; nor is it a secret that the world is counting on you to bring a greater tomorrow. The next few years of your life will be, at times, exhilarating, ecstatic, difficult, triumphant, stressful, profound, intense, bittersweet, challenging, and on and on. But, what will always be present is your unlimited potential.

We hope you can make the most of all your opportunities. We hope you find yourself standing alongside other great young persons like you whom you find inspiring and who prove to be your lifelong friends, your allies for peace.

In the introduction to *A Youthful Diary*, SGI President Ikeda says of his third decade of life: "Those youthful years, when I was striving day by day to advance in my undertakings, seem no further away than yesterday. I served my teacher [President Toda] for some ten years—in one sense a long time, in another sense a mere instant—and those ten years contained my entire future."

Your mission is profound and your life is just beginning. Please have a safe and joyful graduation. Go 2000!

Sincerely,

the High School and Junior High School National Leaders
Bobbie, Jomo, Nobuko, Steve and Shan

The Ten Worlds and Victory Over Violence

by Mahogany Gamble,
San Francisco



I once heard a high school student say: "Violence is natural. We are nothing but animals

and our instincts lead us to fight. Not only to protect ourselves but to become the best and be at the top of this human food chain." Unfortunately, no sooner did he said that than he had to change schools after being the center of a massive fight. At the time I heard him say that, I didn't know what I know now. I didn't know how to react or what to say in an attempt to get him to change his thinking.

Thinking about what he said, there is not much science out there to prove that we humans aren't merely an advanced form of animal

species. Is it then truthful to say that we act solely on instinct? Science has proven that our brains are much more complex than other animals. That advancement gives us the ability to formulate thoughts, change our feelings, communicate in an entire language and learn more. It seems as though while other animals are acting out their instincts, we've been given a tool to move beyond that.

Further on the science note, think for a minute about your house or about your body. How difficult it is to maintain it. How hard it is to have to constantly clean your house or exercise to maintain your body figure. In physics they say that things naturally tend to decrease or get messy; that the Earth, like your house if not constantly maintained, will become dirty and fall apart. This phenomenon says that things will naturally tend to decrease or take the easier route. Similarly, it is said that a person put in the situation to

choose peace or violence will naturally choose violence because peace is so much more difficult to attain.

Do you think that this summary is true? How do we become victorious over violence?

Going back to us being animals, I would like to share about the Ten Worlds, which is one way this practice explains life. It is believed that there are ten states, or life-conditions,

that we all have within ourselves. There is potential for any one of them to be manifested at any time depending on our actions, which depend on our environment. The ten states from lowest to highest are: Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Heaven or Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood. It

("Victory..." continued on page B)

Trailblazers!

In this issue, look for the first ever "Trailblazers," a new column for "Seize the Day" created by the SGI-USA student division. It can be found on page D.

"Trailblazers" will be published monthly in the second issue of "Seize the Day" each month. The name "Trailblazers" expresses the mission of student division members as trailblazers of worldwide kosen-rufu. We hope you enjoy this new column as the students set their sights toward May 3, 2001, and the new millennium.

(“Victory...” continued from page A)

was earlier believed that humans were born in the world of Humanity and animals in the world of Animality based on their karma in previous lifetimes. In Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, it is believed that all humans possess these 10 life-conditions at every moment and may experience them at any time. It was easy to see in my previously mentioned experience that I was in the state of Animality, which says: In this state, we are ruled by instinct. “We exhibit neither reason nor moral sense nor the ability to make long-range judgments. In the world of Animality, we operate by the law of the jungle, so to speak. We will not hesitate to take advantage of those weaker than

ourselves and fawn on those who are stronger.” That was a quote from the book *The Winning Life*. Many of us are in this state when we act violently.

We can overcome the six lower states — Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity and Rapture—by simply chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to the Gohonzon. In the Goshō (which are writings by Nichiren Daishonin) “On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime,” it says that the Mystic Law is the reality of life and “is called the Mystic Law because it explains the mutually inclusive relationship of a single moment of life and all phenomena” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 3). The Mystic Law is represented by *myoho* in the phrase *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*. It further states that

rengo is representative of the lotus flower, which symbolizes the wonder of *myoho* or the Mystic Law. “Once you realize that your own life is the Mystic Law, you will realize that so are the lives of all others.” I’ll go into that point a little

later. The



Gohozon is the physical form of this Mystic (or universal) Law. By chanting to the Gohonzon and having faith in it, we can activate the powers of the Buddha and the Mystic Law, hence raising our state of consciousness or life-condition. Meaning that by chanting, our fundamental life-conditions can rise above the six lower states.

Once our basic life-conditions reach the states of Learning and Realization (the seventh and eighth states), which are together called the two vehicles, we are no longer captives to our own reactions as in the lower states.

Meaning in part that we don’t react to in our environment by lowering to one of the six lower states. At this point we have recognized the Mystic Law (or *myoho*) as the law of the universe and are beginning to realize that our lives are the Mystic Law. In these states, though, we have tendencies to look down upon those who have not reached our same understanding and the potential to drop down into one of the lower states is present. In further explain-

ing that each of our lives is the Mystic Law, this Buddhism believes Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the law of life. That “[this law] gives rise to all phenomena, and all phenomena are manifestations of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.” So the law of life and all phe-

nom-ena that we see are inseparable. This becomes a part of us in the principle known as *esbo funi*, the law of the oneness of life and environment. That our lives are inseparable from the environment and the environment is a direct reflection of our life-condition. This explains the girl at my school who constantly felt the need to pick on me. She, being part of my environment, was a direct reflection of me being in the state of Animality. This law is why when you wake up some mornings you are already in the state of Hell, or when you’re feeling good everybody wants to say “Hi” to you. Just to recap, the universal law is all phenomena and all phenomena is our environment and our environment is a reflection of us, therefore we are the universal or Mystic Law.

With that knowledge we now go back to what Nichiren Daishonin said, “Once you realize your own life is the Mystic Law, you will realize that so are the lives of all others.” As is further stated in the Study Department exam booklet, “If we truly understood that

everyone we meet is ultimately a Buddha, we could never take pleasure in another’s suffering or think that we could be happy at their expense.” Once we have reached that realization, we are said to be in the state of Buddhahood, the 10th or highest state of life.

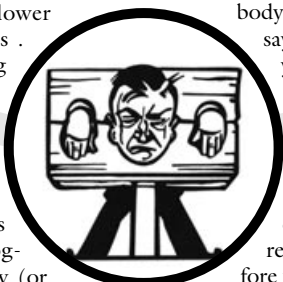
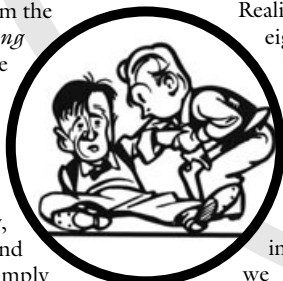
That is the key to being victorious over violence as well as all of life’s other difficulties. Once we have reached that state, we have an unwavering happiness. Our happiness and realization are reflected in our environment and those in our environment will act accordingly: peacefully. Had I been in a higher state of life when I was 12, my friend would not have picked on me; there would’ve been no group of 20 middle school students attacking one girl; there



wouldn’t have been violence or animality in my environment. Peace may be more difficult to maintain, especially at the crucial moments, but that is what this practice is about. If one person becomes happy, so does his or her environment. When we tell others

about this practice, we open up their minds to reach that realization. They then spread peace and happiness by becoming peaceful and happy. We can reach the state of Buddhahood only by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to the Gohonzon.

It is important for us to strive daily to reach this state. It is said in the book *The Winning Life*, “The SGI’s ultimate purpose is to contribute to the establishment of a peaceful world where all people experience happiness.” ♪



YOUTH *Study* JULY 2000

“Being True to Ourselves”

**“From this hour I ordain myself loos’d of limits and imaginary lines,
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,
Listening to others, considering well what they say,
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.”**

(Walt Whitman, *Song of an Open Road*)

By Suyrissa Langbell, Youth Study Committee

Four years ago when I started chanting and reading SGI President Ikeda’s speeches, I remember how he caught my attention as well as my immediate respect. He spoke to youth on the same level as adults. His bold messages always included “be true to yourself.” By contrast, many adults these days are not saying this to youth. Instead they complain about times changing and young people’s lack of respect for life and their elders. I think President Ikeda is different because he sincerely believes in each of us. He trusts and sees our Buddhahood, even though we cannot always see it ourselves. And ironically because we fail to see our own Buddhahood, we sometimes fail to trust ourselves enough even to follow his guidance.

If we look at history and learn from those people who stood up alone against evil authority, we can see that these heroes were first and foremost true to themselves. Their courage was found through their own personal conviction and belief in what they were doing. For example, first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi would not have sacrificed his life in prison during World War II unless he knew in his heart that he was doing the right thing. He did not look to the priests for reassurance or approval because he knew from his own wisdom that they were not protecting the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. If he were to follow their lead, we most likely would never have learned about the Mystic law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

I am beginning to learn that before any individual can take action for justice in his or her life, it is important to see oneself clearly. Once the self

is understood, respected and honored, nothing can defeat the individual. We all want to be happy, but many of us seek approval of those around us. Most are afraid to look foolish, which I think is true of all ages. So it is easy to find ourselves putting forth energy to fit in. But as I get older, I am learning how to overcome my insecurities of not fitting in. As long as I am working towards fulfilling my dreams, I have a foundation based on happiness and I do not have the tendency to worry about what others think of me. This creates a calming effect within my life. From this kind of life condition, it is natural then to see the Buddhahood in those around me. As a result of this clarity, I can develop the resolve to help others open up their own lives to the happiness they deserve.

Being true to oneself means seeing our lives in the Gohonzon and believing that we are just as capable of standing up for each person’s happiness as presidents Makiguchi, Toda and Ikeda. “What each must seek in his own life never was on land or sea. It is something that never has been and never could have been experienced by anyone else” (Joseph Campbell). Each human being has a unique existence — making up a beautiful collage of existences. President Ikeda, who has seen the worldwide spread of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism for more than 50 years, expresses his vision of how our world peace movement will grow:

Our movement is an endeavor to illuminate and treasure the life of each individual, to help people develop their inherent good, to bring forth their positive creativity, and to forge indomitable selves that are not at the mercy of their desires or environment, selves undefeated by anything. We call this process “human revolution.”

(*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 5, p. 16)

This movement begins in the living rooms of ordinary people, with young people like us enjoying our own unique individuality—following our own path, creating our own history and encouraging our friends to, above all else, be true to themselves.

This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.

— Emerson

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?

Postal Mail:
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E-mail:
seize@sgi-usa.org

QUESTIONS for DISCUSSION

What does it mean to you to SEE your Buddhahood?

When is it easiest to see your Buddhahood?
When is it most difficult to see it?

How do you feel about other people and seeing their Buddhahood?

How do members of the SGI and members in society interrelate?

What kind of role do you want to take in society? within the SGI?



Trailblazers!

by **Daisaku Leslie,**
SGI-USA Student
Division Leader

In January of this year, I received a wonderful opportunity to attend a training course in Japan. Honestly speaking, before leaving for Japan I was experiencing major turmoil in my life. I had just been appointed a national student division leader. I felt that I was not capable enough and that I had no vision for the student division to share with my mentor on this trip. My stomach was churning queasily. I chanted with my entire being to overcome this feeling. Specifically, I chanted to develop friendships with those whom I accompanied on the trip, to be true to myself and that each of us would have the most amazing experience with President Ikeda.

On one occasion we attended a dinner meeting, and something prompted me to jump out of my seat to ask President Ikeda a question. At the crucial moment, I thought about the sufferings of my fellow members with whom I had been fighting together on the front lines of our organization.

In his answer, I felt he was sharing his vision for the student division of the SGI-USA. He said that to overcome the darkness of depression and despair, it is of utmost importance to introduce others to this Buddhism, to provide people the opportunity to hear about this great practice. He said that we should read good books and conduct dialogue with our friends who are suffering until they are able to transform their consciousness to one of infinite hope. He also stressed the importance of discussion meetings as the most effective means to share with our friends the philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin and the activities of the SGI. It was tremendous guidance!

As he was leaving the dining room he passed by me and tapped on my shoulder stating, "You are the Daisaku of America, I am the Daisaku of Japan." In these warm words of encouragement, I felt that President Ikeda was encouraging me to have confidence, to have conviction in my mission as a student division leader. Essentially, he was telling us that we are all young presidents of the Soka Gakkai.

The student division has a great mission: Based on the conviction that our studies themselves contribute to kosen-rufu, become great leaders in every field and become the new backbone of the SGI. With unbreakable bonds of friendship, let's create a tidal wave of propagation and with tenacious action and profound philosophy let's double our student division membership by May 3, 2001! ♪

Poems**Courage**

Roar, lion, roar
Darkness no more.
No longer shy
from adversity's eye.
Through my struggles
my effort doubles,
only strong faith
will Buddhists make.
Fight, study, search, and Fight
to reveal a true, inner light.
All the earth's length
will not lessen my strength
No longer accepting defeat
my victories I will meet
and help others do the same
Ignite their inner flame.
So Roar, Lion, Roar
Let you life Soar
Awaken to the mission
You promised before
Because
Fear Retreats
When Woman speaks.

by Caroline Bergui, New Jersey



Iwrote this poem after being inspired by my women's literature summer class that I was taking. At the time, I was really doubting my faith and asking myself what I truly believed in. I had reached a point in my practice where simply chanting blindly did not work any longer. That type of thinking was what I needed in high school. Now I was questioning whether I chanted for myself because I really wanted to and whether I really believed I was changing my life.

So, I wrote this poem to pull myself out of the doubt and the despair. I used it to motivate me and jump-start my faith. With it came a lot more chanting and studying. There are two things that I have learned while chanting to the Gohonzon during my college experience at Rutgers University: 1) Always be specific in what you want and 2) Never, ever accept no for an answer. I hope you can find the inspiration within yourself (I know it's there) and produce something unique and beautiful.

Shimmering Star

By Karen Quispe

The tiny Pointy Star

I feel like making a wish.

You go up to space just to see that star.

The feeling is smooth and plain with straight

short triangle shapes surrounding it.

It looks like a creative shaped crystal in the sky at night.

That is just such a pretty sight.

I see it way, way high up.

My, it's so far.

Oh I wish I could be that special star.