



EXPERIENCE:
Margrette and Celia Francisco challenge corrupt authority and achieve justice for their sister, Joan.

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

No. 3281

\$2.00

FEBRUARY 18, 2000

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE FOR CHINESE NEW YEAR'S

A Beautiful Garden of Diversity

In his Feb. 6 message to a culture festival in Los Angeles celebrating Chinese New Year's, SGI President Ikeda reminds us that 'Buddhism teaches that the beautiful garden of a true human republic can be created when we manifest our full potential, at the same time always respecting human difference and diversity.'

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

Happy New Year to all the distinguished guests and my beloved members of the SGI family gathered today. My heartfelt congratulations on your wonderful spring festival, which marks the start of the third millennium!

I understand that this spring festival, which commemorates the Chinese New Year, will be blessed with a variety of celebratory performances by diverse ethnic groups of the United States, including the Chinese, Korean, Thai, Cambodian and Japanese peoples.

Buddhism expounds the principle of *o-bai-to-ri*, which literally means "the cherry is the cherry, the plum is the plum, the peach is the peach, and the damson is the damson." This stresses the importance of giving full, rich expression to one's individual traits. In other words, Buddhism teaches that the beautiful garden of a true human republic can be created when we manifest our full potential, at the same time always respecting human difference and diversity.

Your spring festival can therefore be called a great



The opening dance at the culture festival in Pasadena, Calif., celebrating Chinese New Year's, Feb. 6 (see page 12).

festival of friendship, a gathering of world citizens and a garden of individual beauty, where the flowers of ethnicity and culture blossom.

Feb. 11 is the centennial of the birth of the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda. He is known as an advocate of a new globalism that seeks human and cultural solidarity.

I believe that he must be delighted at this splendid festival, where people of many ethnic backgrounds

have joyfully come together. I'm sure that he is sending you his congratulations.

"We will change the century of hatred and division into one of harmony and mutual respect, in which the world's people befriend one another." This is the spirit of the successive Soka Gakkai presidents toward achieving peace. This is the starting point of the SGI's movement for peace, culture and education.

It is my heartfelt wish that all the honorable guests attending today will heartily enjoy this festival of peace and culture, and spend a meaningful time together.

I am earnestly praying every day for the good health of all present today. I am sincerely praying every day for the prosperity of your families. Please convey my best regards to your family members who could not attend today's event.

Daisaku Ikeda, President, Soka Gakkai International
February 6, 2000

See page 12 for more on the Chinese New Year's culture festival.

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



New Orleans Manager of the Office of Tourism Dean Shapiro (center) presents honorary citizenships for SGI President Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda to SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima, Dec. 23, 1999.

SGI's 25th Anniversary Recognized

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Many local governments across the country celebrated the 25th anniversary of the SGI organization (Jan. 26) by issuing commendations to the SGI and SGI President Ikeda. The SGI's contributions to the community and the SGI president's leadership for peace were often cited as the reasons for the recognitions.

Some highlights included: The Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco issued a Certificate of Resolution recognizing the SGI-USA and SGI organizations on

Jan. 5. The City of Los Angeles presented President Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda with a Certificate of Commendation on Jan. 7. The State of Hawaii named Jan. 9 "Soka Gakkai International Day," while a number of city and county officials there issued proclamations to the SGI. Anacortes, Wash., and Tukwila, Wash., proclaimed Jan. 26 as "Dr. and Mrs. Daisaku Ikeda Day." Panama City Beach, Fla., bestowed the title of Honorary Citizen on the SGI president and designated Jan. 26 "Daisaku Ikeda Day," while the City of Orlando, Fla., designated Jan. 26 "Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda Day."

Awards and commendations were also received from New Orleans, Denver, Miami, Englewood, N.J., Seward, Alaska, Biloxi, Miss., the State of Tennessee and various locations in the Caribbean and the Pacific. In total, more than 25 commendations were announced for SGI Day.

Many of the dignitaries who met with SGI-USA and SGI leaders last month expressed their expectations for the SGI's future development. SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima commented, "Let's respond to their expectations by making our organization even greater and contributing more to our communities!" **WT**

Why 'Soka Spirit'?

EDITORIAL

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR



each time by the word *evil*; we have to share how the Daishonin uses this word to

refer to priests who promote distorted versions of Buddhism.

Last year, many members expressed dissatisfaction with the term *temple issue*. They felt that it did not reflect our spiritual basis for this movement. *Temple issue* did not really capture what we are doing, they argued. This is why, last December, SGI-USA's Central Executive Committee adopted Soka Spirit, a name that New York members had come up with, as a suggested new name for this movement. (No one is required to use Soka Spirit, of course—you can use another name you like better or can even keep using *temple issue* if you want.)

Achieving kosen-rufu, from one perspective, is a war of words. We struggle to convince people of the truth of this Buddhism through the words that we speak and write. And we have all probably experienced just how hard this can be, whether in explaining our Buddhist practice to our family members or in discussing matters regarding Nichiren Shoshu.

We have worked especially hard over the last several years to find the best words to spell out the temple issue: the SGI's stance toward Nichiren Shoshu's determined efforts to confuse people about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Sometimes we have used language that has been too emotional, and our point has been lost on our listeners. Other times, we have not emphasized the seriousness of the issue enough; our way of introducing it has caused people to see it as unrelated to their daily practice.

We have learned that there are certain words and terms that we must be careful to explain fully or use sparingly or even avoid. If we say that the priesthood is evil, for instance, it helps to explain what we mean

The name Soka Spirit derives from the "Soka Gakkai spirit" that SGI President Ikeda often cites. After all, educating people about Nichiren Shoshu's true intent is synonymous with the Soka Gakkai spirit—to counter selflessly any forces that threaten this Buddhism and to make sure that we protect the Law for the people, for the future, based on the example set for us by the Daishonin. This has been the spirit of the suc-

'To practice in accord with the Daishonin's word and spirit is the prime point of the SGI. It is to strive together with the intent of accomplishing kosen-rufu, of spreading this Buddhism....'

cessive Soka Gakkai presidents, who have withstood great persecution, including unjust imprisonment, for their kosen-rufu activities.

As SGI-USA Vice General Director Greg Martin explained in a lecture at the recent Soka Spirit Conference in Florida: "To practice in accord with the Daishonin's word and spirit is the prime point of the SGI. It is to strive together with the intent of accomplishing kosen-rufu, of spreading this Buddhism.... To grasp this spirit and inherit the Daishonin's will is the opportunity presented to us by the priesthood's attacks on us and their distortions of the Daishonin's teachings. For us to inherit the torch of kosen-rufu that President Ikeda wants to pass to us, we must have the understanding and courage to propagate this philosophy—in this case, to clarify the correct practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism, contrasting it with the incorrect practice. The question is whether we will have the courage to accept this mission."

Above all, when it comes to this mission, "it is the heart that is important" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 949).

We need to strengthen the courageous heart each of us already has—the heart to take full responsibility for elucidating the correct practice. In continually finding new ways to articulate the often difficult-to-broach subject of Nichiren Shoshu's falseness, our sincere desire to help others understand is needed. This desire is, in fact, the only thing that, when expressed in the most appropriate way, will move others to open their hearts to the matter. Our war of words must always begin with the resolve to make the Soka Gakkai spirit our own, to live the Soka Gakkai spirit, to move with this spirit.

This is the conclusion that the Soka Spirit Conference participants reached with the pledge they agreed on: "We pledge to lay down our lives to courageously protect the Soka Gakkai spirit, to be victorious against the enemies of human justice and to be a beacon of hope for all humanity." This one sentence sums up what Soka Spirit is all about: It is to continue, to the best of our ability—with our words, with our hearts, with our actions—the struggle for the Law in America. **WT**

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Head Temple Faces More Lawsuits Over Grand Main Temple Destruction

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

More parties in Japan are initiating lawsuits against High Priest Nikken Abe and Taiseki-ji, the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu, over their destruction of the Grand Main Temple (Sho-Hondo). Reformist priest Bando Sato, who seceded from Nichiren Shoshu in September 1999, joined 28 others from Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan, in suing High Priest Nikken and the head temple on Feb. 3. In the Yokohama District Court, they will seek approximately \$80,000 in compensation for the psychological duress they

say they have suffered by the temple's destruction.

According to the document they submitted to the court, they all made contributions for the construction of the Grand Main Temple in October 1965 with the understanding that the Grand Main Temple would be maintained far into the future. Mr. Bando states: "Out of his jealousy toward his mentor, the former high priest Nittatsu, and the Soka Gakkai, Nikken destroyed the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism that should have been protected for all eternity. We can't tolerate his great slander!"

In their petition, the Kanagawa plaintiffs detail the painstaking efforts they under-

went to come up with the money that they donated. One says, "While raising three infants, we donated \$760, juggling around our monthly salary, which at the time was only between \$95 and \$190." Another states, "I pawned all the expensive clothes I had bought for my new married life to come up with the money that I donated for the Grand Main Temple's construction."

Also on Feb. 3, in Aichi Prefecture, 21 people brought a similar suit against High Priest Nikken and Taiseki-ji at the Toyohashi Branch of the Nagoya District Court. The Feb. 3 suits bring the lawsuits against High Priest Nikken and

Taiseki-ji over the Grand Main Temple's destruction to a total of five. Fifteen Soka Gakkai members from Fujinomiya City, where Taiseki-ji is located, sued High Priest Nikken and Taiseki-ji at the Shizuoka District Court on Jan. 17, seeking around \$219,000 in compensation. Twelve Soka Gakkai members in Numazu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, filed a suit against High Priest Nikken and Taiseki-ji on Jan. 25, asking for around \$79,000 in compensation. And Tadao Nomoto, a member in Hachioji City, Tokyo, filed a suit against High Priest Nikken on Jan. 26 for the return of about \$49,000 that his mother donated in 1990. **WT**

World TRIBUNE The SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

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

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

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

Printed on 100% recycled paper
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EXPERIENCE — JOANNA JECZALIK, LONDON, ENGLAND

My Environment — A Perfect Mirror

Joanna Jeczalik tells how Animality determined her choice of career and the way in which she perceived her environment.

"There are many people today who do not see anything wrong about the strong winning over the weak. This is the Law of the Jungle, but I think such an attitude is foolish because it is mindless. As in the world of animals, it involves no wisdom, no reasoning, no will." (Daisaku Ikeda, Life: An Enigma, a Precious Jewel, p. 102)

At the time, it seemed a strange choice for me to go into advertising. I was a studious and hard-working 21 year old, who measured my self-worth in "A" grades and first-class honors degrees. I had no idea what attracted me to the high-powered and glamorous world of advertising, except perhaps that it was so different to the life I was used to.

In my last term at university, I went to all the interviews at the big London agencies, but was only offered a job at one — a small, inconspicuous agency in Paddington.

There was only one place I really wanted to be and three years later, in 1980, I was offered a job there as an account manager — Saatchi & Saatchi, the agency that dominated the headlines every week in the advertising industry's trade paper, *Campaign*. The only agency that people outside the business had heard of. The big one. The famous one. The successful one. It was already a legend within the industry.

Maurice Saatchi's famous quotation, "It is not enough for us to succeed. Others must fail," was banded about in the agency pubs with a mixture of fear and admiration. The relentless energy of the agency, combined with its single-minded determination to be the biggest at any price, gave it an unforgettable aura and charisma. Working there brought me extraordinary highs, bizarre and uncontrolled behavior, combined with iron discipline, and inevitably, crucifying lows when campaigns were thrown out, clients unhappy or whole accounts lost.

I was, at once, captivated and enthralled by the place, and terrified of it.

It didn't destroy me, but I saw plenty of people less lucky than myself, and I had no doubt that this was a dangerous place for me to be.

In 1985, I moved to another agency, a huge U.S. conglomerate involved mainly with global brands. The London office in Berkeley Square had a reputation for being gentlemanly, kind, good to its staff. After five years dangling over a pot of boiling oil, I felt ready for a change. The joke at my leaving party was that I was retiring from the business altogether. Moving to Berkeley Square was compared to buying a bungalow in Barnstaple. Privately, I was half hoping that this would be the case.

I couldn't have been more wrong. Soon after I moved there, the entire agency network was taken over by the ex-financial director of Saatchi & Saatchi. The maelstrom was on my tail. Profit targets went up, costs had to come down, the familiar smell of fear was in the air.

It was to be here, in the leafy environment of Berkeley Square, that I was to confront the appalling suffering of total despair, a hell state that would propel me inexorably toward the Gohonzon.

The recession hit in 1989, the same year my first daughter was born and my husband's rock band split up, leaving him with no recording contract and an expensive legal suit. I was managing the European advertising for a well-known Dutch lager that involved long hours, a lot of traveling and complicated politics. The head office of the brewery was keen to run a single advertising campaign across Europe. The individual countries were not keen. Neither were our local agency offices.

This situation created enormous tension, not just between the agency and the brewing company but also and more distressingly, between myself and my own colleagues in our various European offices, many of whom had become close friends over the years. While struggling with this at work, I recklessly had another baby, which meant that on a good night, I would be lucky to get as much as four hours' sleep.

My body was exhausted but my brain was permanently hyper, over-stimulated, mad.

Often I would hallucinate and my mind would become blurry and disorientated.

In January 1992, I suffered a severe nervous breakdown. My mind gave up. Stretched to a breaking point, it simply collapsed and me with it.

My heart goes out to anyone who has suffered in this way. This is truly the state of Hell. Life is the size of a pin prick. Every stimulus is agony, even the tinniest sound of a knife being put down on a table. Sleep is only achievable with drugs, and panic whirls ceaselessly around in your stomach.

Now, seven years later, I am profoundly glad for this experience. It revived my seeking spirit, brought me to my senses. I had to find a meaning for it, an explanation, and soon after, I met the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

While chanting brought many benefits, I didn't immediately get to the bottom of this terrifying experience. In fact, I felt quite well recovered from it and was happy to paper over the deep cracks that were still there.

It is not through one experience but through many, that I have come to understand what happened and to place this frightening period of my life into a continuum of cause and effect.

The agencies I worked with were driven by Hunger, Animality and Anger, three extremely powerful forces in my own life. Indeed, I have a vivid image of myself wrestling with the darker side of these energies, like wrestling with a huge snake, so great is their capacity to rule my life. If I had to pick one life-state which has dictated my actions and emotions more than any other, it would be Animality, as I recognize with total familiarity the feeling of both prey and predator deeply embedded in my life. In fact, while chanting to have the wisdom to write this experience, I felt that this dominant state of Animality had been mine for many lifetimes and had wreaked its strange and unthinking havoc within and around me countless times before.

As Nichiren Daishonin says, "It is the nature of beasts to threaten the weak and fear the strong" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 302). This explains so clearly, and so beautifully, the conflicting and confusing emotions which rocked the foundations of my life in that turbulent period. My all-consuming fear contaminated my perception of



Photo by BETTINA SALOMON

'My all-consuming fear contaminated my perception of my environment.'

my environment: fear of failing to achieve a European advertising campaign for the lager brand; fear of achieving it and upsetting the local distributor; fear of losing the support of my own colleagues; fear of blowing the whole project and losing my job; fear of having no income and being unable to support my family.

Before I started chanting, I saw all these different pressures as causes of the nervous breakdown. Now, with the benefit of much daimoku, I can see them as effects. The cause was in my life, all the time, waiting to become manifest. Although this might sound a bit theoretical, this was a stunning and liberating realization for me!

If the nervous breakdown had been caused by a random and unfortunate sequence of events, it could happen again at any time. But it wasn't. It was caused by me, living my life in a state of Animality that was perfectly reflected in my environment. I could not have had a clearer mirror.

Nichiren Daishonin also says, "Foolishness is the world of Animality." Again, my involvement with the global marketing of the Dutch lager provided a clear image for my own foolishness. It never occurred to me to wonder whether it was right to impose a single marketing strategy for them across Europe. I simply accepted that this was the job I had been given and, if I didn't do it, I would be fired. I was, as President Ikeda so succinctly says, operating according to the "law of the jungle" and therefore without wis-

dom, reasoning or will.

It is, I think, another feature of Animality that you have no sense of your own individual identity when you are in this life-state. This is not a lack of self-worth; it is a lack of self. With the benefit of daimoku, I recognize this as a striking feature of my life. Ever since I can remember, I have followed orders mindlessly, rarely questioning or assessing them.

Now, with two years of practice behind me, I can feel the bright light of Buddhist wisdom shining deep into my life. I can see that I have to let go of the need to please, to succeed, to be special, to be wealthy, to be liked. Most of all, I have to let go of the fear and insecurity beneath all these needs. My life is, indeed, special, but not in the way I had thought. It can only flourish and be creative to the fullest when it is based on the Buddha state: on wisdom, courage and compassion.

I am still very far from achieving this glorious life-state in any kind of consistent way but, if I drift back into my old habit of Animality, the suffering is sharp and instantaneous and brings me back to my senses quickly.

Thanks to my extraordinary good fortune in meeting the Gohonzon, I know that my karmic habit is changing gradually, but profoundly, and that provided I persevere, I can base my life on the majestic and all-encompassing state of Buddhahood.

Thank you, Nichiren Daishonin and the SGI, from the bottom of my heart. **WT**

This experience is courtesy of the UK Express.

EXPERIENCE — CELIA AND MARGRETTE FRANCISCO, ALTADENA, CALIF.

JUSTICE FOR JOAN

Margrette and Celia Francisco achieve justice for their deceased sister, Joan, by courageously standing up and challenging corrupt authority.

Margrette and Celia were born and raised in London, England. Margrette came to the United States in 1981 to study, and Celia followed her several years later.

Margrette: Turning poison into medicine is a very difficult attitude to espouse and apply to one's life. A tragic event that occurred in our lives has helped us to understand the value of reaching beyond one's limitations to put this precept into practice.

Celia: On Dec. 26, 1994, our youngest sister, Joan, was scheduled to come from London to Los Angeles to visit Margrette and me. Hours before she was to arrive, our mother called from London and said that Joan had been murdered. She was found strangled in her apartment with a vacuum cleaner cord. I became hysterical. My world turned upside down. The only thing that kept me on solid ground over the next five years was my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Margrette: I was also in a state of shock and disbelief. I immediately called one of my seniors in faith and received guidance that was to change the course of my life. The leader told me that I must further develop myself and become a greater human being because of my sister's death, otherwise her life would have been in vain. I made a determination to follow this guidance.

Celia and I flew home to London that same day. What occurred over the next six weeks, as well as the subsequent four-and-a-half years, proved to us the power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Celia: At the time of our sister's murder, I had been practicing Buddhism for five years. I did not understand why our sister was murdered despite not only my practice, but also Margrette's. Joan was only 27 and a medical doctor. She was beau-



Margrette (right) and Celia Francisco with their mother, Venus.

tiful, talented, full of life and fun. She had everything going for her and everything to live for. I started blaming myself. I thought maybe my practice wasn't strong enough or that I should have tried harder to get her to chant more.

I received guidance from a national leader of the SGI-UK. He told me that in each lifetime everyone is born with a mission to fulfill. Once that mission is completed, we move on. He talked about the Buddhist concept of karma. He said Joan's karma governed the nature and circumstances of her life and death. He also said that because both Margrette and I chanted, our prayers had directly affected her life and provided protection. In other words, our chanting could have prolonged her life or lessened the horror of the circumstance in which she died.

Margrette: From the time we arrived at our mother's home in London, our family was warmly supported and encouraged by the wonderful members of the SGI-UK. Our prayer was that her funeral would show how life could be celebrated in death. We know Joan would have wanted it that way.

Celia: The Catholic priest's

sermon was very Buddhist in nature. He talked about the eternity of life and analogized the cycle of life, death and rebirth to the cycle of sleep and awakening. After the funeral, we felt relieved and at peace. We even received comments like "This is the best funeral I've ever been to" and "This didn't seem like a funeral."

Margrette: After Joan's funeral, which was covered by all of the television networks, we returned to Los Angeles. I was very concerned about how our mother would cope with Joan's death without Celia and me there to support her. I wrote to SGI President Ikeda asking for guidance about how to encourage our mother from afar. Mrs. Hachiya, SGI vice women's leader, answered my letter on his behalf. There was one point in the letter that became the guiding force behind all of the action we were to undertake. She said, "No matter how impossible the reality may appear, you must never concede defeat."

Celia: Despite the police's certainty that Joan's killer was her ex-boyfriend, there was no forensic evidence linking him to the scene of the crime. He was not charged. It had been six years since our sister had dated

this man. But he had stalked her for several months preceding her murder. Police told us that based on this man's psychological profile, he would soon confess. However, five months later, nothing had happened.

Margrette: We began to lose confidence in the police. I was faced with the frightening realization that if there was going to be justice in this case, I would have to take action myself. I chanted desperately for the wisdom to know what to do. It was at this time that I saw a news report on television about another family fighting for justice in the death of their son, who had been murdered by skinheads. I got in touch with their lawyers. After I explained our situation to them, they agreed to take our case for free.

Celia: Over the next three years, the police still did not come up with additional evidence. It seemed as if the man we believed responsible for murdering our sister would never be prosecuted. Our lawyer suggested that we file a civil suit against him, which had never before been done in the legal history of the United Kingdom. Usually civil cases are filed as a way to collect damages after a

criminal trial, such as in the O.J. Simpson case. We decided to pursue her suggestion.

Margrette: In late 1997, to prepare for the civil trial, Celia and I began a daimoku campaign that spread to all of the members of Pasadena District. Seven days a week, we held two-hour chanting sessions in my home, beginning at 5 a.m. Our district also began a 100-day prayer campaign, with every member of the district setting goals and making a determination to chant a minimum of one hour a day for 100 days. Our goal was justice for Joan. We were determined to show through our civil court action that courage and determination were the keys to justice when fighting a system that had failed us.

Celia: In March 1998, four years after Joan's death, we went to court for the civil trial. On the first day, there were more than 40 reporters outside the high court in London. What had started out as our fight had become a much greater issue. On the day of the verdict, I chanted that no matter what the outcome, we would have victory in our hearts for having fought the judicial system against the odds. So when the judge, reading

Photo by JERI LOVE

from his 40-page decision said, "We find for the plaintiff," we were overwhelmed with joy. Our prayers had been answered. Justice had been done. Coincidentally, the verdict was announced on the 100th day of our district's campaign.

Margrette: But we were to find out that our civil court victory was just the first step in the battle. Despite the judge's decision that there was overwhelming evidence that our sister's ex-boyfriend was her murderer, the Crown Prosecution Service declined to file criminal charges. The CPS said the evidence used by the civil court was insufficient to meet criminal case standards.

Celia: We were angry and disappointed by the CPS decision. But because of our Buddhist practice, we knew that this was just another obstacle that we had to overcome. We were not going to allow the CPS to dictate the outcome of our battle.

Margrette: We investigated the possibility of filing a private criminal prosecution, which can be done in the United Kingdom. However, one of the drawbacks is the expense. The party bringing the action is financially responsible for its cost, which is estimated to be \$350,000 in U.S. dollars. A private prosecution would also require the launching of an aggressive and extensive national fundraising campaign. However, because our solicitors and barristers believed in our battle for justice, they offered to represent us for FREE. There was no doubt in our minds that we were continuing to reap the benefits of our Buddhist practice.

Celia: We were also disturbed to learn that despite our civil court verdict, the police had effectively closed the case. We asked for a meeting with Sir Paul Condon, the chief of police in London. In an unprecedented action, he agreed to see us. During the meeting, he assured us that the police would reopen their investigation. In exchange, he asked us to give him 90 days to come up with tangible evidence. If there was nothing conclusive, we told him we intended to pursue a private prosecution.

Margrette: Meanwhile, we returned to Los Angeles and continued to chant. Three months later, our lawyer called. A forensic re-examination of the T-shirt Joan had been wearing at the time of her murder found traces of blood and saliva. A DNA test of new evidence found that the saliva was our sister's, but the blood belonged to a man. Joan's ex-boyfriend was brought in for testing. His blood was a match.



Dr. Joan Francisco

Celia: Police told us that although they had always known that there was blood on the T-shirt, the DNA testing capabilities four years ago were not sophisticated enough to have yielded the necessary evidence needed for prosecution. We later found out that this explanation was not true. It was given to us in an attempt to cover up the police's oversight during the original investigation, which was either marred by negligence or their racial attitudes.

Margrette: Nonetheless, as a result of the new evidence, the killer was arrested, charged with Joan's murder and placed into custody. The trial was scheduled to start Sept. 20, 1999.

Celia: Leading up to the trial, Pasadena District members, as well as members from other areas around Los Angeles, came together to participate in three, seven-hour chanting sessions to chant for justice for Joan. Armed with the support of our members and our daimoku, we landed in London ready to do battle.

Margrette: Our Buddhist practice enabled us to draw the most fortunate circumstances. Even though Celia and I were not witnesses, the Crown Prosecution took the unprecedented action of paying for our flights to and from London, including the airfare for my son, Lawrence. They also paid for his nursery school, for our lunch on a daily basis, and for our taxi to and from the court. In addition, they gave us a daily allowance. Even after the trial, we were given a car for three weeks and money for gas.

Celia: Every morning before the criminal trial started, I chanted that the truth be revealed. During the cross-examination of the defendant by the Crown Prosecution's lawyers, he showed signs of tension and anger. The stories he originally told the police were proven to be lies. Despite his attempts to show the jury that he was calm and collected, he began to show that he was in fact out of con-

trol and had an explosive temper. A temper that we believed had caused him to kill our sister. But despite his best efforts, the jury was not fooled. On Oct. 13, 1999, the anniversary of Nichiren Daishonin's death, the defendant was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. We had achieved justice for Joan.

Margrette: After the verdict, *The Voice* newspaper, which is a leading national minority-owned publication that bestows annual awards for major contributions to the community, informed us that we had been nominated for the family award for our efforts to achieve justice in our sister's case. Our mother and I attended the elegant awards dinner. We won and were presented with a beautiful trophy. It was the first time I saw our mother joyful in the years since Joan's death.

Celia: In the aftermath of Joan's murder, I look back over the past five years and am amazed by how much value we have created thanks to our Buddhist practice. Within a month of Joan's death, we established the Dr. Joan Francisco Foundation. The charity gives scholarships to medical students, offers a mentor program and hosts annual medical lectures.

Margrette: Also, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) produced a documentary, which chronicled our legal battle. The documentary aired nationwide on Oct. 27, 1999, two weeks after the guilty verdict. During research for the film, the producer found a forensic expert who revealed the information about DNA testing that directly contradicted the story the police had given us.

Celia: The BBC film shows us chanting and talking about our Buddhist practice. It documents how our practice enabled us to prevail against seemingly insurmountable odds. This is particularly significant in light of the fact that the BBC did an extremely negative documentary about the SGI and President Ikeda five years ago.

Margrette: Since the film aired, people on the streets of London stopped both Celia and me to ask us about chanting. Also, strangers stopped our mother on a daily basis, hugged and kissed her, and told her how encouraged they were by our family's perseverance, courage and dignity.

The documentary, we recently heard, was nominated for three awards.

Celia: Because of this practice, our family was able to unite, stand up and fight during

the most traumatic period of our lives. It would have been so easy to accept the decision of the police and give up. But our quest for justice was stronger than our quest for an easy life, and all of our efforts to develop our lives will go back to benefit Joan in her next. By chanting daimoku, participating in SGI activities and studying President Ikeda's guidance, I have been able to tap an inner strength I didn't know I possessed.

Margrette: The murder of our sister was one of the most difficult things I have ever endured. But at the same time, I have become more capable. I have learned to challenge my fear and self-doubt in order to fight for something I truly believe in. My family fought and won a difficult battle against the world's second largest criminal justice and legal system. We could not have won without using the strategy of the Lotus Sutra and the support of all the members who rallied around us every step of the way.

Celia: The greatest lesson I learned from this was simply to never give up on my dreams and goals. Things may get worse before they get better, but it's imperative to have faith and trust the power of prayer. Most importantly I've learned that no matter how impossible the reality may appear, I must never concede defeat.

Margrette: Since the verdict, we have written to the British Home Secretary, who is the head of law enforcement and judicial systems in England, asking him to launch an investigation into how our sister's murder was handled by the police, why it took our family's efforts to bring the killer to justice. It is our hope that procedures and programs will be implemented in the law enforcement and judicial systems to ensure that this will never happen again to another family.

President Ikeda has taught us that we must have the courage to stand up against injustice and challenge corrupt authority. During our quest for justice, we challenged the corruption and indifference of the British legal system that places value on human life based on the color of the victim's skin. Using our Buddhist practice to fight for justice for Joan enabled us to show others that tenacity and determination can truly yield results that are often greater than we can ever imagine, no matter how big or powerful the opponent. Equipped with the insight, skill and knowledge gained during this ordeal, we are well prepared to fight even bigger battles for others. It is our determination that our battle for justice for Joan will bring us closer to creating a society where there can be justice for all. **W**

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The Justice Chronicle is a free, weekly e-mailer for *World Tribune* subscribers about the Soka Spirit movement. Its purpose is to support SGI-USA's ongoing education campaign about this subject in the timeliest fashion possible.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 28 SPEECH

Let's Climb Higher!

'Let us eagerly embark on a never-ending journey of self-development and growth,' SGI President Ikeda says, 'climbing higher, ever higher toward the great mountain ranges of the new millennium!'

SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 42nd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Jan. 28.

Guam has a spirit that is among the most beautiful in the world. It is a place where people can live with true dignity and humanity. [SGI President Ikeda received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from the University of Guam at this meeting.]

Today, the University of Guam's green flag hangs proudly above our heads. It bears a single Latin word. What is it? *Excelsior!* This famous word means "Higher!"

Excelsior! — Higher! — this inspiring motto and goal has reverberated in the hearts of humankind since ancient times.

The great American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow composed a well-known poem titled "Excelsior." It tells of a young

man braving snow and ice to climb a perilous mountain peak. Brushing aside all temptation to rest and unafraid of the dark and the buffeting wind, he climbs higher and ever higher. Though he may lose his life, he will never let go of his convictions. Longfellow's poem sings of the essence of the spirit of youth.

Seven years ago, in September 1993, on the occasion of my second address at Harvard University, graduates and students of Soka University living in the United States presented me with a precious manuscript of this poem penned in the author's own hand. It is now included among the treasures of Soka University of America.

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, declared decisively: "What is the Soka Gakkai's mission? It is the challenge of elevating the character of all humanity to the highest level of value."

Today we are privileged to welcome such people of noble character as our honored guests — the professors of the University of Guam.

Together with the faculty and students of the University of Guam, let us eagerly embark on a never-ending journey of self-development and growth, climbing higher, ever higher toward the great mountain ranges of the new millennium!

Honorable Chairman of the Board of Regents David Shimizu, President Jose Nededog and Mrs. Carmen Nededog, regents of the University of



Mrs. Kaneko Ikeda, SGI President Ikeda's wife, receives the Ancient Order of the Chamorro, the highest award of the government of Guam bestowed on a non-Chamorro, from Ms. Judith Wonpat-borja, former Senator of the Guam legislature and an SGI-USA member, at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Jan. 28.

Guam, distinguished Guests: We of the SGI will always look to Guam as our starting point. As such, the honors my wife and I have received today from Guam are honors more precious and more significant than any other. [President Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda were designated honorary citizens of Guam, while Mrs. Ikeda received the Ancient Order of the Chamorro, the highest honor that Guam's indigenous people, the Chamorro, can bestow on a non-Chamorro.] My wife and I humbly accept these awards together with SGI members in 148 countries and territories around the world. Thank you very much.

Nichiren Shoshu lost Nichiren Daishonin's spirit during World War II.

The SGI was not inaugurated in the temple of a closed, parochial, self-serving Buddhist sect. It was formed on Guam, a haven of world citizenship, open on all sides to the vast blue Pacific and abloom with the fragrant flowers of many cultures.

Guam suffered great tragedy during World War II, when it was occupied by Japanese troops and became the site of intense fighting. I am grieved to learn that Chairman Shimizu lost a precious sister and that President Nededog lost not only his beloved father but also his

dear brother in the war. As a Buddhist, I have offered solemn prayers for the eternal happiness of their deceased loved ones.

Some 80 years ago, the noted American philosopher John Dewey visited Japan. Both Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Mr. Toda had utmost respect for this renowned thinker and educator. Dewey offered an especially keen observation about Japan: "It takes more force, more moral courage to be an outspoken critic of the politics and social condition of one's nation, to be a dissenter, in Japan than in any other country in the world."

It is just as he describes. Anyone who stands up for justice and truth in Japan is persecuted. The only way to change this is to spread the unsurpassed philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

In a nation defiled by erroneous views, both Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda demonstrated unrivaled strength and moral courage, and called out with a lion's roar for peace and justice in their unbending struggle against Japan's nationalism and militarism.

In sharp contrast, when Japanese military forces invaded and occupied island after island in the Pacific, including the island of Guam, the corrupt priesthood immediately performed ceremonies praising the military and praying for Japan's victory. From that time, not a trace of the

Daishonin's spirit could be found in the priesthood.

Advances in science and technology have made little impact on human happiness.

Guam possesses wonderfully wise perspectives on peace that have much in common with the Buddhist view of life. A proverb of the Chamorro, the indigenous people of Guam, says: "Respect is like a mirror. It reflects back at you." The Daishonin said something very similar: "When you bow to a mirror, the reflected image bows back" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 769).

It is important that we respect and value every individual — especially, every young person — recognizing that they are infinitely precious and worthy, and engaging in earnest dialogue with them, patiently persevering in encouraging and supporting them. Such sincere behavior will eventually come back to us in the form of others' deep trust and respect for us.

I particularly want to ask young people to cherish their parents. Please take the time to say "Mom, let me help you with that," or "Dad, you must be tired. Let me massage your shoulders." Even just words like that will be a great comfort to them! And how much more so if you follow through! Nothing can put parents' minds more at ease or encourage them more than such

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Struggling Toward Victory

From This Speech:

Struggle is the essence of life. It is crucial that our lives are strong enough to triumph through struggle after struggle throughout eternity. Buddhism enables us to forge such invincible lives, so that we can win through successive struggles.... As long as we keep striving, we will prosper, we will never be frustrated or held back. Let us strive on! The Daishonin's Buddhism is about winning!

- 1) Why do you think SGI President Ikeda says that "struggle in the essence of life"? What things are you struggling with in your life right now?
- 2) President Ikeda says that as long as we continue struggling, our victory is guaranteed. How do you encourage yourself to keep struggling when you feel like giving up?
- 3) What does it mean to say that "the Daishonin's Buddhism is about winning"? What is true victory in your opinion?

simple gestures of love and concern from their children.

There is another wonderful saying of Guam: "When you hurt someone, your turn to be hurt will come. Even if it takes a while, you always pay the debts you incur." This refers to the unwavering law of life, the law of cause and effect: We reap what we sow. How lamentable is the fate of those who envy and attack the just! We have all seen what happens to them.

That is why another wise proverb of Guam warns "An intelligent man is worth little if he has no respect." This is simply put, but its message is important indeed. We have made tremendous advances in science and technology, and great increases in our store of knowledge and information. Yet this has made little direct impact on the happiness and peace of the world at large. Why is this? We have lost sight of what all of these advances are for. This is the root of human folly and the cause of the madness we see all about us.

The ancient wisdom of Guam firmly rebukes this error—the error of the arrogance of knowledge. If world leaders would only adopt the spirit of this wise saying, we would have world peace without fail.

The University of Guam upholds the highest ideals of humane education and takes as its mission teaching, research and service. Chairman Shimizu and President and Mrs. Nededog are great examples of translating these ideals into practice. They have shown enormous love and concern for young people, transcending all national and ethnic boundaries. They have worked hard to raise fully rounded human beings. As an expression of our deep respect and admiration for their efforts, let us give them a warm round of applause!

Traditionally, women have enjoyed high status on Guam. Strong, wise mothers played an important role in the preservation and transmission of the rich human culture of the island.

Ms. Judith Wonpat-borja, former senator of the Guam legislature, who bestowed honorary citizenships on my wife and me earlier, is also an SGI-USA women's leader on Guam. Through her wise contributions, she has helped open the path to an age of women.

On a similar note, just the other day, two members of the SGI-Venezuela women's division sent me a letter announcing the wonderful news that they had been appointed to important positions in the Venezuelan government. Ms.

Dilia Parra Guillén will be the head of a newly established government agency to protect human rights called Defensora del Pueblo, or Defender of the People. Ms. Adelina González de Hernández was appointed vice chairman of the official Bureau of Audit. Both women, as women's division members, are proud of the SGI's philosophy of respect for human rights and of service to society. Using this philosophy as their inspiration and driving force to serve their fellow citizens in the field of government, they have won enormous trust among their country's people. Let us pray for the prosperity and bright future of Venezuela.

Without education, religion falls into the trap of self-righteousness.

In December, the Brazilian lower house, the Chamber of Deputies of the National Congress of Brazil, held a special session to honor the SGI. Applause for the SGI's efforts is spreading like a huge wave across that great nation.

We have also recently received many honors from counties, cities and provinces throughout South Korea.

Despite frequently having to endure misunderstanding and prejudice in society, our members around the world, not the least those in Brazil and Korea, have continued, with perseverance and steadfast prayer, to sow the seeds of peace and friendship. I wish to praise these noble members with all my heart!

It is a terrible shame that today, after the end of the Cold War, we still see no end to bloody regional conflicts caused by religious differences. This is why in the SGI Charter we have so strongly advocated, along with the promotion of increased educational and cultural exchange, the need for mutual understanding and cooperation in the international community.

Today, leaders around the world are finding in the SGI a model for achieving a peaceful alliance of global citizens in the 21st century. Many of them are starting to point to our organization as the only hope for realizing this dream.

When I met with Dr. Allen Sessoms, president of Queens College of the City University of New York, on Jan. 18, he expressed his sincere wish that the SGI will transmit to the world its ability and know-how to bring people together, employing that ability to prevent conflict and war.

I am determined to devote more and more of my energies to humanistic education, which I re-



SGI President Ikeda celebrates receiving an honorary doctorate of humane letters from the University of Guam with University of Guam Chairman David L. G. Shimizu (left), President Jose T. Nededog (center) and regents Peter B. Melnyk and Marie R. Nelson (right), at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Jan. 28.

gard as my final work. Without education, religion falls into the trap of self-righteousness and is easily swept away into blind faith.

Humanistic education is the path to our eternal triumph.

Construction on the eagerly awaited Orange County campus of Soka University of America is proceeding on schedule, aiming toward the opening date of May 3, 2001. [Classes will begin in September 2001.] Three mottoes for SUA have been announced: "Be philosophers of a renaissance of life"; "Be world citizens in solidarity for peace"; and "Be the pioneers of a global civilization." The university has also fielded a superb staff for its teaching faculty from around the United States and the globe.

It was the wish and cherished hope of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda that, with a clear sense of purpose, we spread a unified force for good throughout the world based on humanistic education. Both of them believed this to be the path to humanity's eternal triumph.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Mr. Toda's birth. And next year will be the 130th anniversary of Mr. Makiguchi's birth. As we reach these momentous milestones, I, the third in this succession, have made the grand dream of our first and second presidents a reality in the form of Soka University of America. I humbly thank all of you for the part you have played in this!

This is a university for your children and grandchildren. I hope that talented students from around the globe will gather to study there in great number.

I also hope that the Univer-

sity of Guam professors will continue to support and encourage SUA, a younger sibling across the Pacific Ocean.

Struggle is the essence of life.

I want to share a favorite passage from *Song of the Open Road* by Walt Whitman, the great American "poet of democracy," whom I have loved since my youth:

Now understand me well — it is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary. My call is the call of battle....

This passage means that however much we succeed, we can never rest, relax or sit back on our laurels. Success by its nature produces even greater struggles, and we must get up in readiness for the next battle.

Struggle is the essence of life. It is crucial that our lives are strong enough to triumph through struggle after struggle throughout eternity. Buddhism enables us to forge such invincible lives, so that we can win through successive struggles.

Justice must prevail. That is why we have to keep fighting. Justice cannot be upheld unless we fight for it and win. I have found this to be true from personal experience.

The higher one climbs a mountain, the narrower and more perilous the path becomes. Harsh winds blow. If we let these obstacles defeat us, we cannot reach the summit.

As long as we keep striving,

however, we will find a way to the top. As long as we keep striving, we will prosper, we will never be frustrated or held back. Let us strive on! The Daishonin's Buddhism is about winning!

Another wise saying of Guam is "If you have a problem, stand up and face it. Don't wait until it overwhelms you." The key to winning the struggle of the 21st century will be consistently taking the offensive with speed, courage and daring. Those who exert themselves in this way will win. This is what Buddhism teaches. This is a rule of history.

The University of Guam is internationally renowned for its research in the field of marine biology, particularly for its preeminence in coral reef research. Guam's coral reefs rank among the earth's great treasures—they have grown from one generation to the next for more than 100,000 years.

Kosen-rufu is a river. Let each of us, in the respective countries of our mission, demonstrate the power of a hundred or a thousand. Let us create a mighty river of capable people who possess courage and champion justice—a river that will flow for all eternity.

Please joyously continue your victorious march into the 21st century, uniting the world with hope as you advance with a joy, optimism and good cheer that sparkle as bright as the waters off Guam in the golden morning sunlight.

I pray that Guam, precious hometown of my heart, will enjoy lasting peace and prosperity, and that my beloved University of Guam will continue to flourish and grow into the eternal future.

Thank you! My best to you all!

EXPERIENCE — YOSHIE YOSHIKAWA, KYOTO, JAPAN

My Personal Victory in Faith

Yoshie Yoshikawa, the wife of reformist priest Kodo Yoshikawa, renews her faith. "All my sufferings and hardships during those difficult days were to make it possible for me to appreciate the Soka Gakkai today."

I was born in Kita-Kyushu City, Japan, in 1959, the eldest daughter of a family consisting of one boy and three girls. Since my family was very poor, we suffered from malnutrition. Our neighborhood Soka Gakkai members, who saw our destitute condition, tried to introduce our family to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, but my mother detested the Soka Gakkai so much that she threw salt on the porch to purify our home after Soka Gakkai members left.

After we moved to Kanagawa Prefecture, my father was introduced to this Buddhism by a colleague at work and received the Gohonzon without my mother's consent. It ended up, however, that my father did not practice seriously, but my mother did embrace the Gohonzon and began practicing. Our family of six started life in Kanagawa in a tiny 6 foot by 9 foot room.

We were a family without any fortune, but because of my mother's devoted practice, we overcame our bad financial and health karma; our family situation changed dramatically. My mother's favorite saying was "Our happiness today is all due to SGI President Ikeda's encouragement! I owe a lot to him for what we are today." I learned to respect the Gohonzon and President Ikeda through my mother's actions. However, my daily life was not focused on my own practice.

When I was 21, I introduced a friend to Buddhism. The same year, I met my husband, Kodo, and became part of a priest family. In the beginning, my husband mentioned that he had no intention of ever marrying. After becoming a priest, he saw how difficult it was to continue practicing within the

priesthood, where there was no faith in the Gohonzon. He saw the wives of the priests who were once active soon discover that they had no place to practice and rapidly lose their faith. Since he had seen this occur so often, he was afraid to make a woman miserable by marrying her.

After we got married, my husband told me: "If I happen to die before you, please sever your ties with the priesthood and go back to the Soka Gakkai. Yet, as long as I live, I take full responsibility for leading your faith and practice on the correct path."

My husband first met President Ikeda when he was 17. Since that time, he knew the correct way of practicing existed only in the Soka Gakkai. He felt that President Ikeda was his mentor, and my husband practiced sincerely even though he was in the thoroughly corrupt priesthood.

This is how, from the day I got married, I began life as a "closet" Soka Gakkai women's division member. The conditions were severe, but I never heard my husband complain. He steadily continued to practice. The two of us, as closet Soka Gakkai members who followed President Ikeda's guidance, practiced this faith together. Consequently, my husband was denied audiences with High Priest Nikken Abe, and he was not allowed to participate in any priesthood activities. He continued his kosen-rufu activities, though, knowing that he might be banned from the priesthood at any time. As I watched my husband challenge himself in these dire circumstances, I continued to chant sincere daimoku to the Gohonzon. If I did not chant abundant daimoku, I felt I would go crazy.

After we were married, I moved into the Ichino-bo, my husband's living quarters at the head temple. It also served as the lodging for the members visiting the head temple. Eight employees managed it, and training them was one of the responsibilities of the priest's wife who was assigned to that living quarter. Any mistakes the employees made in their speech or behavior—even if the mistakes were made outside the quarters—were regarded as the responsibility of



Yoshie Yoshikawa with her husband, Kodo Yoshikawa, a reformist priest, in Kyoto, Japan.

the wife in charge. And everyone there was eager to find the mistakes of others. Their attitude was contrary to Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

I was only 21 and certainly could not manage everything without making mistakes. So whatever I did, I was a good target for their criticism and bullying. For example, they did not like the way that I bowed to them. Even when I bent down 90 degrees, they were not satisfied. After all, it was not the matter of how I bowed—I was an outlet for their stress.

In the very small world of the head temple, there was no sense of joy, only conceit and egotism. To them, helping others or encouraging others was regarded as lowly behavior, unbecoming. Such behavior was only permissible for the lay believers.

In such an environment, the stress I felt was so severe that I suffered horrible migraines once a month. I could not get out of bed. I could not even turn over. I just had to wait for the migraines to pass.

I took my frustration to my husband and kept asking him why I had to suffer this much. He listened to me patiently, but in the end he would tell me, "It is your karma."

I felt miserable and upset. I thought: "I'll chant daimoku. I'll show him." I chanted an average of two to three hours a

day. When I was 24, my brother died suddenly in an accident; he was 26. Three months later, my newborn baby died after living only one day in this world. I felt the heaviness of my karma, over which I could gain no control.

Several hours before my child died, while I was chanting, I saw myself on the Gohonzon; it was as if I were looking at myself on a TV screen. At that time, a thought hit me: My karma had been engraved in my life since the infinite past. I felt deeply apologetic to my husband and this child for the way I was and made up my mind to become a better wife and mother.

My child died several hours later of an unknown cause. Like my mother three months earlier, I had the karma of losing a child.

The doctor told me that even if the child had lived, he would never have been able to walk or see anything, because his brain lacked sufficient oxygen. When I learned this, I was convinced that we had changed our negative karma, and I thanked the Gohonzon. This experience established a solid foundation for our faith.

My mother overcame the sorrow of losing her son and again exerted herself wholeheartedly in faith. She had her own community center built, with a

meeting room of 1,046 square feet; it was her longtime dream. My mother now lives in a four-story building that she also had built, and she is filled with joy and still enjoys activities.

Ten years passed, and my husband was transferred to a temple in Kyoto. It was the 80th temple donated by President Ikeda. My husband was planning to spend his whole life at the head temple, dedicating himself to kosen-rufu by educating the young acolytes—this new assignment was quite a surprise.

The first two years in Kyoto were totally frantic. From the time the temple opened in the morning until it closed, time passed like a speeding arrow. Even though I chanted, something was missing. I was always seeking something, but I did not know what I was looking for. Those busy days left only anguish in my heart. I was constantly asking myself: "Am I doing the right thing? Am I on the right track?"

In 1990, the priesthood dismissed President Ikeda from the position as the head of all Nichiren Shoshu lay organizations and began to persecute the Soka Gakkai. The persecution by High Priest Nikken's group fell on my husband, too. They were always plotting a way to strip him of his position in the priesthood; they always persecute those who speak the truth.

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

My husband, together with some of his fellow young priests, eventually decided to sever ties with Nichiren Shoshu. He started his campaign to prove the righteousness of President Ikeda and traveled all over Japan and the world. Whenever I saw him off, I felt an indescribable loneliness, thinking that I had fallen behind in the kosen-rufu movement.

Last November, President Ikeda invited me to the Chubu Culture Festival. Everything I witnessed was deeply moving. At the finale, all the people's hearts were united as one. "I want to be part of this great surge of energy!" I said to myself. I felt as if my heart would burst with this desire.

When I got home, I chanted. I was filled with gratitude. "With the Gohonzon and President Ikeda in my heart, what is there to fear?" I asked myself. I could not stop my tears.

I called Vice President Eikichiro Ueda, who was in Kyoto, and asked him to make a women's division membership card for me. This is how I finally began my activities as a full-fledged women's division member last November.

Being an observer versus actually belonging to the women's division is totally different. Before, even if I were in despair, I was the only one to cheer myself up. Now, when I am down, if I attend planning meetings and other activities, everybody's high spirits naturally inspire me. It is so wonderful!

In the Soka Gakkai, President Ikeda continuously leads us to happiness through various campaigns. For example, when there is a campaign to promote publications, I think of how I can promote publications from the moment I wake up and chant sincerely to actualize my prayers. Before I became a Soka Gakkai member, there were no opportunities to challenge myself to break through my limitations. I now realize that it is only through challenging my limitations that I can really grow. As of today, I have promoted 19 subscriptions to the *Seikyo Shimbun* and introduced my friends to this Buddhism.

The way I pray has definitely changed since I became involved in Soka Gakkai activities. I earnestly engage in dialogue, so that people will understand the Soka Gakkai and President Ikeda. I have learned how to practice this Buddhism correctly.

The most surprising differ-

ence is the amount of benefits that I have received. Before practicing with the organization, I had a very passive attitude in faith. Today, under the guidance of President Ikeda, my faith is deepening daily. As a result, my son, who used to be extremely introverted, has changed so much. He is talking to every student at his school about Buddhism.

He does not get depressed anymore. I understand now that he is a reflection of my life-condition. He had to suffer to teach me the power of Buddhism, so I am very grateful to him. Both my son and daughter love to attend meetings.

Some time ago, my husband received a message from President Ikeda at a Soka Spirit training meeting. President Ikeda said, "Districts are the main stages of the kosen-rufu movement." I took this guidance as my own and made up my mind to take action in the forefront of the district.

It is as if spring has come to our family, filling us with the blossoms of happiness. Twenty years ago, when I was at the head temple, I used to watch the visiting Soka Gakkai members through the windows. I felt envious of them as they joyfully sang Soka Gakkai songs. I shed tears in front of the Gohonzon, wondering when I would live proudly and vigorously like those people. Now my life has changed wonderfully. Now I shed tears of joy.

I am very happy that I am not alone anymore. I have many fellow members who share my



Yoshie Yoshikawa at a Soka Gakkai women's gathering.

joys with me when I am happy, who cry with me when I am sad. Most of all, I am happy to openly profess that President Ikeda is my mentor.

During the last 20 years, I have gone through many things. All my sufferings and hardships during those difficult days were to make it possible for me to appreciate the Soka Gakkai today. I believe that it was my mission to testify to the validity of the Soka Gakkai through my own experiences. I honestly feel that the Daishonin's passage "Winter always turns to spring" has come

true (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 536).

President Ikeda has taught us that the most important thing is how much we exert ourselves to help others. And he has taught us that those who genuinely find the greatest joy in doing so will win the final victory. My past struggle was a process of human revolution. It was so that I can now appreciate President Ikeda's guidance from the bottom of my heart.

It is my eternal joy that I was allowed to join this great voyage of kosen-rufu with President Ikeda. I conclude my ex-

perience with my appreciation and determination to strive alongside President Ikeda for achieving the great dream of kosen-rufu. **W**

Join the Class of 2001 at SUA, Calabasas

Now in its sixth year, Soka University of America's graduate school in Calabasas, Calif., is accepting applications for its master's degree program in second and foreign language education. Individuals seeking admission to the master's program must hold a baccalaureate or bachelor's degree with a minimum grade-point average of 2.7 (B-) on a four-point scale. Applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a minimum score of 600. Applications for the 2000-01 academic year are due by April 30, 2000. For more information, contact the Graduate Admissions Office at 26800 West Mulholland Hwy., Calabasas, CA 91302. Telephone: (818) 878-3717, e-mail: grad_admissions@soka.edu

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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 39-40

In Hong Kong, Shin'ichi Yamamoto reflects on how the Soka Gakkai should not become politically involved in any country outside Japan.

After talking with Anne Miyako Raiz, Shin'ichi Yamamoto pondered deeply how the Soka Gakkai should conduct its activities around the world.

He reflected on where possible causes for misunderstanding of the Soka Gakkai might lie. First, the unfamiliar Japanese name Soka Gakkai might give people the impression that it was a strange, mysterious religion. People tend to be afraid of things they don't understand.

It was therefore crucial, Shin'ichi thought, to clarify that the Gakkai was a Buddhist organization based on Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, and that the Daishonin's Buddhism was the essence of the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. In other words, it would be necessary to let people know that the Soka Gakkai was a group striving to achieve peace and happiness for humankind, contribute to each country's development and cultural prosperity, and create value by bringing the true spirit of the more than 2,000-year-old philosophy of Buddhism to flower in society.

Shin'ichi suspected that some might also be under the impression that the Soka

Gakkai was a religious group seeking political power, due to its role as the main supporting body of the newly established Komei Political Federation in Japan. But the decision to send members into the field of politics had been made only to open the way for a fresh approach to government in Japan's confused political situation. There was no need for the Soka Gakkai to become politically involved in any other nation.

The political involvement of Soka Gakkai members as groups outside Japan would most likely have a negative effect on the promotion of their religious activities in their respective countries. Since other religious groups and the political establishment in Japan were making a big fuss over the Soka Gakkai's involvement in national politics, using that to stir up concern about the organization overseas, it would be important to state unequivocally that the Soka Gakkai had no intention of becoming politically involved in any other country.

It would also be crucial to make people aware that the religion upheld by the Gakkai was not one restricted to the Japanese — that it was in fact a world religion intended for all humanity. It would be increasingly im-

portant, therefore, for the Soka Gakkai organizations in each country to incorporate locally and pursue their own activities uniquely suited to the circumstances and situation there.

Buddhism teaches the principle of adapting precepts to the locality. As long as the fundamental spirit of Buddhism is upheld, the customs and traditions of the region or the times should be abided by. It would be vital for Soka Gakkai members around the world to understand this principle and to put down firm roots in their communities and societies while working for their countries' prosperity and their fellow citizens' happiness.

For his part, he determined to meet with the leaders of other nations to help them appreciate the true nature and goals of the Soka Gakkai to protect the members living in those countries.

At the hotel, Shin'ichi and the others discussed the Hong Kong organization. A number of districts were to be established at



months after the chapter's formation, her husband's work having called them back.

Participating in the discussion with Shin'ichi were Kiyoshi Jujo, Eisuke Akizuki, Shoichi Tanida and Yoshihiko Ohya, who were traveling with Shin'ichi, as well as Fukuyasu Takami, Okinawa General Chapter leader and Southeast Asia General Chapter vice leader, and Tamako Uema, Okinawa General Chapter women's division leader, both of whom had come from Okinawa for the occasion. Shin'ichi regarded Okinawa as the gateway to Southeast Asia, and he had asked Takami and Uema to be responsible for the Soka Gakkai's activities in Southeast Asia.

The group decided to establish three districts in Hong Kong but agreed to put off selecting a new chapter leader until they had considered the matter further.

The next day, prior to the chapter meeting, an oral Study Department examination was held at the Lap Sun Building in Kowloon, which was also the venue for the meeting. When the examinees arrived at the building, they found Ikuyo Oka, who was supposed to be back in Japan, waiting to greet them. She had heard about the meeting and that President Yamamoto would attend, and had flown from Japan. Learning that a Study Department examination would be held the same day, she decided to wait in front of the examination site to coach the participants on study points in the short time

available before the test began.

Mrs. Oka lived in Japan, but as Hong Kong Chapter leader she strongly wished to do whatever she could to assist and support the Hong Kong members. She explained to the examinees such terminology as the Three Great Secret Laws and the principles for judging the validity of various Buddhist teachings, all the while encouraging them to challenge the exam with confidence. At this "special lecture session" by their chapter leader, whom they thought they'd never see again, the members made a fresh determination and went into the exam with enthusiasm.

In the afternoon, Shin'ichi took Ohya and Uema, who were visiting Hong Kong for the first time, on a brief tour of the city. He wanted them to gain a better understanding of the conditions in Hong Kong and to see how the people there lived. It was Chinese New Year's, and the city was bustling with families celebrating the holiday. They even witnessed the famous Chinese lion dance.

The walls of shops were covered with celebratory New Year's prints of a plump baby holding a large peach as well as prints of carp or goldfish. There were also red paper banners emblazoned with the Chinese character for fortune in gold. The festive sound of firecrackers filled the air.

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



Depression Misunderstood

The article in the Perspective section of the Jan. 28 *World Tribune* brings to light an ongoing dilemma in our organization. The author states "that depression is misunderstood by society as a whole..." and she also feels that this attitude is reflected in the type of guidance given to members who are struggling with mental health issues. In my experience, it is not only the issue of misunderstanding the very real medical aspect of depression and other mental diseases, but also the role of the psychologist or psychiatrist in helping the patient stabilize his or her life.

Having been an SGI member for 35 years and a psychotherapist for 19, I have seen or heard about a wide range of reactions members have had to fellow members who are seeking treatment for emotional problems. On the one hand, there are leaders encouraging members who are suffering with these disorders to chant daimoku to find a psychiatrist or therapist who can truly help them begin to look at their problems and find the appropriate solutions. On the other hand, there are others who will state that psychotherapy or psychiatry is like a heretical religion and goes against Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. This view stems from that person's personal view and has no doctrinal support in any of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings or President Ikeda's guidance. Yet this misconception dangerously continues to exist and as the article points out, makes these members feel their daimoku is powerless when results aren't obtained. Worse than that, it leads them to believe that chanting "is the only cure" and that taking medication, for instance, is a lack of faith.

Daimoku brings forth wisdom, the wisdom to select the right medical help, whether the problem is physical or emo-

tional. If our organization is to become an integral part of society, now is the time to pay closer attention to the superstitious ways in which people can interpret Nichiren Daishonin's great teachings.

—LARRY SHAW,
Los Angeles
shawsusanlarry@emailmsn.com

I was quite encouraged by the perspective written by Lori McDaniel (Jan. 28 *World Tribune*, p. 3). I am a bipolar person who is often misunderstood. In the beginning of my practice, I did well. I was established in society and introduced people to the Gohonzon. My fire turned to ash, or rather, depression. I became inconsistent.

After listening to President Ikeda's guidance and participating in activities when he came to San Francisco, I still landed in jail. Being clinically ill and acting out left me unable to focus on the Gohonzon. My heart remained in the right place, but I could not control my emotions.

Upon my return, I enrolled in intensive therapy and partial hospitalization. For the next two years, I gained the meaning of human revolution. I challenged myself to gain balance while raising my new baby daughter on my own.

Now I am a different person. Slowly building a new foundation, I've become purely consistent and centered around the Gohonzon. Thank you for your article!

—STEVEN BAJONE,
Sacramento

I am writing in response to Lori McDaniel's article about overcoming depression. I spent the better part of my life in a vicious cycle of clinically diagnosed "manic-depression." I'm also a women's district leader, practicing 15 years. I've been hos-

World Tribune MAILBOX

pitalized twice for a total of four months inpatient and e i g h t months out-patient treatment. This does not include many years in weekly therapy, as well as support group meetings and lots of different drug therapies.

Presently, I no longer suffer from "manic-depression." It's been about six years since I've experienced any major mood-swings or interruptions of my daily life. While I agree that it is devastating and treatment is needed, I am appalled at how many people go on drug therapy automatically without seeking to get to the root of the "illness." I put both manic-depression and illness in quotes because I don't truly believe it to be a disease in the way Lori and many others speak of it. Yes, I think there is a chemical imbalance that some folks are predisposed to at birth. But I also feel that going deeper to unlock and release the feelings at the cellular level with both our Buddhist practice and mind/body therapies is the only way to truly cut this karmic chain of suffering for future generations. In a crisis, yes, drug intervention is crucial; but not as an ongoing "bandaid" therapy. I know what I'm saying is extremely controversial and many will disagree. However, I'm proof that it can work another way. Thank you.

—REBECCA TOROSIAN,
New York City
Rtoro8@aol.com

Friends for Peace

Upon entering the San Francisco Landmark Area New Year's 2000 Gongyo Meeting, I was given a notice for the Boys and Girls Jan. 23 kick-off meeting. I put it with the collection of papers handed to me, thinking that it didn't look like it applied to me. Early the next morning, while I lay thinking in bed about whether I would attend the meeting, I remembered "The Story of Ohashi no Taro's Determined Son" printed in the Dec. 3, 1999, *World Tribune*. Somehow I had never read this Goshu. I started skimming through it, and it just grabbed me.

I really felt a lot of connections to it. I lived with foster parents a large part of my childhood, and always missed my father dearly. He finally finished his military duties and returned home with a Japanese wife. By then I was 17 and wanted to see the world, so I joined the military. My mother (stepmother), sensing the dangers I faced going into the world young and alone, converted me

to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. She still worried about me, but knew I would always be protected, as I was, even through the Vietnam War. Now my father has passed on and I still miss him, but it is really a blessing not having to worry about my mother as she is still practicing strongly and is receiving major benefits in her life.

The family issues in the story were moving to me, but the purity of faith and hope of a child, combined with the power of the Lotus Sutra offer more than can be expressed in words. I must admit I envy the parents of fortune children, and I hope the Boys and Girls Group activities really do well. When I finished reading "The Story of Ohashi no Taro's Determined Son," I had so many tears that I could hardly read. I looked through bleary eyes to reread the title and saw next to it the logo "Friends for Peace"; how appropriate and wonderful. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

—LARRY E. WILLIAMS,
San Francisco
LEWILLMS@aol.com

Thanks, Jorge Silverio

Greetings from Tokyo, Japan! I am an English teacher here at Soka Junior High School, Tokyo. I was very happy to read Jorge Silverio's experience (Jan. 1 *World Tribune*) because I am now the vice young men's leader for Grupo Pasion. This group was established by President Ikeda to help foster capable leaders for the Spanish speakers who live in Japan. Mr. Silverio's efforts for propagation in Cuba—a country that has so much suffering and yet so much potential—his experience really touched my heart. Here at Soka Junior High School, volunteering teaching Spanish to my Spanish club members really brings hope that one day there will be free exchange between Cuba, Japan and the entire world!! I cannot wait to meet SGI-CUBA members and sing Guantanamo together!!!

—DAVID QUINTERO,
Tokyo, Japan
david_quintero@hotmail.com

Hello From Israel

Hello, my SGI friends—greetings from Israel. You can't imagine how good it feels to read the WT E-mail Express over here in Israel. World peace is getting closer in the Middle East. Thank you again and please sign me up for any other items you have by e-mail. I love you dearly.

—JOY WILLIAMS,
joyewilliams@yahoo.com



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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.



Milestones

On Feb. 4, a memorial service was held at the Sacramento Community Center for Mr. Morris Pavis. Mr. Pavis practiced for 30 years in Los Angeles with Mrs. Kazue Elliot and other pioneer members and moved to Sacramento in 1998. Mr. Pavis had cancer of the liver but his life-condition was so strong that he encouraged everyone who visited him during his illness. Over 50 of his family members attended the memorial service along with his SGI friends.

—Jerry Farr; g.a.farr@worldnet.att.net

Lost and Found

During the summer of 1985, I was taught gongyo by a young women's member named Pia Masotta in Findlay, Ohio. Sadly we lost touch with each other over the years. I believe she may be in the Connecticut area. If anyone has heard from her, please have her contact me at MareeEG@cs.com

Chinese New Year's Festival Celebrates Diversity

More than 2,000 people attended the Chinese New Year's culture festival for the Year of the Dragon in Pasadena, Calif., Feb. 6. This annual celebration was the fruition of the hard work of 750 performers and behind-the-scenes supporters.



SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima bangs the gong beginning the Culture Festival.



Korean drum dance.



Kung fu demonstration.



Taiwan native dance.



Rum Klong Yaow, a traditional Thai dance.



Dramatic performance from the Lotus Sutra.



The Millennium Dragon Dance.



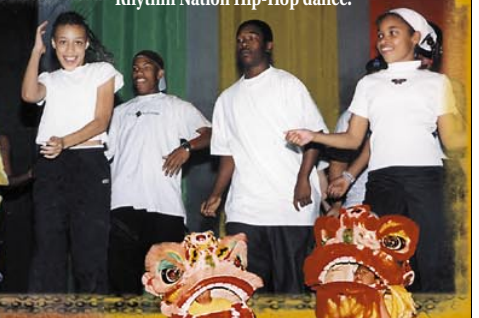
Cambodian coconut dance.



Chinese dance depicts the power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.



Chinese lion dance.



Rhythm Nation Hip-Hop dance.



Kung fu demonstration.



Japanese cherry blossom dance.



Kung fu demonstration.

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI