



**IMPRESSIONS:**  
Representatives  
of groups formed  
in 1990 share  
their growth.

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## Reunion Marks 10th Anniversary of SGI President's Historic 1990 Visit

By JEFF FARR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

It was something like an enlightened class reunion. On Feb. 12, exactly 10 years after SGI President Ikeda arrived in America for his historic 1990 visit, more than 200 (mostly) former youth division members gathered with their families at Soka University of America, Calabasas, to renew their ties and their determinations.

In the same Minuteman Hall where President Ikeda gave much of the extensive guidance that led to SGI-USA's rebirth, these members of groups that the SGI president established at the time spent an afternoon discussing faith matters: the mentor-and-disciple relationship, Buddhist study, improving relationships based on Buddhist practice, gongyo and the Gohonzon.

During his February 1990 stay, President Ikeda formed six groups: the American New Century Group, the American Soaring Group, the American School of Glory, the American Wisdom Group, the Performers

Group and the Eureka Group. Some 1,000 youth division members, many of them from Southern California, became members of one or more of these groups. Participants on Feb. 12 shared how they determined in 1990 to stick together as a family and how this reunion inspired them to continue doing so for the rest of their lives.

All of the national youth division leaders from that time attended: Eiko Heffron (formerly Eiko Hirota, young women's leader), Ian McIlraith, then the young men's leader, and Danny Nagashima, then the youth leader.

Mr. Nagashima, now SGI-USA's general director, encouraged the participants to "create a wonderful new wave of kosen-rufu in the men's and women's divisions — with your youth division spirit! Let's remember the time 10 years ago when we were here with President Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda, and how we felt then. Let's go back to our prime point, to the original determination that we made with President Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda here in 1990."

The "Class of '90" is now



Photo by JEAN PRITCHARD

Participants at the reunion of groups formed in 1990 renew their bonds and their determinations for the future.

planning a 10th Anniversary Conference, to be held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, June 22–25. If you are a member of one or more of these groups, and want to get involved, please contact the 1990 Reunion Committee at the SGI-USA Headquarters. (Please see impressions of the Feb. 12 event, p. 2.) **WT**



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

A photo display of events that took place in 1990.

### SEE INSIDE!

## A Dialogue With U.S. Youth Division Leaders

SGI President Ikeda's "Discussions on Youth" returns with his dialogue with U.S. youth division leaders Ed Feasel, Steve Mortan and Nobuko Kobayashi. President Ikeda candidly addresses their questions about many problems facing U.S. teens today, including violence in their schools, teen pregnancies and alcohol and drug abuse.

President Ikeda also encourages the youth to win over all these problems: "America is a land of freedom. But along with the sometimes dizzying freedom that can be found

there, there is also a deep, impenetrable darkness. America is a microcosm of the world. This is where you live. In a way, we could say that your problems represent the problems of all humanity. In that respect, your victory will open the way to victory for the youth of the entire world. It will also illuminate the path along which humanity must advance in the 21st century. You are the hope of America and the world!"

Please see pages 4–7 for the full dialogue.

## For the Nationwide Entrance-level Exam on April 30

The Entrance Exam study material is now available in one booklet at SGI-USA bookstores nationwide, or by mail order (800) 626-1313. Price: \$3.00.



# Ten Years Later... How Has Your Life Changed?

**Participants at the reunion of groups established on Feb. 12, 1990 (please see story p. 1) share how SGI President Ikeda's guidance became a turning point for their lives.**



Gloria Richardson



Earl and Betsy Cook



Janelle Washington



Carol Pelekai

**Gloria Richardson, Atlanta:** "There have been so many personal changes for me over the last 10 years. For so long, I was practicing this Buddhism based on external things. What would make me happy from the external standpoint? In the last few years, I have really started to understand how to do human revolution as SGI President Ikeda encouraged us to do in 1990. I have started changing the core of my life, not just the surface."

"I think that in the past whenever we talked about benefits, we always mentioned external things: a new car, a new job. Those things were meaningful, but today I realize so much more deeply what this Buddhism is all about. It is to be able to change the fundamental darkness of your life. And quite frankly, it is a very painful process. But because I was able to do it, from here on out my life will be a lot more free."

"Before 1990, many of us felt restricted in so many ways. One reason I was so restricted was that I didn't really understand what happiness was. If you go back to read the 1990 guidance, President Ikeda continually compares relative happiness and real happiness. I want to always be a person who's happy from the inside."

**Betsy Cook, Boise, Idaho:** "The biggest change that happened to me since 1990 regards the commitment I made then to go back to college so I could teach children. I was inspired by how President Ikeda talked of the importance of education for our future. But it took me a while to make this determination happen. I didn't have the confidence to do it, and I wasn't sure where I would get the support. But I was able to accomplish my dream, and I began teaching a year and a half ago!"

"Now, every day, I share President Ikeda's guidance with my fourth graders in the morning. It may sound like a cliché, but I was able to reply to President Ikeda in the best way I could—

through teaching, through education. And I love it. It's the perfect thing for me. It's a benefit from the Gohonzon."

"I travel an hour each way to my school, a small, private school in Ontario, Ore. People ask me, how can you do that every day? And I think, well, I chant—and I have a mission. None of the kids I teach are Buddhist, but I'm able to share Buddhist concepts and principles with them in a very natural way."

"Based on my youth division training in the past—we were always encouraged in the young women's division to be really strong and determined, to be true to ourselves—I can relay this encouragement to the boys and girls at my school. I know I'm teaching them academic information, but the social, spiritual and self-esteem issues I can help them with are also real valuable. Buddhism is all about becoming a really capable and happy person. I feel like I'm contributing to the cause of the happiness of young people. I'm very happy and fulfilled."

**Earl Cook, Boise, Idaho:** "By 1990, I had, as a youth division member, devoted everything to organizational activities with no regrets. Everything I did, I grew from. But still I had this laundry list of gripes and complaints regarding things that didn't feel right about the organization. It was like I had this checklist. When I heard President Ikeda talk about a new start for our organization in 1990, I felt one by one each gripe was checked off."

"President Ikeda's guidance also encouraged me to do a paradigm shift in my own life. It was the impetus for me to feel more open about my life and to pursue new career paths. Without the 1990 guidance, I wouldn't have felt the freedom and courage to make changes in my career. I was very comfortable practicing in the organization I had grown up in, which was in

Washington, D.C., my hometown. I never imagined that I would move, but I started thinking of myself for the first time as not just a Washingtonian."

"Ten years ago, I never would have thought I'd wind up in Boise. In Idaho, there's a very small organization, and it's far away from any big city—Seattle is 13 hours away. I can see how critically important it is for us to really branch out, to really develop the organizations in the rural areas all over the 50 states. I encourage more members to move to small towns! I feel like my practice has started anew since I moved to Idaho."

**Betsy:** "We just appointed our first YWD district leader ever. We're actually having youth meetings now! The Boys and Girls Group is also growing."

**Janelle Washington, Houston:** "That was really an incredible time for the organization when President Ikeda came in 1990. The organization went through so many changes. For me, it was like fresh air. The organization was so different in the 1980s—I was wondering then how long I could continue. When President Ikeda gave us new guidelines for the organization toward the 21st century, it was a moment of relief for me."

"President Ikeda encouraged

us to be citizens of the universe. I grew up in the organization in Los Angeles, but after 1990 I decided to transfer with my job to Houston. I work for an airlines and travel all over the place. I now feel that wherever I go in the world, I belong. This is my way to reply to President Ikeda. Wherever I go in the world, I try to connect with the SGI members there."

"My life has really expanded since 1990. I feel like I'm a much stronger person. I still have problems, of course, but my character is much stronger. I don't freak out as much. I'm more of an adult! There's this incredible sense of power within my life. I go to the Gohonzon and pray for the wisdom to overcome whatever situation I am presented with. I have also really grown as a person in dealing with racial tension. I learned that I have to take responsibility for not putting myself in the position of playing the victim."

**Carol Pelekai, Honolulu:** "I decided to come to this reunion because I always get really encouraged when I meet my friends from these groups, whom I practiced with 10 or 20 years ago. I felt this was my opportunity to see everyone again and make that determination

again to fight for kosen-rufu wherever I am."

"The biggest change for me over the last 10 years was having to go into the frontlines and into the community. I never did that as a top leader in the youth division 10 years ago. I was basically concerned with the organization on the top level. But when I went to the grassroots, I realized how much effort it really takes to do kosen-rufu. I realized how much patience it takes to really develop a district and bring the SGI-USA into the community. It made me see President Ikeda and his efforts in a new light. A little bit of what he's doing in the world, I'm doing in my own way in Hawaii. I feel more appreciative of President Ikeda now—to be part of the SGI's movement. Going in this direction is how I've been trying to reply to the guidance that he gave us in 1990." **WT**



(L-r) Pete Campos, Brian Miller, David Allen and Ross Dreibratt reunite.

**World TRIBUNE** The SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

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SGI PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO THE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE AT FNCC

# A Solid Path Toward Happiness

Photos by JANICE HIRANO

My sincerest congratulations on your women's conference. I understand that 188 representatives from across the United States have gathered at the Florida Nature and Culture Center today. Please have an enjoyable, bright and cheerful time, in a manner befitting America.

Nichiren Daishonin states: "If your heart remains unchanged and your faith steadfast, you will 'enjoy peace and security in your present existence and good circumstances in future existences'" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1528). So long as you are steadfast and live resolutely in accord with the Mystic Law, you need fear nothing. No matter what may happen, you need not despair. Please be convinced that you are walking a solid path toward happiness.

I ask that each of you please become a stouthearted queen of the Mystic Law and move forward brightly and cheerfully while warmly encouraging youth who will shoulder the coming era.

I am wholeheartedly praying for the health and victory of all of the SGI-USA women. Please convey my best regards to the women in your areas as well.



'The Power of One Woman To Make a Difference' was the theme of the Women's Conference held Feb. 10-13 at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

February 2000  
Daisaku Ikeda



Small group discussions followed each presentation on a given topic.



Presentations on such topics as The Power of Prayer, Creating a Winning Environment and Soka Spirit—The Ultimate Human Revolution held the women in rapt attention.

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SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE  
COMMEMORATING FEB. 27, SGI-USA WOMEN'S DAY

## Thank You for Your Dedication

To the Precious Women of the SGI-USA:

Congratulations on holding your Women's Commemorative Meetings. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your untiring efforts and dedication to ensure the happiness of the members in our SGI-USA family. Your faces must be beaming with happiness and filled with excitement as you embark upon the Century of Women with our new women's leader, Matilda Buck.

Just as President Ikeda states in his message (please see Feb. 11 *World Tribune*, p. 12), you are the true mothers

of American kosen-rufu. It is because of your sincere prayers and care for the members from the depths of your hearts that our organization has grown to what it is today.

Together, let's achieve all of our dreams and build an America where everyone is filled with hope and cherishes each other's friendship. Let's welcome President and Mrs. Ikeda in the near future with our victories in all our endeavors. Once again, congratulations and thank you very much.

Sincerely,  
Danny Nagashima  
SGI-USA General Director  
February 2000

## DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

# YOU ARE THE HOPE OF THE WORLD!

**In the return of his 'Discussions on Youth,' SGI President Ikeda tells U.S. youth that 'your victory will open the way to victory for the youth of the entire world. It will also illuminate the path along which humanity must advance in the 21st century. You are the hope of America and the world!'**

*A discussion among SGI President Ikeda, SGI-USA Youth Division Senior Advisor Ed Feasel and SGI-USA high school division leaders Steve Mortan and Nobuko Kobayashi.*

**SGI-USA Youth Division Senior Adviser Ed Feasel:** The high school division members in the United States have been very encouraged by the "Discussions on Youth" series. There are some specific issues that the youth of America want to ask you about.

**SGI-USA High School Division Leader Steve Mortan:** These are universal issues faced by youth in America today. We are talking about juvenile delinquency and violence, relationships, and drugs and alcohol.

**SGI-USA High School Division Leader Nobuko Kobayashi:** Our members are grappling with these issues themselves, or they are wondering how they can encourage others in similar situations.

**SGI President Ikeda:** The fact that you are seriously thinking about and trying to find a solution to your problems and those of your friends is in itself a sign that you are moving forward.

Of course, each person has his or her own unique set of problems. And given that I cannot meet with you in person and hear the details of your individual situations, it may be difficult for me to fully appreciate what you're going through and offer satisfactory advice. In addition, what I say may not apply specifically to your particular prob-



SGI President Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda on Jan. 2, his 72nd birthday, at Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Japan.

lem. Nevertheless, in the hopes that it may be of some help in solving your problems, I will share my thoughts with you.

In any case, when it comes to getting specific advice on individual problems, please talk to someone close by whom you can trust.

I am ready to do anything for you, if it will lift your spirits even a bit. In fact, I wish I could fly to America right now and relieve you of your problems and encourage you. This is how I truly feel.

America is a land of freedom. But along with the sometimes dizzying freedom that can be found there, there is also a deep, impenetrable darkness. America is a microcosm of the world. This is where you live.

In a way, we could say that your problems represent the problems of all humanity. In that respect, your victory will open the way to victory for the youth of the entire world. It will also illuminate the path along which humanity must advance in the 21st century. You are the hope of America and the world!

## Violence is an absolute evil.

**Feasel:** Thank you, President Ikeda, for your high expectations.

Our members are struggling hard in situations that can be pretty tough. One problem in particular has been the upsurge in violence among youth. Because violence is rampant in their schools and communities, many young people have no hope and are living in fear.

**Mortan:** I was shocked by the shooting that took place last April at Columbine High School

in Colorado, in which 13 students were shot and killed by two classmates. The two students who committed the crime were apparently motivated by a desire to get even with their fellow students who had made fun of them.

**Kobayashi:** A student at another school complained that vandalism and violence is rampant on campus, and that there had even been a bomb threat. She said she found going to school very depressing.

**Feasel:** Some members have said they have friends who are into violence, and that they are saddened when they see some of those people boasting about having beaten someone up.

**President Ikeda:** Nothing pains and saddens me more than young people, who possess such infinite potential for the future, physically harming and killing one another.

When I was around the age you who are in the high school division now, I lost my eldest brother in World War II. He was a kind, gentle person. Harboring grave personal doubts about the validity of Japan's invasion of China, he said: "Japan's behavior is abominable. What we are doing to the Chinese is unforgivable."

I will never forget how my mother took the news of his death. It was unbearably painful to look at her small back turned to us in silence, stifling her sobs. At that time, I vowed to fight to eliminate war and violence from the world.

Violence is an absolute evil. You lose if you resort to vio-

lence, regardless of the reason. You may think you have beaten your opponent, but ultimately you have lost. For when you harm another, you actually harm yourself. When it comes down to it, people who readily use violence and have no respect for others' lives have no respect for their own lives.

**Feasel:** The Columbine shooting ended with the two gunmen killing themselves. Following the tragic incident, President Clinton issued the following statement: "We must reach out to our children and teach them to express their anger and to resolve their conflicts with words, not weapons."

**President Ikeda:** I agree. The essence of violence is cowardice. It is because they are cowardly that people rely on brute force. They lack the courage to pursue dialogue.

Nonviolence is an expression of real courage. It takes more courage to pursue the path of nonviolence than it does to use violence. Mahatma Gandhi stated: "Nonviolence is not a cover for cowardice, but it is the supreme virtue of the brave.... Cowardice is wholly inconsistent with nonviolence.... Nonviolence presupposes ability to strike." A willingness to engage in dialogue is a sign of a thinking person.

Of course, responsibility for the prevalence of violence in our world today falls on society's leaders — on adults, including politicians, educators and people in the mass media. But nothing will change by simply criticizing them. It is up to you, the youth, to stand up with the determination to create a different society from now on. The important thing is that you begin to take nonviolent action, starting in your immediate environment.

What do you do, for instance, when you see a friend heading down the wrong path? If you really care about that friend, then you should stand by him or her. I hope you will be a good friend who not only listens attentively to what your friends have to say, but who can come out and tell them when needed "What you're doing is wrong," or "Don't throw away your life." In the Goshu, Nichiren Daishonin cites the famous words: "If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his

enemy" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 287).

Of course, you'll have to use wisdom in getting your message across. There's no other way. And to find the wisdom, you have to chant earnestly for your friends, praying that they will change their ways and get back on track. When you chant daimoku, courage will rise within you, and wisdom will well forth, enabling you to think of different ways to encourage them.

More importantly, you will become a person who genuinely wishes for your friends' happiness. If you are truly sincere, your friends will one day understand your intentions. Even if they resent what you say and stop being friends with you for a time, your deep concern for their well-being will stay with them. Your sincerity will bear fruit some day, and your friends will realize that what you were saying was true.

## Violence stems from the animality that is inherent in life.

**Kobayashi:** I was asked by a student about what she could do to stop her friend from stealing. She knows a number of students who steal.

**Mortan:** I also knew many students in high school who stole from others. They broke into people's cars and houses. Some of them did it simply to prove they had the guts to. They always urged me to join in. When I told them what they were doing was wrong, they just laughed at me.

One day in high school, I finally gave in to the pressure from a friend of mine, and we broke into a video game arcade after all the employees went home, hoping that we could play some games for free. Unfortunately, an employee returned to the store just as we were about to leave. We quickly hid behind one of the machines, afraid that he would find us. We stayed there for about 15 minutes, but it felt like an hour. After he left, we made our escape.

When I got home, I chanted desperately that I wouldn't be arrested. I also chanted for the courage never to do such a stupid thing again and for my friend to quit doing such things. I then talked to him about it and urged him not to break the law anymore. I think he may have



**Ed Feasel, SGI-USA Youth Division Senior Advisor.**



**Nobuko Kobayashi, SGI-USA High School Division Leader.**



**Steve Mortan, SGI-USA High School Division Leader.**

felt bad about pressuring me into going that night and nearly getting me into trouble. After that, he stopped breaking into places and even helped me persuade others to stop doing the same.

I am now a high school teacher, and based upon that experience, I always tell my students that efforts to encourage others are never wasted.

**Feasel:** Friendship halves our suffering and doubles our joy.

I was once discouraged when I felt that I was being treated unfairly. At that time, a friend of mine encouraged me not to get sidetracked and reminded me of my goals. Supported by this friendship, I felt I could overcome my difficulty and achieve my dreams. Above all, my greatest source of strength was my resolve to live the way of mentor and disciple.

**Mortan:** When I was going through a hard time once, a senior in faith sent me a postcard. All he wrote on it was "Keep fighting for your dream!" Those words filled me with fresh determination.

**President Ikeda:** Friendship is the most beautiful of human bonds. It is a relationship that transcends gain and loss. It is not something superficial, nor is it merely to feel sympathy or pity for another person. It is a relationship where, no matter what happens to the other person, you still care about him or her from the bottom of your heart. Friendship is a precious, irreplaceable human treasure.

I hope that you will forge such friendship with one person after another. It may seem like a small thing, but war and violence can be banished from the earth when a network of such friendship enfolds the world.

Of course, efforts to control violence by external measures such as the elimination of weapons of destruction, the establishment of more adequate laws, and the signing of treaties

between nations are also important. But violence stems from the animality that is inherent in life. Even if we eliminate all weapons from the face of the earth, violence will never disappear unless we successfully control the animality within us. That is why transforming ourselves from within is so important.

Nuclear weapons embody the ultimate form of violence. Back in 1957, my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, called on us youth to fight against the use of nuclear weapons. He not only insisted that all such weapons of mass destruction must be abolished but taught us about the need "to rip out the claws of the demonic nature inherent in human life."

The Daishonin says: "Life is the foremost of all treasures. It is expounded that even the treasures of the entire major world system cannot equal the value of one's body and life. Even the treasures that fill the major world system are no substitute for life" (WND, 1125). Our lives are more precious than all the treasures in the universe. The sanctity of life is the basis of Buddhist philosophy. It is vital that more and more people in the world embrace this fundamental belief.

**Feasel:** Based on the ideals promoted by the SGI, the SGI-USA youth division has been carrying out the Victory Over Violence campaign, calling on the youth of America to put the following three-point pledge into action: "I will cherish my own life; I will cherish everybody's life; and I will give hope to everyone."

As we each become able to cherish our own lives, we will naturally value the lives of others around us as well. Many young people are supporting this campaign. A number of schools have requested that SGI-USA youth give lectures on nonviolence to their students.

**President Ikeda:** That's wonderful. In any event, the important thing is that you do something, that you start something. Nothing comes from nothing: Zero remains forever zero. But one step can lead to infinite growth: One can become two, three and even tens of thousands. There is a saying in the East that one is the mother of tens of thousands.

**Nothing is more despicable than violence against women.**

**Kobayashi:** We also must bring an end to sexual violence against women, which inflicts immeasurable pain and suffering on its victims.

**President Ikeda:** Nothing is more despicable than violence against women. It is absolutely unforgivable. I want all men to remember this.

Unfortunately, there is a general trend in society today that encourages sexual promiscuity and violence. Such a trend also exists in Japan. But the thing is not to fall victim to it. I hope men will be gentlemen at all times. They are a disgrace, if they behave otherwise. It's also important that women exercise wisdom and caution, taking utmost care to protect themselves.

I can only imagine the incredible physical and mental agony that women who are victims of sexual assault must suffer. Though you may perhaps lose trust in others, or feel defiled and broken, please remember that no one can destroy who you are. No matter how badly you have been hurt, you remain as pure as fresh snow.

Buddhism teaches that the lotus flower grows in muddy water. What this means is that our supremely noble lives continue to shine even amid the harshest of life's realities, just like the pure white lotus flower that blooms unsoiled by the mud.

Having gone through what you have, there is pain and suffering in others' hearts that only you can notice. Having suffered

what you have, there is true love and affection that only you can find. There are definitely people out there who need you. If you give up on yourself, it is only you who will lose.

Nothing, no matter what happens, can change your inherent worth. Please have courage. Please tell yourself that you are not going to let this ordeal defeat you.

Those who have suffered the most, those who have experienced the greatest sadness, have a right to become the happiest of all. What would the purpose of our Buddhist practice be, if the most miserable could not become happy? The tears you shed cleanse your life and make it shine.

To live with this conviction and keep moving ever forward is the spirit of Buddhism. It is also the essence of life.

You may not want to tell someone else about your pain and anguish, but I strongly recommend that you consult with someone — even just one person — whom you can trust and whose confidentiality you can rely on. You should not suffer all by yourself.

The Daishonin states, "Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means to enter the palace of one's own life" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 787). The precious palace of life is nothing other than the life-state of the Buddha. Even an atomic bomb cannot destroy this inner palace. Please use life's painful experiences to open up this palace of happiness within your life.

**Mortan:** You're talking about the palace of Buddhahood, aren't you?

**President Ikeda:** Buddhahood is an inexhaustible wellspring of infinite potential. You can draw from it and draw from it, and it will never run dry.

Buddhism expounds the principle of 3,000 realms in a single life-moment. This principle holds that each life-moment is endowed with 3,000 different functions, which influence not only our own lives but those of all around us; they also influence society, our natural environment and the earth. They encompass the entire universe.

Therefore, once you have decided to do something, the 3,000 functions and your entire being start working to help you reach your goal. The entire universe also starts moving toward the fulfillment of your goal. If you pray, "This is how I want to be," and continue to work toward your dream, you will gradually realize the future you

have envisaged.

An ascending life, where you keep striving to grow and improve — this is what we mean by human revolution. Human revolution doesn't mean becoming something special or different from who you are; it simply means striving to improve yourself, no matter what challenges you face.

Your future self does not exist in some far-off place; it exists in the heart and mind of your present self. That is why you have to face and tackle the realities that confront you. Just wishing to be a certain way and not making any concrete efforts will get you nowhere.

**Feasel:** Faith enables us to turn our dreams into reality.

**President Ikeda:** What is true success in life? It is winning in the struggle against oneself. Those who hold fast to their beliefs, even though they may be persecuted or thrown in jail by unjust authorities, are victors in life — just as we see in the examples of first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and his disciple, Josei Toda, who were imprisoned for their opposition to Japanese militarism during World War II.

People who are successful in society are not necessarily the ultimate winners in life. Money, fame and position — all these things do not last. Human worth cannot be judged by such superficial criteria.

There are many people who, though not rich or famous, are living their lives honestly and sincerely for the benefit of their families and society at large. Many of your mothers and fathers are such great ordinary people. I hope you will remember this.

**Unwanted pregnancy is a tragedy.**

**Kobayashi:** I think that women need the wisdom to protect themselves in intimate relationships with men.

A member once asked me: "What can I do to help my friends? One recently got pregnant, while another is having sex with her boyfriend without thinking about the fact that she could get pregnant or catch a sexually transmitted disease." I grew up in an area where there are many teen pregnancies. When I was in junior high, I knew three girls who got pregnant. One of them was an excellent student with good grades. I wish these young women could have had access to proper sex education and someone they could talk to

frankly about anything.

**Feasel:** When I was in high school, two of my classmates also got pregnant. One of them had an abortion. It was a traumatic experience for her, both physically and emotionally. The other girl gave birth to her baby, and she ended up quitting school. Young people tend to feel invincible, thinking that no matter what they do things will be all right. But no one can escape the law of cause and effect.

**Mortan:** When I was in junior high as well, one of my classmates had a baby. At first, everyone offered encouragement and fussed over her baby. But eventually they drifted away, because their parents feared that they might follow the same path. The girl who had the baby found herself all alone.

**Kobayashi:** This kind of thing happens all the time. A member told me that her boyfriend wants to have sex with her and asked me what she should do. I don't think love means doing whatever your partner wants. Love can easily make us blind. So I'm worried that some teenagers will become carried away by the passion of the moment and wind up deeply hurt.

**President Ikeda:** Your stories make my heart ache. Unwanted pregnancy is a tragedy.

In your teens, you become curious about many things. And it's only natural for you to develop an interest in sex. But if you just go wherever your curiosity takes you, you could end up having lifelong regrets. Not only do you risk being hurt physically and emotionally, but you may lose many of the opportunities of youth.

Your teens are a time to build the foundation of your life. Your body and mind are still flexible, and you can readily absorb all sorts of things. It is a time when you can acquire all kinds of learning and skills. If you so desire, you can open the road to any future you wish.

It would be a terrible pity if you were to cast aside this freedom. You would also be doing a great disservice to your parents and to all who have come before you, who made it possible for you to have the opportunities that you do today.

The American civil rights heroine Rosa Parks makes the observation: "Our school system in America makes it very easy to get an education. Even if the buildings are old and the textbooks worn, the opportunity to learn is there. There were

people who fought and died, even before the modern Civil Rights movement began, so that all of you would have had that opportunity. We must not let their struggle and sacrifice be in vain" (*Dear Mrs. Parks: A Dialogue with Today's Youth*, p. 52). I totally agree with her.

So, bearing this in mind, if you start going out with someone, I hope you will have a relationship that is appropriate for your age. I hope you will strive for a relationship in which you both encourage and support each other in reaching your future goals and help each other grow and develop.

**Kobayashi:** Helping each other grow and develop is important, isn't it?

**President Ikeda:** I ask men to always treat women with respect and women to possess the resolute strength not to be swept away.

If your boyfriend truly loves and cares for you, he will not force you to do anything that you don't want to. Quite often, by firmly saying no, you can discover whether or not your partner's feelings are genuine.

As for the question about the young woman who found herself with an unwanted pregnancy, I think it's important that her friend stand by her in true friendship. Offering sympathy is easy, but sympathy only goes so far. It may make her feel better for a while, but it won't help her get back on her feet and rebuild her life. Remember that your friend is probably hurting badly and feeling lost. So, while being careful to respect her wishes, please continue to warmly support and encourage her.

**Mortan:** I think one of the reasons that teenagers become sexually active is that there is a general thinking in society that premarital sex is a good way for couples to find out whether they are compatible before marriage, rather than discovering later that they aren't and ending up in divorce. Teens are also influenced by the pleasure-seeking culture in which they live and which is manufactured by self-serving adults.

Another factor is commercialism that operates on the belief that there is money to be made by exploiting people's baser urges. Even many adults are confused about where they should place the highest value.

**Alcohol and drugs represent the greatest trap you can fall into.**

**Feasel:** The fact that alcohol



More than 150 Philadelphia Region youth gathered Dec. 18, 1999, at the community center, determined to show actual proof and become pace setters for the new century with warmth and sincerity. The three-hour celebration was full of music, joy and youthful determination. (Above) Maya, Gen, Ashley and Diane perform 'Song of Joy.'

and drugs are a serious problem in American schools is also a reflection of the problems in adult society. Many students think drinking alcohol is cool. Many start drinking because all their friends do and end up becoming alcoholics.

**Mortan:** When I was in high school, some of my classmates drank. One of them was always drinking orange juice spiked with vodka. He was a popular guy in class, always joking around and even making the teacher laugh. We all thought he was a really cool guy. Some time later, we stopped seeing him at school. After graduation, I found out that he had become an alcoholic.

**Feasel:** One of my high school friends nearly died in a car accident. He had taken a ride with a friend who had been drinking and driving.

On the subject of drugs, there is a misconception in society that marijuana is less harmful than other drugs, so people think that there's no problem in using it. Often people start smoking marijuana casually but later find themselves in over their heads.

**President Ikeda:** I can understand young people wanting to be adventurous and do something different from their everyday routine. But drinking and drug taking is definitely not a "cool" adventure, nor are they the epitome of freedom. Far from it, they in fact represent the greatest trap you can fall into and ultimately deprive you

of freedom. Why? Because you become a prisoner of your impulses, emotions and desires. It is an animalistic way to live.

A Buddhist teaching urges, "Become the master of your mind rather than let your mind master you" (WND, 502). It encourages us to be the boss, exercising control over our minds, our thoughts and feelings — not to simply act on every impulse. People who blindly follow their desires may appear to enjoy freedom, but ultimately they lose their freedom altogether.

**Feasel:** When I was in college, I knew a guy who was a talented classical guitarist. When I first heard him play, I was deeply impressed. I remember thinking, "Wow, this guy is the same age as me and so talented!" At that time, I was struggling, trying to figure out which direction I should pursue in life. In contrast, he seemed to shine with brilliance and promise.

I later found out that he had a drug problem. By the time graduation rolled around, he was not the same person. He had lost his drive and energy, as well as his dreams for the future. I, on the other hand, was on my way to graduate school, filled with a sense of purpose and determination. How our situations had changed in only a few short years! I can clearly say that drugs were his downfall. From that experience, I resolved to help others avoid the same tragedy.

**President Ikeda:** When you're under the influence of alcohol or drugs, it's like you're danc-

ing in a dream. But when you wake from the dream, harsh reality awaits you. In addition, no matter how cool people who drink or take drugs may look, any strength or ability they show is not their own; it is the work of the alcohol or the drug.

In my opinion, the truly cool are those who continue to make steady efforts to fulfill their dreams, even if their dedication goes unnoticed and unrecognized by others. A person of self-control is a person who is free in the truest sense. It is therefore vital that you continue to challenge your goals.

**Feasel:** Yes, I feel that one of the reasons for the upsurge in violence and other serious juvenile problems is that young people don't have specific goals in life. Or, even if they do have goals, the goals tend to be extremely short-term and mainly focused on gratifying immediate desires. Many young people make no time to reflect on themselves or ask themselves questions such as "What do I want to do before I reach 20?" "What can I achieve?" or "How can I contribute to society?" Because they have no long-term goals, their actions are governed by their moment-to-moment emotions.

**If you have a big dream, it can prevent you from being swayed by trivial things.**

**President Ikeda:** That is simply living on impulse and animal instinct. One of the things that sets humans apart from other animals is that we cherish dreams and hopes for the future. If you have a big dream, it

can prevent you from being swayed by trivial things. Even if you should experience a temporary setback along the way and think you can't go on, the important thing is to keep moving forward without giving up.

What is failure in life? Making mistakes does not signal failure, but giving up on yourself when you've made mistakes or are feeling discouraged does. Not getting back on your feet when you've suffered a setback or disappointment—that is failure. True victors are those who get up again each time that they fall down.

I believe you all know Orlando Cepeda, who was a major league baseball player. Last year, in what was a great personal victory, he was finally inducted to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

**Mortan:** Mr. Cepeda played professional baseball for 17 years, mainly with the San Francisco Giants. He gained fame as a great power hitter.

*In 1958, Mr. Cepeda was named the Rookie of the Year. In 1967, he was voted the Most Valuable Player of the National League. He hit a total of 379 home runs during his playing career and was an 11-time All-Star. He was one of the most feared hitters in major league baseball in the 1960s.*

Everybody thought he would easily make the Hall of Fame. But things took a turn for the worse after he retired from baseball and was arrested on drug-related charges.

**Kobayashi:** You can't gain entry into the Hall of Fame just by having a superb baseball

record. You must also possess an exemplary record off the field. When Mr. Cepeda was arrested, he lost everything.

However, in 1982, when his life hit rock-bottom, he encountered the Daishonin's Buddhism. From that moment on, he began to challenge himself anew. He devoted himself not only to changing his own life but also to helping young people get back on the right track. His efforts and contributions to society were taken into consideration and, in what many have described as a miracle, he was finally inducted into the Hall of Fame last year.

**Feasel:** Mr. Cepeda sent a message to the youth division of Japan last year. He states: "Because of President Ikeda's guidance, I have always been able to live my life dedicated to the pursuit of a noble human goal. As I continued to break through my inner darkness, I learned to work not only for myself but also for others. Please devote yourself to SGI activities, study President Ikeda's guidance and chant abundant daimoku. Your potential is limitless. Please don't give up, no matter what. As long as you embrace this faith, you can make the impossible possible. I have been telling myself the same thing. I had nothing when I first began to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism. Now I have gained so much. I have become a much broader person. I have won over myself. We are indeed most fortunate to have a mentor in life like President Ikeda."

**President Ikeda:** When I met Mr. Cepeda, I was impressed by his strong faith and conviction.

Answers and solutions to the problems and sufferings of youth do not suddenly appear. But it's vital that you do not run away from your problems, and that you have the courage to continue facing them. Even though you may not find an answer to your problems right away, please continue to tackle them squarely.

By doing so, you will find some day that you already have the answer. Therefore, the important thing is your sense of mission and the causes you decide to champion.

When I met with Dr. Allen Sessoms, president of Queens College, University of the City of New York, on Jan. 18, he commented that American youth used to have clear causes to fight for, "enemies" to fight against. They had targets to focus on, such as the Vietnam War or bad government or racial discrimination. But today, he noted, the causes which youth should direct their energies toward are getting harder to identify.

As a result, the youth lack positive outlets for expressing their passion. In reality, there are many causes—quite large ones in fact—that they should take up, such as environmental degradation, overpopulation and poverty. But it is not easy for youth to recognize them as causes without good knowledge of them, Dr. Sessoms said.

All sorts of injustice and evil still exist in the world. It is the mission of youth to fight against them. Strong are those who have resolved to create a better world than the one in which they now live. Such a sense of mission elevates your life.

In 2001, the Orange County

campus of Soka University of America will open. Its mottoes are: "Be philosophers of a renaissance of life," "Be world citizens in solidarity for peace," and "Be the pioneers of global civilization."

I hope that young people will gather from all over the United States and the world to study on this campus, and that from this campus they will set out into the world once more. I hope that many future Nobel laureates will appear from among their ranks. I also hope that those of you who may not be able to study at this school will somehow support those who do.

It is my hope that you, the youth of America, will appreciate the significance of having this university in your country—a university that will serve as a great center for peace in the new millennium.

Please remember that your fellow members in Japan and the entire world—and all the members of humanity—are waiting for you, the youth of America, who embrace the great philosophy of the Mystic Law.

Youth of the world! I call on you to take care of everything in the 21st century! **W**

## Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo Seeks Assistant Dean of Students

The assistant dean of students will assist the dean in overseeing all aspects of student affairs, including residential life, student counseling, campus security, student activities, career placement and student athletics. The assistant dean will assist in fostering a stimulating, vibrant community for students through support of activities and events that contribute to the cultural, intellectual and recreational life of the campus, and through the provision of services that promote and enable student well being and success. SUA, Aliso Viejo is seeking an individual of character and vision who enjoys working with students, fac-

ulty and staff members from many cultures, in a collaborative, consensus decision-making environment.

Qualifications include: a master's degree in college student personnel, counseling, higher education or a related field. Three or more years' progressive experience in student affairs administration, counseling, residence life or student activities. Knowledge of the undergraduate experience in a small residential college or university preferred. Candidates must have a student-centered philosophy and high ethical and professional standards.

Interviews will be held at the NASPA Conference this March

in Indianapolis, Ind., and locally in Aliso Viejo, Calif. To be considered for an interview at the NASPA Conference, application materials must be postmarked by March 6, 2000. The position will remain open until filled.

To apply, send a letter of interest, your resume and three professional references to:

Edward Feasel, Ph.D.  
Dean of Students  
Soka University of America  
85 Argonaut, Suite 200  
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

Please see our Web site at [www.soka.edu](http://www.soka.edu) for detailed information. **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](mailto:grad_admissions@soka.edu)



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# A Radiant Sunflower of Warmth and Courage

## PERSPECTIVE

By AMY TALIAFERRO  
NEW YORK CITY

### Let the flowers of the Law Bloom with beauty and purity Throughout this land of America

(—Poem dedicated to the women of SGI-USA included at the close of SGI President Ikeda's "clear mirror" guidance, Feb. 27, 1990)

If I try to imagine a vast garden revealing the warm faces of beautiful and compassionate SGI women, I see in the center a gigantic, radiant, unbending sunflower bearing the countenance of Amelia Moran. When I think of the power of one woman to challenge adversity and to inspire countless others to blossom through faith, I think of Amelia Moran. I think about Amelia Moran a lot these days. Amelia began her practice of Buddhism on Aug. 25, 1972, and continued until her death last summer on Aug. 14, 1999. For 27 years she gave freely of her encouragement, warmth, courage and determination to countless SGI members and friends.

I remember the early days of my own practice, which began in February 1975. I practiced in Manhattan, but was always aware of the famous Brooklyn women's group whose presence I always felt at our community center. I secretly yearned to be one of the Brooklyn women, the "Daimoku Queens," whose deep struggles, chanting marathons and humble, warm and embracing, family-like spirit I envied. As a "Calypso Queen" in 1976, dancing up the Avenue of the Americas in a night parade that was part of New York's conven-

tion, I was overjoyed to be dancing alongside some of those Caribbean-born Brooklyn women, especially Amelia Moran, who was born in Panama.

I have many memories of Mrs. Moran, whom I knew only from a distance in the early years of my practice. She, myself and several others were part of the "regulars" who, in rain and snow, in the early '70s made it every morning to join Mr. David Kasahara in morning gongyo at our old New York Community Center. We sat in the front row chanting hours of feverish daimoku that ultimately led to victories in our separate desperate situations. I saw Amelia Moran whenever I participated in activities at the culture center. She seemed to always be there participating in some behind the scenes activity—organizing the production of costumes for conventions and parades; preparing food for various events; supporting the women's Sunrise Chorus; supporting the Spanish study department in the New York area; closing out the *World Tribune* subscription collections; and carrying out countless other administrative and leadership responsibilities.

At large meetings I remember looking forward to the determinations or encouragement given by Amelia Moran. Although her speeches were not the fanciest, she always conveyed her absolute determination and total confidence in the Mystic Law, leaving me inspired and joyful and able to say, "Yes!"

In 1988, I actually became part of the Brooklyn women's group by marrying a Brooklyn men's division member and moving to Brooklyn. I then had the opportunity to enjoy more firsthand encounters with Amelia Moran. She was the first to warmly welcome me to

Brooklyn with her gracious words and a card. She was the first SGI member to visit me in the hospital with a gift from "Auntie Amelia" to my new daughter when she was born 10 months after I moved to Brooklyn. She supported and encouraged me and other struggling young mothers who were uncertain and confused by our new role. Mrs. Moran's consistent encouragement and confidence enabled me to continue in faith, despite exhaustion and hopelessness in what seemed to be an impossible transition from my youthful, unencumbered optimism to its ultimate translation into success in the real world as a working mother.

Mrs. Moran never failed to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of others, no matter how great or small. When calling to leave messages and SGI communications for my husband, her co-leader, she never failed to warmly greet me, ask about each of my children, and listen patiently to the endless details of all of my sagas, as if that were the only reason she had called. On Mother's Day, on Father's Day there were always hearty congratulatory messages from Mrs. Moran. She brought my children little gifts to let them know that she was thinking about them and always delighted in their accomplishments.

The last time I spoke to Mrs. Moran, she was on her sickbed at home before her final hospitalization. She spoke briefly about her illness, but at length about her joy at having just seen my 7-year-old son's photograph in the *World Tribune* as emcee for the Boy's and Girl's Group meeting.

To me and to others, Amelia came to exemplify a new kind of pioneering spirit. Having been at the forefront of the early energetic expansion of membership in Brooklyn, Amelia was still always trying to forge ahead and break new ground. She exerted herself to change old habits and refresh her thinking by ceaselessly trying to digest President Ikeda's guidance.

Her favorite guidance from him was: "Whatever problems you may have, ultimately you chose to have them in this lifetime. In other words, you have your present problems so you can prove the power of *Myoho*. If you truly understand this point in the depths of your life, you will have no reason to fear problems. All you have to do is courageously overcome each one with



Amelia Moran encouraging young women.

the power of faith" (*Daily Guidance*, vol. 4, p. 222).

When faced with difficult challenges, she would always go back to her favorite passage from Nichiren Daishonin, which she recited by heart: "Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubts in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood. Do not have doubts simply because heaven does not lend you protection. Do not be discouraged because you do not enjoy an easy and secure existence in this life. This is what I have taught my disciples morning and evening, and yet they begin to harbor doubts and abandon their faith" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 283).

In his condolence message that was read at Amelia Moran's funeral, President Ikeda said, "She was a mother figure in our kosen-rufu movement, and her warm and bright character was loved by all." Her own son, Ulysses, who completely understood her important SGI role, offered his condolences to more than 1,200 members who attended her funeral and two memorial services. He said: "I know that to many of you she was like a mother, too. She created a new kind of family and we are all part of it." Many SGI women remembered her as an example to emulate, determining to manifest their own "Mrs. Moran" spirit.

Feb. 9 is the anniversary of my joining the SGI in 1975—25 years ago. I also just celebrated my 50th birthday in January, which means I have now been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for half of my life. This is significant to me. Having fought major battles to overcome my inability to appreciate my life, I might subtitle my own human revolution story, "Journey from NO WAY to Y-E-S!" To

me, Amelia Moran's spirit is the embodiment of "Y-E-S!" "Yes, you can do it!" "Yes, you must do it!" "Yes, you have the Gohonzon and there is no doubt that you will win!" "Yes, you will find the best solution to your problem." When I face new challenges and my old tendencies of insecurity and fear rear their distorted, ugly heads to immobilize positive action, I will up an image of Amelia Moran, visualize the sunflower, take a deep breath and say, "Y-E-S, I can and I will! Nam-myoho-renge-kyo."

I used to have confidence that kosen-rufu would happen, that it was guaranteed because Amelia Moran was here in Brooklyn and Mrs. Moran never gives up. Now Amelia has departed. As in the parable of "The Excellent Physician" who departed from this world so that his beloved children would stop relying upon him and drink the beneficial medicine themselves, I believe that in Amelia's departure, she has passed on the women's division baton. I believe others are ready to carry on the mission to provide strong and confident leadership through example and through warmly embracing others.

Although it may be that I am an azalea and not a sunflower at all, for this new 21st century and this new millennium, I emphatically say (deep breath—thank you, Auntie Amelia—sunflower—Nam-myoho-renge-kyo), "Y-E-S, without a doubt I will blossom and use my power to spread beauty and purity in my Brooklyn community and throughout this land of America!"

(Note: Much of the information about Amelia Moran's life was supplied by Donna Walker-Kuhne and Bret Kuhne.)



Amy Taliaferro (left) and friend Debbie Kon celebrate Amy's 50th birthday in January, with Ned and Cathy Robinson attending.

# the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

## 'EARLY SPRING'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 3, PARTS 41-42

*At the Hong Kong chapter meeting, Shin'ichi Yamamoto says, 'The key to attaining happiness is having the strength of spirit to withstand any obstacle or challenge, possessing the wisdom to create value and fostering a rich heart that overflows with joy and hope.'*

When Shin'ichi Yamamoto arrived at the Lap Sun Building, where the Hong Kong Chapter meeting was to be held, a young boy, about 10 years old, was standing in front of the elevator. He wore a suit and tie and a Traffic Control Group armband with Soka Gakkai written on it. The boy was obviously assisting the event staff. Shin'ichi said "Thank you!" in Japanese and smiled at him. The boy had no idea who Shin'ichi was and looked at him blankly. But when he saw Shin'ichi's smile, he smiled back.

Resounding applause greeted Shin'ichi as he entered the room. The lyric sheets to Gakkai songs such as "Song of the New Century" and "Song of Kosen-rufu in Asia"—in both Japanese and the romanized transliteration of Japanese—hung on the wall at the front of the room. Several chairs lined the wall, and when Shin'ichi and the others took their places, the meeting began.

Tamako Uema, Fukuyasu Takami and the leaders traveling with Shin'ichi each delivered greetings. There were an increasing number of new members who didn't speak Japanese—a testimony to the advancement of kosen-rufu in Hong Kong—so the speeches were interpreted into Cantonese.

Kiyoshi Jujo announced the establishment of the three Hong Kong districts—Chungyan, Kowloon and Wanchai—and introduced the new leadership

appointments. Shin'ichi addressed the gathering next, speaking with strong conviction about the power of the Gohonzon.

His conclusion was that "the key to attaining happiness is having the strength of spirit to withstand any obstacle or challenge, possessing the wisdom to create value and fostering a rich heart that overflows with joy and hope. Moreover, to bring true prosperity to society requires genuine concern for others, friendship and trust.

"In other words, everything begins with our inner transformation. Buddhism shows us the way to achieve this human revolution and teaches the principles for absolute hap-

piness and lasting peace. I sincerely hope that all of you will shine brilliantly with the light of humanity as you turn Hong Kong into a garden of happiness."

The meeting closed with a rousing chorus of Soka Gakkai songs.



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

When it was over, Shin'ichi spoke with the interpreter, Chow Chi Kong, and his wife, Chow Chui Yok Jane. Chow Chi Kong had been appointed Hong Kong Chapter vice leader when Southeast Asia General Chapter Leader Kazumasa Morikawa and other senior

Takami had both mentioned to Shin'ichi that they wanted to make Chow the leader of Hong Kong Chapter in the future. His wife had been appointed that day as women's division leader of the new Wanchai District.

"Ah, Mr. Chow!" Shin'ichi said, "We are thinking about asking you to take over as leader of Hong Kong Chapter in the near future. I hope that from today you'll take full responsibility for Hong Kong Chapter, as if you were already the chapter leader."

"I will," Chow answered. "I only joined the Soka Gakkai 15 months ago, so there is still much I don't understand. But I will do everything I can to meet your expectations."

"By the way, your Japanese is excellent," Shin'ichi remarked.

A gentle smile appeared on Chow's face. "Actually, I am Japanese," he said. "I was born in Kagoshima [in Kyushu, Japan] and moved to Guangzhou, China, to work for a trading company, when I was a young man. While I was there, I met and married my wife, and then the war came. After the war, I adopted a Chinese name and came to Hong Kong."

Chow went on to explain his background in more detail: He was the youngest of three children. His father, a fisherman, died when he was

only 1 year old, and his mother died when he was 9. For a while he fished with his brothers, but then he went to China to work for a Japanese-run clothing business. He started out doing odd jobs and gradually learned the ropes.

After several years, he went to Guangzhou, where he began working for a trading company. That's where he met his future wife, who was employed as an accountant for a Japanese company there. She was an only child, and her father had died. They fell in love, but her friends and relatives opposed the idea of her marrying a Japanese man.

Her mother, however, agreed. Soon after they wed, the war ended, and all the Japanese who had been in China during the Japanese occupation had to leave.

Chow said to his mother-in-law: "I have seen what the Japanese army has done here in China, and it is horrible. I cannot think of such a country as my homeland. I will live in China as a Chinese."

But that would not be so easy. If he were discovered to be Japanese, he would be arrested, and strong anti-Japanese sentiment among the people made him a potential target for violent retribution.

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



Gakkai leaders had made a guidance tour of Southeast Asia in August and September 1962, the previous year.

Mr. Chow was a good-natured man of about 50 who ran a trading company. Mr. Morikawa and Southeast Asia General Chapter Chief Vice Leader Fukuyasu

# Victory Over Violence Campaign Continues

*The youth division's Victory Over Violence campaign generates dialogue in Denver and San Diego.*

## Arun Gandhi Encourages Denver Youth

**W**e have to begin with ourselves and in our homes. We have to create peace there, create peace with our friends and relatives, and let that radiate into peace around the world.... We have a great task to perform."

With these words, speaker Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, encouraged the capacity crowd gathered in the Ikeda Auditorium of the SGI-USA Denver Culture Center to embrace the concept of peace and begin "planting the seeds" of nonviolence in their daily lives.

Several hundred SGI-USA members and guests from throughout the community came to the culture center on the beautiful Sunday morning of Jan. 30 for a celebration of peace and nonviolence planned and organized by the youth division. Attendees listened to experiences and were ushered in groups through the culture center on a "Journey for Peace" where, in various rooms, they participated in discussions, listened to speakers and did other activities.

Everything was centered on the three main themes of the youth division's Victory Over Violence pledge: 1) I will respect my life; 2) I will respect all life; and 3) I will inspire hope in others. After their tour, participants enjoyed food and beverages and were entertained by a variety of talented singers and dancers, and the musical groups Jazz Explosion and the Snow-Capped Rocky Mountain Chorus.

The highlight of the half-day affair was the speech by Mr. Gandhi, who spoke at length about how to make nonviolence a reality in the modern world. He stressed how all of us must make nonviolence "part of our nature and really live it." He also emphasized that nonviolence goes beyond not using physical force against another person; true nonviolence must include the key components of love, compassion, understanding and respect. Those that say



Photo by M.J. WARRENDER

On Jan. 16, San Diego members discuss 'How are we going to ensure that something like the Holocaust never happens again?'

nonviolence is not relevant today "are saying that love, understanding, compassion and respect are not relevant," Mr. Gandhi states. Peace in the world "must come from love, not through fear."

Mr. Gandhi also recalled his grandfather's advice on using anger effectively when confronting injustice. His grandfather told him that "anger is like electricity"—when channeled properly, anger can be a force for many good things. If not, channeled properly, it will create nothing but destruction.

Mr. Gandhi praised the youth division for its efforts to promote peace and nonviolence. "The SGI youth," he said, "have a great deal of commitment and have already taken wonderful steps to make people aware of violence and of our need for peace."

—SHELBY FORSYTH



## SGI-USA Denver Youth Join Youth Summit

**D**enver youth division members awoke bright and early on Saturday morning, Jan. 29, to attend the kick-off event of A Season for Nonviolence in Colorado with 500 middle school and high school students and their parents from throughout Colorado and surrounding states. The Peace Quest 2000 youth summit at Lakewood High School included speakers, discussion sessions, performances and a keynote address by Arun Gandhi. Ten junior high and high school division members were official participants in the summit.

Other youth division members were on hand to answer questions at a booth and present information on the SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee's Vic-

tory Over Violence campaign.

The youth summit focused on helping youth discover ways to initiate peaceful dialogue with one another in their daily lives. In the morning sessions, students broke up into small discussion groups to identify different forms of violence and discuss the difference between passive and aggressive violence. From there, students spent the afternoon brainstorming different nonviolence methods and programs to implement within their schools and communities.

Many students were able to hear Mr. Gandhi speak for the first time. His M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence in Memphis, Tenn., initiated the annual Season for Nonviolence in 1998, the year marking the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and the 30th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

Gandhi opened his speech by asking everyone in the audience to pair up with a partner, with one of the partners making a fist. He said that inside the fist was the world's most precious diamond—the other partner should try to get the diamond out of his or her partner's hand. Gandhi then asked: "Did you ask for it or did you forcefully take it? Usually it's the second one." This exercise, he said, shows how violent people usually are.

"Nonviolence is something for the brave," Mr. Gandhi said. "You are the young leaders of tomorrow. You're going to inherit the world tomorrow. I hope that you will spend your time trying to learn about life."

Mr. Gandhi also said that each of us has the responsibility to stop passive and physical violence from occurring in our daily lives. He asked, "Why is it that violent [TV] shows get the highest ratings? We have to



Photo by C. DIMEFF

Arun Gandhi speaks on nonviolence at the Denver Culture Center, Jan. 30.

make that change in ourselves and not want to watch these shows." In dealing with others who are violent, Mr. Gandhi said that people should try to reach out to them instead of blocking them out. "Violent people weren't born evil," he said. "They were nice, good young kids who had something happen to them. We need to be more understanding and compassionate with people who are less fortunate than us."

—LISA MATSUO



## San Diego Victory Over Violence Committee Hosts Seminar on Holocaust Survivor

**N**early 200 participants filled the SGI-USA San Diego Kearny Mesa Community Center Jan. 16 for a moving reenactment of the Nuremberg Trials. The seminar/workshop, titled "From the Ashes," drew 48 guests from the community, some who had survived concentration camps during World War II. To open the day's events, Judge Norbert Ehrenfreund, who covered the 1945 Nuremberg Trials for the Stars and Stripes newspaper, interviewed a San Diegoan, Lou Dunst, who had survived four concentration camps, including Auschwitz, in an interview style similar to that used in the trials. Members and guests listened in disbelief to his account of the torture, slavery and starvation Lou and his friends had undergone.

In 1944, Mr. Dunst, then 18 years old, was living in a small Czechoslovakian town where his family practiced Orthodox Judaism. German soldiers came knocking on their door one day,

instructing them to leave their home and all their belongings and go to the village square—or be shot on the spot. After spending several days with all the other Jewish townspeople in the square, they were marched down to a field by a cemetery where they were told to dig their own graves. Several days later, instead of being murdered, they were forced into crowded boxcars, with no food, water, ventilation or sanitation facilities. Nearly a week passed. Many of the older people and sick people died. Pregnant women gave birth, and when they were finally taken from the boxcars, the babies were kicked away "as footballs."

At Auschwitz, his family was forced to separate. It would be the last time Mr. Dunst would see his mother. Men were forced into slavery, into building missiles, constructing their own crematoriums and carrying dead bodies. Many resorted to cannibalism to keep themselves alive, eating the livers of their dead neighbors. After a year and a half of imprisonment, the American army overpowered the Nazis and liberated the camp. At the time of their emancipation, Mr. Dunst had been left for dead on a pile of corpses.

Judge Ehrenfreund followed up the interview by questioning how and why such an event could ever occur. "How could so many participate in the widespread murder of so many innocent people?" he asked. "The Holocaust is like a black pit that is so deep, and that could never, ever be closed." He recalled that, as he sat and studied the faces of the 21 Nazis on trial, they appeared as common people, and he realized that this "beast of Nazism" could live in any one of us.

—M.J. WARRENDER

MARCH 16: KOSEN-RUFU DAY

# Celebrating the Mission of Youth

## SIGNIFICANT DATES

ON MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM AND THE SGI

By LIZ ANDERSON  
SAN DIEGO BUREAU CHIEF

music festival, its "dress rehearsal for kosen-rufu." Mr. Toda appeared at the event, riding on a litter because he was too ill to walk. Less than three weeks later, on April 2, Mr. Toda died peacefully. In a time and society where youth was mostly powerless, Mr. Toda keenly perceived the organization's youth as the true leaders of the future.

But above all, what President Toda gave the youth was his confidence. Trust has the power to inspire, give courage and create deep human bonds. It is a

vital link between people. It can mean the difference between success and failure.

When Toda gave the 6,000 youth present that day his trust, they responded by surpassing all his expectations. Because his mission was given with a generous spirit by his mentor, a young President Ikeda could embark upon spreading Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism confidently across the globe. Surely, the young Ikeda keenly felt trusted in the depths of his life. The bonds of friendship he shared with Mr. Toda gave him confidence in himself and the vision they shared together for this great philosophy.

Today, youth division members across the country are

working to create their own legacy by holding March 16 meetings of their own.

We should remember the significance of the day by supporting the youth as they work to create their own dynamic. The success of our organization now and into the future rests upon the confidence we extend and also extend to others.

I am a member of the youth division, and as SGI youth of 2000, we have the opportunity to take responsibility for our organization, inspiring and encouraging guests with our lives and experiences. We can discover our own personal missions for humanity and become closer friends.

If determined, we can move

people's hearts with compassion, friendship and wisdom. Reaching people's hearts and minds is the key to our March 16 introductory meetings.

President Ikeda writes, "Rather than thinking 'How can I improve our results?', an organization whose leaders constantly rack their brains thinking, 'How can I let everyone feel joy?' is a winner."

Youth is in itself rebirth.

By making room for young people to share their ideas and demonstrate their competence, we polish the SGI diamond, hopefully revealing a brilliance never seen before. Let's follow the tradition of March 16 and continue to create an organization we are truly proud of! **WT**

**K**osen-rufu Day is the commemoration of March 16, 1958, when the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, entrusted the responsibility of kosen-rufu—world peace through individual transformation—to its young members and a young Daisaku Ikeda.

On that day, the Soka Gakkai youth division held its first

## Young Peace Keepers PeaceGame 2000 Held

By ARIANA BOCK  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

**F**or the third time since the installation of the exhibition, "Linus Pauling and the 20th Century," local SGI-USA members joined with other local organizations to hold an activity celebrating the exhibition's informal theme, "the power of one person to make a difference." The latest activity, called Young Peace Keepers PeaceGame 2000, was held on Jan. 17 in the National Museum of Health and Medicine at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Its purpose was to tackle the topic of violence in schools and commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day at the same time.

The 37 students from area junior and senior high schools who participated in this event came from three organizations: SGI-USA, Rosa Parks's Pathways to Freedom, and Just Me Entertainment. During the day-long activity, as actors in PeaceGame2000, the students confronted issues they face in their own schools and communities and developed skills toward becoming "young peace keepers." In the process of role-playing in a realistic and potentially violent situation, they strengthened old friendships and developed new ones.

Modeled on the simulations of war—or "war games" devised by the military, peace games nevertheless have very different goals. As Game Director, Larry

Seaquist, of The Strategy Group, an independent, international "do" tank, noted, "In a war game there is only one winner, but in a peace game, everybody wins." Mr. Seaquist, along with the Washington, D.C., Region Linus Pauling Exhibition Steering Committee and SGI-DC youth division leaders, organized PeaceGame2000. Mr. Seaquist worked on war games for the U.S. military until his retirement, when he began staging peace games. Today's peace game was the first Mr. Seaquist has directed in which junior and senior high school students participated.

On this day, PeaceGame 2000's scene was Pristina, Kosovo, and the youth were charged with establishing a multi-ethnic high school there after the Kosovar refugees have returned to their homes. The political and social climate everywhere in Kosovo reflects the destruction to people's lives, homes, work and more. There is still deep hatred between Kosovar Albanians and Serbs. Violence is a daily occurrence, and now the Kosovar Albanians control much of the country.

Each youth played the role of a member of one of eight teams: Albanian Boys, Albanian Girls, Serbian Youth, Teachers, Parents, School Administrators and Security, Community Leaders, and U.N. Peace Keepers. Separately, each team discussed the questions: "What do you plan to do about these problems: refugee families live in the school, there are only a

few computers, and the Albanian and Serbian youth speak and write in different languages?"; "Who can attend this school?"; and "In practical terms, what does it mean to have safety, security and civility in a school and a community?" The youth seriously engaged in their roles, and when they came together, shared their responses in passionate and sometimes heated dialogue:

After this first plenary session, Washington, D.C., City Council member Kevin Chavous reflected on the example set by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Citing King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Chavous noted that peace does not mean to live without tension. In fact, King says that sometimes you have to push to bring tension to the surface. This push is direct action but it is nonviolent: it is the starting point for dialogue. Unless you push against injustice, more layers of ignorance will be built on the existing layers. He said young people must learn to think beyond their own existence and self-interest.

The second round of team discussions focused on questions of how to achieve the goals set in the first round: "What practical steps can help keep the school and community calm and safe?"; "What practical steps can help the students go to school together in a non-violent climate?"; and "How can you be prepared for practical steps to reconciliation if there are incidents of hostility?"

With each team's elected "school board member" sitting up front as though at a town meeting, the youth debated and worked toward agreement on how best to run a peaceful, non-violent high school in Pristina. For example, they agreed that the U.N. should not only send in U.N. peacekeeping troops, but should also invite peace activists and educators to stimulate dialogue and understanding among the city's factions. The youth also felt it was important that Albanians and Serbs either learn each other's languages or adopt a third language, such as English, to help overcome cultural and ethnic barriers. There was a real recognition of the difficulties and creativity needed to advance in such a complex situation.

The PeaceGame ended with Mr. Seaquist bringing the youth back to Washington, D.C., to reconsider their outlook on conflict in their own daily lives. Many of the youth are confronted with violence every day. Some said this event taught them the importance of seeking to understand a person through one-to-one dialogue before passing judgment based on a rumor.

The day concluded with a memorial service for Martin Luther King Jr. Steve Wunder, Washington, D.C., Region young men's leader, introduced SGI-USA's Victory Over Violence campaign. He showed the Youth Peace Committee's Victory Over Violence video, which helped the students think

about the connection between passive violence and physical violence, and about the power they have to stop both forms.

Dr. Wilma Harvey, current D.C. School Board member and former school board president, called for adults and young people to join together in partnership for victory over violence.

In closing, Larry Seaquist reminded the young peace keepers that Dr. King taught that each individual can make a difference. If we can cause tension in a nonviolent way, wonderful things can come from it. We can live in this world in which we learn to prevent violence.

Frank Huggins, a high school sophomore, said PeaceGame 2000 put him "in a position to act as an adult, able to make changes." Lindsey Stokes, a junior, said, "Change starts with one person to help the world: to make a change, start with yourself." Senior John Stonebraker said the PeaceGame "reinforced for me that everybody has ideas; nobody dominates; when we work in a collective group together we can make a difference."

Whether these young people happened later that day to catch their PeaceGame2000 featured on the local six o'clock news, they were invigorated by the activity. They looked fully confident about their ability to make a difference to create peace and nonviolence in their schools and communities. **WT**

Please see page 12 for photos.

# YOUNG PEACE KEEPERS PEACEGAME 2000

(Please see article on page 11.)

- Its purpose — to tackle the topic of violence in the schools and commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day at the same time.
- Held on Jan. 17 in the National Museum of Health and Medicine at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Photos by PHIL ROSENBERG



SGI-USA member Alena Tansey (3rd from left), a senior in high school, brought two friends from her school in Rockville, Md. — Ben Moldover (2nd from left) said, 'Peace is an individual thing. You have to want it and you have to work for it.' Amelia Hill (4th from left) said, 'We all undergo the same conflicts.'



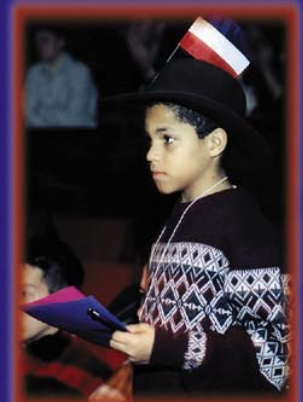
(L-r) Ella McCall-Haygan, the Washington, D.C., regional director of Pathways to Freedom (Rosa Parks' group); Stephanie Tansey, SGI-USA representative on the organizing committee; and Game Director Larry Seaquist.



Bill Aiken, representing the SGI-USA as sponsor of the peace game, welcomes attendees.



Several participants of PeaceGame 2000 take a group photo before the game. They include members of Rosa Parks' Pathways to Freedom, Just Me Entertainment and SGI-USA, and their friends from school and the community.



Participant Phillip Jackson from Pathways to Freedom Group.



Youth engage in serious dialogue.



The youth struggle to find consensus on extremely sensitive questions.

Louise Jackson, 80, guardian of 13-year-old twins Phyllis and Phillip — whom she took into her home when she was 70 (and they were 3) — came to PeaceGame 2000 with them through the Rosa Parks Foundation. They live in northwest Washington, D.C.



Youth from the SGI-USA, Pathways to Freedom, and Just Me Entertainment mingle in a small group discussion and form friendships.

