



EXPERIENCE:
Yumi Schweizer manifests harmony and financial stability in her family.
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Dr. David Krieger Speaks at USC Victory Over Violence Seminar

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

A society that bases its safety on weapons of mass destruction can never call itself non-violent. This was the message of Dr. David Krieger, founder of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, in his lecture Feb. 16 at the University of Southern California. Sponsored by USC's Value Creation Club, made up of student division members studying at the campus, the seminar brought a new perspective to the Victory Over Violence campaign, showing how apathy about nuclear weapons contributes to a most intense form of violence.

"The violence of the threat posed by nuclear weapons," Dr. Krieger explained, "is, in fact, the greatest potential violence. If those weapons are ever used, and humanity is destroyed, then every piece of art, every fine thought, every beautiful poem—every work of humanity that has ever been created up until this point—will be gone."

Dr. Krieger encouraged the gathered students to "react against this form of violence!"

If you don't react against this, then somehow your hearts have been scrunched. Or they haven't been opened up to meet a problem of this magnitude. It's not enough to just say 'I don't like this.' You have to do something that will make a difference. Please include in your Victory Over Violence a victory over humanity's worst threat—the invention of the 20th century that can destroy all humanity and most of life."

Dr. Krieger, who has led the very successful Abolition 2000 petition drive, which has united more than 13 million people worldwide for the eradication of this weaponry, has recently prepared a statement being signed by Nobel peace laureates to be presented at the Non-proliferation Review Conference in April and May.

Twelve laureates, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, have already endorsed Dr. Krieger's call for the elimination through negotiation of all nuclear weapons. Dr. Krieger is also continuing the Abolition 2000 drive; please visit www.wagingpeace.org to participate and find out more. **WT**

SGI President Ikeda's Visit to Hong Kong

Please see story, pages 6-7.



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

SGI President Ikeda meets with internationally acclaimed Chinese painter and calligrapher Madame Fang Zhaoling at the SGI-Hong Kong Grand Culture Center on Feb. 16. This was their fourth meeting.

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Dr. David Krieger talks with students at the University of Southern California, Feb. 16.



USC's Value Creation Club sponsors a Victory Over Violence seminar, Feb. 16.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON FAITH

Some Thoughts on Depression

By **TED MORINO**
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Q: How do Buddhists deal with depression?

A: This is my personal view of depression that I have developed as a Buddhist who is very interested in the inner world of human beings.

I understand that, medically speaking, clinical depression is defined as an illness, as opposed to a condition in which an individual feels "under the weather" or "has the blues." Although Nichiren Daishonin does not address this particular type of sickness in his writings, I believe it would fall under his category of "illness of the mind."

It seems that how an illness of the mind manifests varies from person to person. The Daishonin states: "Illnesses of the mind differ greatly in severity. [There are] eighty-four thousand kinds of illnesses of the mind that arise from the three poisons and that afflict ordinary people of the six paths..." (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1111). It would seem that there are as many illnesses of the mind as the number of people who suffer from them.

As pointed out in the above passage, depression is the outcome of a life afflicted by a kind of poison. And the origin of this poison differs from individual to individual. In some cases, the cause of one's depression may have been made in this lifetime; in other cases, it may date back to past lifetimes.

When it comes to an illness of the mind, dialogue is a very important tool to overcome it. For instance, dialogue with a senior in faith who has a solid grasp of the Daishonin's Buddhism or with a professional skilled in this medical field seems crucial for the depressed individual to locate an exit from the mental and emotional disorders contributing to their depression. From the Buddhist perspective, these people function according to Buddhist principles as good friends or Buddhist deities to those suffering from depression.

Life-to-life dialogue, which I admit is not easy, can help us examine ourselves more thoroughly. It can enable us to recognize weaknesses and distortions within and see what needs to be changed. Through life-affirming



dialogue, we can also stimulate a new sense of purpose and passion toward living.

Buddhism teaches that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo should be done with a positive orientation. When we have strong desires in our hearts, clear goals in our minds and solid determination in our lives, our innate Buddhahood will definitely be activated enough to supersede the negative forces that cause depression.

It is within this context that we should understand that the Lotus Sutra is the best medicine. The force of our Buddha nature must prevail for us to become happy.

It is safe to say that, when we start living with hope for the future, we will have already begun overcoming our depression. In addition, if we pray for the happiness of others and take action on their behalf, we have already regained our mental health on a fundamental level.

It is not proper, then, to say "just chant" to those who suffer from depression. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with a weak life force, with no knowledge of how our lives need to be changed or developed may not bring about a true solution. Chanting is more

meaningful when we have a clear goal and solid determination; praying in this manner enables us to tap the wisdom to know what to do and the life force to put forth the effort needed to accomplish our dreams.

It is important to recognize that courage is the key to our happiness. This is often what is missing in the lives of those who fall prey to depression. As the Daishonin's "Reply to Kyo'o" reads: "Believe in this mandala with all your heart. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?" (WND, 412). With faith in the Gohonzon as our center, all our problems that have generated depression in our lives can be wiped out.

The message of Buddhism is: "Let's use our minds and bodies to tap the brightness and joy within, to the point where our entire existence becomes full of vitality, and we feel entirely secure." SGI President Ikeda suggests in *Discussions on Youth* that we should "do something! Start something! As you make consistent efforts, you will begin to see your goals come into focus. You will discover your mission, the one only you can fulfill" (vol. 1, p. 49).

By chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and taking action, Buddhism says that we can em-

power ourselves from the inside. Encouraging others also enhances our lives. This is the most powerful way to battle the causes of depression. By focusing on others' lives and helping them become happy, we will realize that we have already taken the important steps to rid ourselves of depression. The Daishonin explains that "if you light a lamp for another, your own way will be lit" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1598).

In many cases, Buddhist wisdom will lead a person suffering from depression to seek help in the form of psychotherapy and/or one of the many new and effective antidepressants on the market. These medications are meant to correct chemical imbalances, enabling the person to function more efficiently and tap their full potential.

In the final analysis, Buddhism instructs us to establish the kind of identity that is unshakable under any circumstances, that is free from suffering on the deepest level. In other words, Buddhism exists to help us become strong enough to rise above whatever created our depression. It also makes us wise enough to realize that life in and of itself is beautiful and worthwhile.

Through the process of human revolution, we can even view depression in a positive

light. We can eventually see how the life force that helped us overcome our depression led us to greater happiness; how facing depression was the beginning of a journey to a new life. Defeating depression is a great experience that opens our lives and one we can share with others, encouraging them to open their lives, too.

Great dialogue and correct Buddhist practice allows us to find the solution within. **WT**

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EXPERIENCE — YUMI SCHWEIZER, KENTFIELD, CALIF.

THE STRENGTH OF A WIFE

Yumi Schweizer manifests harmony and financial stability in her family. 'In praying for my husband's happiness,' Yumi says, 'I realized that everything in life is connected.'

I did not have much hope or dreams for marriage because I grew up watching my parents constantly fight; they divorced when I was 10. I didn't want to be like my mother. "Like father like son," or in my case "like mother like daughter," it seemed inevitable that I would follow in my mother's footsteps. Because we shared the same destiny, I thought it would be better to stay single than to suffer being married. Yet deep down, I had a slight hope that if I met someone completely different from my father, just maybe...

I was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in London in 1984 by Kyoko Ohshima, who is now my best friend. Kyoko and I traveled to Switzerland together. While we talked about life in general at the foot of Mount Matterhorn, she also taught me about cause and effect—that it's possible to change one's karma. Every single comment Kyoko made was sound and profound; she changed my outlook on life. Most of all, because she was and still is a wonderful, caring person, full of compassion and very strong in faith, I trusted her completely and decided to start practicing.

I met the man I would marry, James, in Japan soon after I received my Gohonzon. I fell in love with him and somehow knew he was the right man for me. I sincerely chanted for the success of our relationship. One year later he moved back to the States, and I followed him to go to college to further develop my life.

My four years at Bates College in Maine was a real challenge. The courses were much more difficult than I expected. Cultural differences, the language barrier, the cold stormy climate and the different diet made me homesick. Just like the Japanese pioneer SGI-USA members, I wanted to go back to Japan. But through this practice I learned nothing is impos-

sible. SGI President Ikeda often says "Buddhism is win or lose," and I didn't want to be defeated by my own weakness. And it was clear that if I gave up everything and went back to Japan, I wouldn't have a future with James. Determined to win, I chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for hours and immersed myself in activities.

My grades improved dramatically, but my financial situation deteriorated. My father could not afford my college tuition during my second year. Again, I overcame this difficulty through my Buddhist practice. I received a scholarship, the total amount of \$26,000 for my junior and senior years and graduated in 1990. I appreciate James for his ceaseless support and understanding toward me and my Buddhist practice; he was always there for me.

James and I got married that same year. Life seemed good for a while, but as many remember, a big recession hit this country and my husband's work was affected. We decided to move back to Japan where the economy was still booming. I was eight months pregnant with our oldest son, and we had only \$70 when we left the U.S.

During the last eight years in Japan our family grew; we had two sons and a daughter. With my parents' support, we built a house three years ago. Our sons got into the best school in the city. My husband was teaching at a couple of universities at the time, but he was not happy at all. He was always loyal to the schools and worked very hard. In return, they treated him with no respect, and he didn't foresee teaching as his lifelong occupation.

Many people fall into one of two categories: you enjoy what you do, but the pay is not enough, or you don't like your job, but you do it anyway to make ends meet. Since my husband was the main source of our household income, without a successful career, we had no financial stability. I wanted him to have a good paying job, but not just any job, one that he truly enjoys.

It occurred to me that I always prayed for my children and myself, but what about my husband? Nichiren Daishonin writes, "It is the power of the bow that determines the flight of the arrow, the might of the dragon that controls the movement of the clouds, and the



James and Yumi Schweizer, with Nicholas (l-r), 8; Amanda, nearly 3; and William, 5.

strength of the wife that guides the action of her husband" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 656). This phrase was read at our wedding, now I finally understood it from the bottom of my heart.

I started chanting for my husband's happiness, for him to have a challenging, fulfilling and rewarding job. Things happened very quickly. Within a couple of months, he resigned from the universities and then moved back to the United States at the end of February last year. I had no doubt that he would find the best job, wherever that might be.

In the meantime, my children and I remained in Japan. I continued to chant and involve my-

self in many SGI activities. Two weeks later, he called and told me that he was interviewing with an Internet company that he really liked, and asked me to chant for him. I chanted a lot over the next four days, and he got the position with an annual salary \$10,000 over his original proposal.

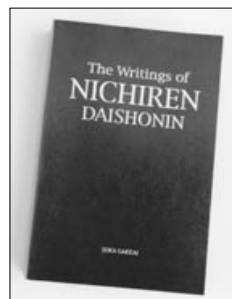
My husband's job requires both his Internet skills and his past teaching experiences. Yes, in Buddhism, nothing is wasted. The job he always dreamed of finally materialized, and recently he got a promotion. The work is challenging and demanding, but it's rewarding, and James is very happy. And I am grateful for my

Buddhist practice.

Because of this change in our financial situation, I no longer have to work. I can stay home and raise our three children and devote myself to SGI activities. What more could I ask for?

In praying for my husband's happiness, I realized that everything in life is connected and my compassion for people has evolved. I feel that it's my opportunity to help other people in return for all the support I received from my family and SGI friends. Now I can sincerely pray for the happiness of others, and I truly feel that "there is no greater happiness than...chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (WND, 681). **W**

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EXPERIENCE — SHOICHI SHIMAZAKI, SAITAMA, JAPAN

Waking Up to the Reality of Nichiren Shoshu

Mr. Shoichi Shimazaki is the former head of the lay organization of Myojo-ji temple in Saitama, Japan. He shared his experience in the Dec. 1, 1999, 'Soka Shimpo,' the publication of the Soka Gakkai youth division in Japan.

I was the head of the lay organization of Nichiren Shoshu's Myojo-ji temple in Saitama. I quit the position for personal reasons in September 1996. Since then, I have been away from the temple, and the other day, Oct. 9, I officially left the temple.

I believe that you will see how corrupt the current Nichiren Shoshu priesthood and Myojo-ji's chief priest, Zuido Matsumoto, are through my account.

In July 1995, I was appointed head of Myojo-ji's lay believers. When I went to the temple to express my respect to the chief priest, his wife, in an arrogant tone, told me: "I am the queen of Myojo-ji temple. I am the lord of this temple. Whatever you want, you have to go through me."

At first, I could not comprehend what she had said. I was simply astounded at her high-handedness. From then on, I

saw how she meddled in everything that lay believers spontaneously wanted to do at the lay leaders meetings. I then understood what she really meant. Since everyone always had to worry about what she thought about each issue, we resolved that we could not carry out our activities in a healthy manner. We requested the chief priest to ask her not to attend the lay leaders meetings any more.

Then, she stopped attending our meetings, which was good. But the chief priest became unable to make final decisions at the meetings. He would bring up each issue with his wife in their lodging quarters. Swayed by his wife, he often reversed decisions we had agreed upon at our meetings. It was obvious that his wife was controlling him behind the scenes.

He seemed to be at her mercy. At one point, I asked him about this, since the way he spoke at the temple had become timid and unnatural. His response was: "Because you are the head of the lay believers, I will tell you the truth. Hidden microphones are placed here and there in this temple, so that my wife can hear everything that we discuss." He even showed me where the microphones were, including in the four corners of the Gohonzon room, the conference room and the reception area.

I later found out that his wife, while in the lodging quarters, was always listening to every conversation through this system. She was checking everything said by the chief priest, the lay leaders and other

believers. I felt: "This place is sick. This is not where we can learn about faith."

Yet I continued to make offerings to the temple as I was urged to do, including \$5,600 of carpeting, \$350 slippers and \$600 sandals. I eventually became concerned that Mr. Matsumoto and some lay leaders were misusing the temple's money. Mr. Matsumoto once harshly criticized me, "Why don't you quit your job so you can support the temple more?" Even though I tried to believe in the greatness of this faith, things like these made me doubt the integrity of Nichiren Shoshu and its priests.

My distrust of Mr. Matsumoto deepened in the summer of 1996.

One day when I arrived at the temple, the chief priest's mother told me not to go into the Gohonzon room. She seemed disturbed. I had a funny feeling about what she had told me, so I dared to enter the room.

The room was usually open to everyone. But this time, it was shut tight. I felt a little uneasy and quietly peered inside. I could not believe my eyes! It was eerie — Mr. Matsumoto, together with a craftsman, was doing something to the wooden Gohonzon, which they had taken down from the altar and placed on the floor.

Actually, Mr. Matsumoto and this worker were attempting to remove from the Gohonzon the name of SGI President Ikeda, the person to whom this Gohonzon was designated. (President Ikeda had initiated the construction of the temple.) When I saw

this appalling scene, I knew that, sooner or later, Nichiren Shoshu would collapse.

Removing President Ikeda's name was an act of insanity. This happened at other temples, too; it was evidence of the priesthood's deep-seated jealousy toward the SGI president. This outrageous conduct clearly showed that something was very wrong with the mentality of the priesthood.

If I were to sum up the nature of the Nichiren Shoshu priests, I would say in one sentence, "They love to be around money." Wherever they smell money, that's where they go. And they suck it all up. When lay believers are of no more

use to them, they will abandon them. When I visited a temple member at his home, the chief priest's response was: "You don't need to do such a meaningless thing!" I wonder what made me follow such an incorrect teaching. I am ashamed that I could not see through the fundamental nature of the priesthood much earlier.

When I quit the position of head of the lay believers in September 1996, I wrote a letter to High Priest Nikken Abe denouncing Myojo-ji's corruption. I am proud of what I did. I am now resolved to wake up all my fellow temple members who are still being deceived by the priesthood. **W**

SGI-USA Members Chant 100 Million Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

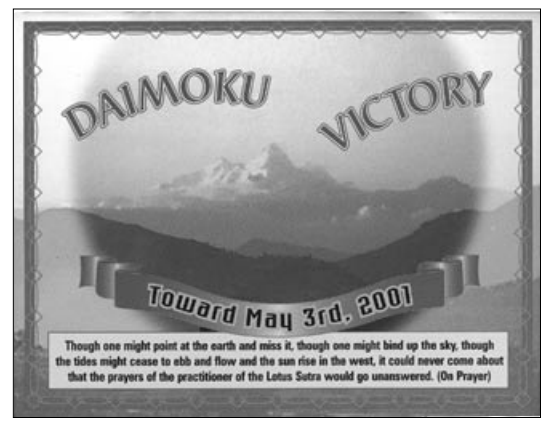
The SGI-USA Soka Spirit Committee thanks everyone for sending in their postcards from the "Daimoku Victory" booklets that were passed out at New Year's meetings. The total Nam-myoho-renge-kyo chanted so far has already surpassed 100 million!

More "Daimoku Victory" booklets are being printed and will be handed out at the youth division's introductory meetings commemorating March 16. You can receive more

booklets through your local organization in the near future.

Many areas have organized their own chanting sessions, and many are focusing on praying for a Soka Gakkai victory in the Tokyo District Court's final verdict in the Seattle Incident trial. The verdict will be announced on March 21 in Tokyo, between 1:00-3:00 p.m. (March 20 in the United States, between 8:00-10:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time).

—SGI-USA SOKA SPIRIT COMMITTEE



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My Memory of Hiroe Clow

PERSPECTIVE

By NORIKO ADCOCK
SAN DIEGO

I have encountered many people in my lifetime. One woman who made a strong impression upon my life was Mrs. Hiroe Clow.

In 1964, my whole family moved from San Diego to Seattle due to my husband's job transfer. There I met Mrs. Clow, who was the chapter leader. It took two hours from where I lived to drive to her home, which served as a center for our SGI activities for propagation. At times, after introducing people to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, we would drive back to her place late in the evening, cheerfully singing Gakkai songs in the car such as "Takeda Soldier". We all felt so refreshed

Photo by EMI GWIN



after sharing this practice with others. My memory of those days are still vivid, as if they happened just yesterday.

At that time, I was only a year-and-a-half member. Hiroe

Clow really took good care of me in faith. Her honesty and straightforwardness captured my heart. I really liked her. Her remarks were succinct yet profound, and at times she was strict, yet warm. The depth of her passion was awesome. Indeed she was an amazing leader.

Then, due to changes in my circumstances, I returned to San Diego with my three children. Thus I no longer had opportunities to spend time with Mrs. Clow. I wish I could have practiced even longer with her. Had I been able to practice longer with her, I could have probably grown much more in faith.

In 1974, our organization's convention was held in San Diego, and I happened to hear that Mrs. Clow was in town for this event. Delighted, I looked for her all over the convention site. When we were able to see each other again, we hugged

each other and cried together.

As years passed by, I had began practicing with Nichiren Shoshu and was astounded to hear that Hiroe Clow sued High Priest Nikken Abe about the Seattle Incident. I was convinced that Mrs. Clow was telling the truth, but since I belonged to the temple, I was not in a position to express my trust in her. And even if I had defended her, I doubt anyone in the temple would have believed me.

At that time, I really wanted to hear directly from her about this matter. I knew she would tell me the truth.

Incidentally, I had received a letter from her in which she says, "Please come and see me in Los Angeles since I have moved from Seattle to Los Angeles." Tragically, however, I lost her letter and could not contact her. In those days, since the SGI leaders knew that I was a mem-

ber of the temple, I doubted they would give me her address. While I gave up visiting her, I heard the sad news that she passed away. I deeply regret that I did not see her before she died.

I chanted all day for her before I wrote this. While I was chanting I sensed that Hiroe Clow was by me, smiling, and I could not stop crying. It was a wondrous experience. I now firmly believe she is the one who feels happiest about my return to the SGI. At the same time, I vowed to follow in her footsteps in faith, trying to build up my faith even to the point where my faith is an inch closer to hers.

Hiroe Clow, I will pray for your peace and lasting happiness. You were a great senior in faith and a friend for whom I deeply cared. Toward the verdict of the Seattle Incident trial on March 21, I will chant for justice to be proven. **WT**

West Hollywood Gathering Celebrates the Power of Women

By JOANNA DELSON
WEST HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

So many friendships were formed through the endeavors that made West Hollywood Chapter's annual women's meeting the joyous occasion that it was — from communicating to making bookmarks, taking photos to bringing food and buying a cake for Alice.

In fact, it was Alice's 75th birthday, and Alice Ross' dance was the highlight of the Feb. 26 gathering to celebrate the 10th anniversary of SGI-USA Women's Day (Feb. 27) at the Los Angeles Friendship Center. The theme: to celebrate the power of one woman to make a difference. Alice, who had wanted to dance in the movies since she was a child, fulfilled her dream at the age of 68 by dancing in the film, *The Mambo Kings*. Her performance at the Meeting brought members of the audience to their feet with clapping, singing and tears in some people's eyes. After the meeting, the chapter presented Alice with a birthday cake.

"I want to have the kind of strength that Alice showed in her dance — womanly strength, unadorned strength with no sense of affectation or self-consciousness," said SGI-USA Women's

Leader Matilda Buck, to the beaming crowd. Mrs. Buck told stories of the women she has met in her travels with her new leadership responsibility and how, through their faith in the Gohonzon, they transformed their lives. She quoted SGI President Ikeda, who said in his message to the commemorative gathering being held nationwide throughout February and into March, "Nichiren Daishonin states in 'The One Essential Phrase' that one lantern can light up a place that has been dark for a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand years." Prayer, explained Mrs. Buck, illuminates our lives.

Approximately 120 women including 27 guests enjoyed Michel Colón's talk about Sacajawea, the Native American woman who faced many obstacles, but was able to change Lewis' and Clark's opinion of her and receive honors from them that no white woman ever had received. Barbara Bragg gave a spirited presentation about Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a woman suffrage pioneer who worked her entire life to help women attain rights. These powerful women made everyday efforts, both small and large, that transformed their lives and history.

West Hollywood Chapter's own women showed their power to make a difference and the power of their faith in the Gohonzon by sharing experiences: Sylvia Danziger changed her relationship with her son, and Carolynne Mote learned to understand her own worth.

After the meeting, everyone enjoyed refreshments and received bookmarks inscribed with quotations from President Ikeda's "clear mirror" guidance. **WT**

Photos by EDWARD CLARK, DENISE RAILLA and STEPHANIE SYDNEY



Alice Ross doing the mambo.



Anulka Kitamura (right) with her sister Rosemary Nightingale visiting from Fiji.



Alice celebrates her 75th birthday.

SGI President Ikeda Visits Hong Kong

Photos courtesy SEIKYO PRESS

SGI President Ikeda last month visited Hong Kong, where he met with old friends, attended two SGI Hong Kong-Macau executive conferences and received an honorary professorship from China's Guangdong University of Foreign Studies.

President Ikeda's first activity in Hong Kong was a Feb. 14 visit to the Chinese University of Hong Kong. At a luncheon in the SGI president's honor, he and Vice-Chancellor Arthur K. C. Li agreed that a global educators conference needs to be held to address the many problems now facing humankind. Mr. Ikeda explained that both the Soka Gakkai's first and second presidents were educators, and that education will eternally remain a central focus of the SGI.

On Feb. 16, President Ikeda and his wife, Kaneko, met with internationally acclaimed Chinese painter and calligrapher Madame Fang Zhaoling. The SGI president shared his ideas on peace and culture with Madame Fang, saying that "unless the world is brought together by culture and art, war will never end, and tragedy will never disappear. We cannot overcome the cruelty in people's hearts through political and economic ties alone. This can only be achieved through culture and art. This is the conclusion I have come to in life. This is also what Buddhism teaches.... We must create a society where artists are recognized and valued as making

great, profound contributions to the nation, the world, peace and humanity. A society that cherishes artists—I advocate this!"

President Ikeda spoke Feb. 17 at an SGI Hong Kong-Macau executive conference that commemorated the 25th anniversary of the SGI's founding. "Life is meant to be enjoyed," he stated. "The purpose of life is to become happy and to contribute to the happiness of others. To actually do this, despite the hardships one may meet along the way, is the supreme way of life for a human being. This is exactly what all of you are doing. As individuals striving to advance kosen-rufu, you are living the noblest lives. As one who is your senior in faith, I am chanting with all of my being for your happiness and longevity."

On Feb. 19, representatives of GUFS traveled to Hong Kong to confer on President Ikeda an honorary professorship in recognition of his work in the field of education. In his acceptance speech, President Ikeda shared the following anecdote: There was once a king who decided to honor the person who had done the most for his country. There were so many outstanding candidates—business people, doctors, scholars—that the king couldn't pick one. The final candidate introduced was an elderly woman with white hair. "Who is she?" the king asked. It turned out that she had been the teacher of all the other candidates. This nameless educator wound up receiving the



SGI President Ikeda receives an honorary professorship from China's Guangdong University of Foreign Studies at the SGI-Hong Kong Grand Culture Center on Feb. 19.

king's highest honor.

In a subsequent discussion between the SGI leader and GDUFS President Huang Jianhua, the Buddhist view of education came up. President Ikeda said that learning and education are vital to conveying Buddhism in an accessible manner. Buddhism is, after all, a universal teaching, he said—for all people, regardless of age, gender or race; it is not a teaching designed to enslave people with rigid doctrines. Down through the ages, he went on, this spirit has unfortunately



SGI President Ikeda meets with internationally acclaimed Chinese painter and calligrapher Madame Fang Zhaoling at the SGI-Hong Kong Grand Culture Center on Feb. 16. SGI President Ikeda, founder of the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, conferred the museum's Award of Highest Honor on Madame Fang Zhaoling.



A commemorative photo is taken with representatives of Chinese University of Hong Kong on the university's campus on Feb. 14. CUHK Vice-Chancellor Arthur K.C. Li (next to SGI President Ikeda) and his wife, Diana (next to President Ikeda's wife, Kaneko).



A meeting is held with China's Guangdong University of Foreign Studies President Huang Jianhua at the SGI-Hong Kong Grand Culture Center on Feb. 19.



The SGI Hong Kong-Macau Executive Conference is held in Hong Kong, on the evening of Feb. 17.

been lost, and Buddhism has become the province of priests. President Ikeda explained that the mission of the SGI is to bring Buddhism back to the people, with whom it belongs.

At another SGI Hong Kong-Macau executive conference, on Feb. 20, the SGI leader shared his belief that the SGI is the only organization working to realize Nichiren Daishonin's ardent wish for the worldwide propagation of the Mystic Law. People do not exist for religion; religion exists for the people — this is the true spirit of Buddhism, President Ikeda stressed. He asked the gathered members to spread the spirit of love for humanity throughout society. **WT**



Downtown Hong Kong.



SGI President Ikeda, founder of Hong Kong Soka Kindergarten, meets with Huang Suyu, principal of Hong Kong Soka Kindergarten, Feb. 17.



SGI President Ikeda and his wife, Kaneko, meets with Chinese University of Hong Kong Vice-Chancellor Arthur K.C. Li, his wife, Diana, and a number of CUHK faculty in the honored guests room of the university on Feb. 14.

Photos courtesy SEIKYO PRESS



SGI President Ikeda encourages SGI Hong Kong-Macau members on the evening of Feb. 17 in Hong Kong.



China's Guangdong University of Foreign Studies President Huang Jianhua presents an honorary professorship to SGI President Ikeda at the SGI-Hong Kong Grand Culture Center on Feb. 19.

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

TOWARD THE FINAL VICTORY IN LIFE

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

SGI President Ikeda remembers how his mentor, Josei Toda, taught him that 'in life, the final victory is the true victory.'

I have many fond memories of my talks with my mentor, Josei Toda. I remember one day at the time when Mr. Toda's business was in great difficulty. We were eating lunch near the old Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Nishi-Kanda, Tokyo, at a small diner that accepted meal coupons.

During and after the war, when rice was rationed, you had to obtain coupons from the government to eat out. At the time, you couldn't eat rice at a restaurant unless it accepted these coupons.

Mr. Toda said to me then: "In life, the final victory is the true victory. Daisaku, the victories of your youth are not the decisive ones. They are nothing but training for the final, ultimate victory in life."

My mentor's words remain firm in the depths of my heart.

Mr. Toda consistently stressed the importance of winning, of fighting, of succeeding in reaching our goals.

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Nishi-Kanda was a student district. I remember fondly how Mr. Toda and I, mentor and disciple, often ate in those lively surroundings, amid the boisterous clamor of all those university students.

Mr. Toda smiled at the students in the room and asked me: "I wonder what sort of adults these students, these young people, will turn into in 20 years? It's something I look forward to with anticipation and, at the same time, concern."

One day, as we were just finishing our lunch, a student who was a fellow Soka Gakkai member called out loudly, "Toda Sensei!" Mr. Toda returned a happy "Hello there!" The student's eyes sparkled with life. He seemed a bright young man with an inquisitive mind.

Mr. Toda turned to me and said, in a strict tone, "Daisaku, keep your eye on that young man's future!" I immediately asked the youth his name, and he answered cheerfully. That took place 50 years ago.

"You have to be on the lookout for talent, and then develop it," said Mr. Toda. That was his constant lesson for me.

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After that, whenever we went to that diner in Nishi-Kanda, Mr. Toda would always comment on whether or not the student was there that day, saying: "He's not here today. I wonder what he's doing?"

How profound was Mr. Toda's concern for the members! How profound was his concern for his disciples!

Though he had only met this young man for a moment, Mr. Toda said to me that he wanted to celebrate his wedding when that day came by presenting him with a proud mission for kosen-rufu. "Daisaku, please raise him to be a capable person!" Mr. Toda told me.

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Later, this student graduated from his university with excellent grades. He left a legacy of sound achievements in the youth division of those early years. He shone with the brilliance of the morning star. The Soka Gakkai was still small, and we only had a few members.

Unfortunately, this young man was fated to leave this world just a few years later. When I told Mr. Toda of his death, he said, "Ah, another sad memory..."

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No matter what days of hardship and sadness we may face, the path of the Mystic Law is always the path of the wise. Nichiren Daishonin states, "The essence of the Lotus Sutra is that earthly desires are in themselves enlightenment, and that the sufferings of birth and death are in themselves nirvana" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 773). He clearly shows us the bright, hope-filled path of the mastery of life.

We must not spend our lives in doubt or sadness. Just because we suffer a setback or a defeat, we mustn't lose heart or give up.

The Mystic Law is the eternal treasure teaching that leads to absolute victory in life. It is the indestructible, imperishable law of life that extends through the three existences of past, present and future. It is the joy-filled, jeweled path of life's journey to the realm of supreme happiness.

The crimson glow of dusk fell over Nishi-Kanda. As the sun began to set in the western sky, the streets thronged with the bustle and rush of people making their way home at day's end.

"There are people who live their days filled with hope. There are people who are sad, hurt by disappointment and the loss of glory. But young people should exert themselves energetically and joyfully in their endeavors today and tomorrow, their hearts blazing with courage and passion." My mentor's words reverberated like poetry in my ears.

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In my diary that day, I wrote:

*Live a shining, vigorous life!
Make good friends among the
brave Bodhisattvas of the
Earth!*

*In the end, triumph over all
and lift the cup of victory
with your comrades!*

*Do not chase dark shadows!
Do not make friends with
those who espouse shallow
thoughts
and philosophies!*

*Find true comrades with
whom you can rejoice in
the realm
of the heart!*

*Make friends who will re-
spond to your call and
your heart!*

*Make friends whom you can
praise with all your heart!*

*Abandon painful pledges!
Abandon sorrowful pledges!
Live your youth with passion
and joy!*

*Greet the new century with
majestic dignity!*

*Live! You must live!
Live, live, and live on, until
you have expended your
last*

*ounce of strength.
Never forget that there you
will find your victorious
self;*

wreathed with fragrant flowers.



The Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Nishi-Kanda, Tokyo, Japan, 1946.

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This essay was published in the "Thoughts on *The New Human Revolution*" series in the Jan. 15 *Seikyo Shim-bun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'EARLY SPRING'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 3, PARTS 45-46

Members in Taiwan pray that Shin'ichi Yamamoto will stop by on his way back to Japan from Hong Kong.

Twenty or 30 members had gathered at Hong Kong's Kai Tak Airport to see President Shin'ichi Yamamoto off. Among them was Chow Chi Kong's son, the boy who had been assisting the event staff at the Hong Kong Chapter meeting.

"One day I'm going to found a university," Shin'ichi told the boy, "so when you get bigger, please come to Japan. For now, study hard!"

The boy looked at Shin'ichi with a puzzled expression. He couldn't understand a word of Japanese. His father, standing behind him, hurriedly translated what Shin'ichi had said. Once he understood, the boy smiled brightly and nodded in the affirmative.

Shin'ichi encouraged the Hong Kong members until the last moment. Finally, sent off by their smiling faces, he boarded the plane.

At about the same time, in Taipei, Taiwan, the Taipei Chapter leader and several district leaders were holding a meeting. Taipei Chapter had been established in August 1962, the previous year, with Zhu Qianxun appointed as its leader. Zhu was born in 1923 in

Jiangsu Province on mainland China, and had gone to Taiwan when he was 23. During the war, he studied at Waseda University in Tokyo, and he was fluent in Japanese.

In 1960, his company sent him to Japan to observe Japanese business practices. During that visit, he heard about the Soka Gakkai from a Japanese friend. Zhu was astonished at Japan's rapid recovery after the war, and he figured it must be attributed to a philosophy or religion that had brought out the power of the people. As he heard more about the Soka Gakkai and Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, he came to believe that this religion, rooted in the lives of the people, must have been a great source of strength in rebuilding Japanese society. He decided to join.

After returning to Taiwan, he avidly read copies of the *Seikyo Shimbum*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, sent to him from Japan, using what he learned from the newspaper to support his Buddhist practice. He also contacted the Soka Gakkai Headquarters and began to visit other members to encourage them in faith.

In May 1961, when Kazu-



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

masa Morikawa and other Soka Gakkai leaders visited Taiwan, five districts were formed, including Taipei and Kaohsiung districts, and Zhu was appointed a district leader. When Taipei Chapter was established in August 1962, he was appointed chapter leader.

But from about that time, Taiwan's Police General Headquarters began to keep a close watch on the Soka Gakkai's activities in the territory. Zhu was tailed by police and called in for questioning. There was also considerable tension between those born in Taiwan and the Chinese who had arrived from the mainland. Against this backdrop, the Republic of China's government, which was planning a counterattack on mainland China, instituted martial law and severely restricted the freedom of speech and assembly.

Just after New Year's 1963, Zhu read a copy of the Jan. 1 *Seikyo Shimbum*. An article announced the itinerary for President Yamamoto's overseas trip, which was to begin Jan. 8. A visit to Taiwan was not included on that itinerary.

But Zhu had heard from Southeast Asia General Chapter Leader Kazumasa Morikawa that President Ya-

mamoto was concerned about the Soka Gakkai members in Taiwan, and Zhu felt certain that President Yamamoto would come to see them. He said to the Taiwan members: "President Yamamoto will begin an overseas guidance tour on Jan. 8, and on Jan. 27 he will fly back to Japan from Hong Kong. Let's pray wholeheartedly that on the way home, he will stop and visit us in Taiwan. Let's gather at Sungshan Airport that afternoon. Even if President Yamamoto can't stop here, he will be flying over Taiwan. We can look up at the sky and think of him, and pledge to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism."

From that moment on, Zhu chanted daimoku earnestly that President Yamamoto would somehow visit Taiwan.

Around noon on Jan. 27, after a district leaders meeting, Zhu asked everyone to wait while he rushed home on his bicycle to get some salted fish, which he wanted to share. A short distance from his home, a taxi pulled up beside him, and a man called from the car: "Mr. Zhu! President Yamamoto is at the airport! And he's asking for you!"

The man in the taxi was a men's division member from Kaohsiung. He and other Kaoh-

siung members had come to Taipei by overnight train, and they had been waiting at the airport since early morning. Zhu asked him to tell the members at the meeting place to come to the airport immediately, and he hurried there himself by taxi.

When he arrived at the airport, several members from Kaohsiung were standing in front of a wire fence. Beyond the fence, he could see President Yamamoto. "President Yamamoto!" shouted Zhu as loud as he could, and he ran full speed to the fence, waving his arms. By the time he reached Shin'ichi, he was out of breath and could only gasp, "Sensei...."

"You must be the chapter leader, Mr. Zhu," Shin'ichi said. "Thank you for all your efforts!" Shin'ichi extended his hand, but the wire fence separated them. Shin'ichi stretched his fingers through one of the openings; only two would fit. But Zhu grasped those two fingers in his own and shook them as best he could. Tears filled his eyes.

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



Soka Spirit Is the Struggle To Define Who We Are

PERSPECTIVE

By LAURA MCFARLAND
LOS ANGELES

SGI-USA's "Soka Spirit" movement is not just a new name for the Temple Issue. It is an outgrowth of our deepening understanding of the issue. While the former term belies, perhaps, a preoccupation with the wrongs of the Nichiren Shoshu temple, Soka Spirit, I believe, accurately gives expression to an emerging desire to understand and give voice to what it means to correctly practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This has always been the spirit of the Soka Gakkai presidents, thus the term *Soka Spirit*.

I was going through a period of suffering last year, really determined to break through, using my practice to propel me through the rough times and searching inside myself for the answers. Not coincidentally I found myself surrounded by friends and others experiencing similar pain in their lives. This was my great fortune.

Taking action for the sake of others at a time when I really felt at the bottom myself not only lifted me out of my own depression but instilled in me a deep desire to do whatever it takes to help heal the ills of humanity. The bodhisattva spirit truly emerged to a degree I'd never experienced before. I made a determination that I will not only show great proof through my faith, but also profoundly deepen my understanding of this Buddhism, of how and why it works, so that I can inspire hope in others through my own absolute conviction. I had experienced 13 years of Buddhist practice with ever-increasing faith, now I was aiming for absolute conviction.

Once I made this determination and started focusing my prayer in this way, it wasn't long before I was asked to facilitate a region Soka Spirit meeting.

"Why me?" I asked. I am not on this committee nor have I ever been especially interested in or involved with the temple situation. Being agreeable by nature and somewhat curious as well, I replied that I would do it.

That evening I realized how much I didn't know and how important this Soka Spirit issue is. I could also see that it was SGI President Ikeda's prime point,



Photo by YVETTE EDMOND

and for that reason alone I felt I must take action to deepen my understanding.

Even though the gathering of members was still called the Temple Issue Committee, I could see that the issue was essentially concerned with my questions: What do we, as an organization, as a religious philosophy and practice, truly have to offer the world? Why are we different than other similar organizations? What, exactly, makes the SGI correct, and Nichiren Shoshu incorrect with regard to the Daishonin's Buddhism? Why should temple members disassociate from the temple?

We really need to know the answers to these questions. Not just parroting responses we've picked up in meetings or in publications. We really need to understand these points for ourselves, and on the basis of that understanding, convey our absolute conviction to others.

This issue is of prime importance. The Soka Spirit movement, and our actions to refute High Priest Nikken Abe's false portrayal of the Daishonin's Buddhism, are our great opportunity to deepen our understanding of our faith and to define who we, and the SGI, are.

The process also enables us, individually and as an organization, to accomplish our human revolution. Such self-scrutiny based on faith definitely reveals both the good and the bad, and gives us the opportunity to further cultivate that which we like about our organization, while creatively challenging and seeking solutions to that which we do not like.

President Ikeda's expressed desire when establishing the first chapters in the Americas that we become a unique organization, dedicated to the happiness of the American people, fulfilling our mission in our own way. It is up to us to wrack

our brains and selflessly struggle to create an SGI-USA that can be a great home for the American people. In short, the situation with High Priest Nikken and the priesthood is our incredible benefit because it is causing us to really self-reflect, struggle and grow.

In addition to this issue being an opportunity, it is also a necessity. The Daishonin repeatedly tells us that obstacles, devilish influences and enemies will appear without fail when we propagate and correctly practice Buddhism. He says, "As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 501).

And "Something uncommon also occurs when an ordinary person attains Buddhahood. At such a time, the three obstacles and four devils will invariably appear, and the wise will rejoice while the foolish will retreat" (WND, 637).

Most of us can attest to the occurrence of obstacles when we are striving to achieve something great in our own lives, especially in the realm of faith. Looking at the body of believers as a whole, our excommunication and the attacks upon our organization by Nichiren Shoshu are proof that our organization is on the right track. The Daishonin tells us in no uncertain terms that persecution is inevitable; it is par for the course in the process of attaining enlightenment.

The evening I stumbled upon my first Soka Spirit meeting was a turning point. From the moment I made a determination to deepen my understanding of this issue my life began to transform at an accelerated rate. One of the first things to happen was that I became aware of the influence of the fundamental darkness within my own life. I saw the ways in which my thoughts, words and actions toward others were sometimes arrogant, hurtful or divisive. I saw in myself the same "bully-ish" tendencies I'd always abhorred in others.

I determined to win over these tendencies and become infinitely more kind, considerate and compassionate. My work relations, friendships and family relationships have deepened considerably and become more mutually fulfilling. A pervading sense of justice is germinating inside of me, and I have begun

to see the world and life itself through the eyes of one committed to upholding justice. I now believe nothing is a greater source of happiness than this.

SGI Deputy President Einosuke Akiya says: "What do we need to do in order to attain an indomitable state of life? In short, we have to fight against evil. By defeating great evil, we establish within ourselves an indestructible state of life of great good. The element *ku* [in the word *ku-doku*, or benefit] means eliminating evil, while the element *doku* refers to the virtue one acquires by bringing about good" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). Only by actively opposing evil can we defeat the inclination to remain passive observers, the negative tendency to tolerate or even

accommodate evil. Through unflagging efforts to eradicate evil, we without fail positively transform our lives and experience a true revolution in state of life."

I would encourage everybody who doesn't feel involved with the Soka Spirit issue to begin to get involved in some way. Even if it's just by chanting about it or studying. Nichiren Daishonin says, "If you light a lamp for another, your own way will be lit" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1598). By the same token, when we begin to take action to fight against whatever forces appear as the enemies of people's happiness, we simultaneously win over those enemies that threaten our personal happiness and, as President Ikeda says, "experience a true revolution in one's state of life." **WT**

SIGNIFICANT DATE

April 2, 1958 — President Toda's Death

April 2 will be the 42nd anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's death. Although he died young — at the age of 58 — President Toda was able to fulfill his mission in rebuilding the Soka Gakkai after World War II. When he became the second president in 1951, he determined to take the membership, then at 3,000 households, to 750,000 households. "If [this goal] cannot be achieved in my lifetime, please do not hold my funeral," he said at the time. "Just dispose of my body off the coast of Shinagawa." Before his death, the Soka Gakkai surpassed his goal of 750,000 households.

Also before he died, President Toda raised his successor, SGI President Ikeda. The ceremony at the head temple on March 16, 1958 — just 17 days before he died — was symbolic of President Toda's passing his responsibility as the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth on to the young Daisaku Ikeda and the youth division.

President Ikeda remembers his mentor's death in his "Epilogue" to *The Human Revolution*, volume 12: "Cherry blossoms dance in the wind, as if bidding a final farewell. The day of my mentor's funeral, and how I stood, with a thousand emotions in my heart, gazing up at the blue sky spreading out beyond the delicately falling cherry blossoms, remains indelibly etched in my memory. On April 2, 1958, my mentor, Josei Toda, passed away peacefully at the age of 58. His life had been as pure, noble and fresh as those cherry blossoms. My mentor had struggled against the cruel oppression of the military government and stood alone in a war-ravaged, defeated Japan to build a citadel of peace for all humanity. He took up the cause of *kosen-rufu* in exact accord with the will of Nichiren Daishonin, bringing the Daishonin's Buddhism to life in an age when it was on the verge of perishing. He dove into the anguished, suffering masses of the people. Talking with them, sharing their laughter and their tears, he lit the torch of happiness for 750,000 households" (June 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 43).

The growth of the SGI that we see today can be traced back to President Toda's determination. His propagation efforts in the 1950s led to the current SGI membership — 12 million people in 148 countries. **WT**

To WT, WT E-mail Express, Fineprint Staff

Years ago, I read an article in the *World Tribune* by President Ikeda. I do not recall all the details, but I do recall his mention/pledge of how important it is to say THANK YOU. The title of that half-page-long article was two-inch-tall letters saying THANK YOU. It was right on the bull's eye! What a difference it makes when we receive a simple answer, a simple "thank you" when we've done something or when we've thought also about someone else! This has been my experience during my 11 years of practice. This type of behavior always made a big difference for me. My regards,

— ALVARO NISTAL,
Boston
PINARES@aol.com

About the Environment

This is another perspective on the environmental issues recently debated in the *World Tribune*. When one is diagnosed with a disease caused by the environment, the environmental issue becomes a global life and death issue. When this happens, it is impossible to water down this problem. I'd like to suggest you have some experiences of members who have had to deal with illnesses caused by the environment.

— DON HANSBROUGH,
Seattle

The Pacific Islands

I have just finished reading the related articles regarding the 1st Pacific Islands New Millennium Peace Conference in the Feb. 4 *World Tribune*, and all I can say is WOW! Not only is the photograph of the Rock Islands of Palau on page 6 a breathtakingly beautiful photograph of nature, but the underlying concept of the conference is stunning—a step steeped in wisdom in the ongoing organization of nations toward peace. Brilliant! Encouraging! The vast scope of the resolution and the humanity and hope expressed by the participants is deeply encouraging to me. Knowing that this current effort grew out of the original founding of the SGI on Guam 25 years ago (only 25 years ago!) causes me wonder what fruit will appear in 2025. Thank you, *World Tribune*, for your exceptional coverage of this wonderful event!

— JANICE JACOB,
Brooklyn, N.Y.
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World Tribune MAILBOX

About Depression

Regarding the article by Lori McDaniel on depression (Jan. 28 *World Tribune*), I applaud Ms. McDaniel's courage and compassion in not only battling her own depression, but in offering a perspective in the *World Tribune* to encourage and give hope to others. I have fought my own battles with sometimes suicidal bouts of clinical depression, which began when I was a pre-teenager and continued off and on through my mid-20s. By then I had recently begun practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Unlike Ms. McDaniel, when I was going through my worst episodes of depression, today's anti-depressant medications were not around yet. I understand that the medications that are out now don't usually cause many of the unpleasant side effects that past drugs did. I took the medications that were available to me, but never stuck with them—mainly because they made me feel drowsy or anxious, depending on the drug. In my case, because I didn't keep taking medications and continue to visit psychotherapists as prescribed, I can honestly say that my consistent practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism was the main thing that helped me win my personal battle with mental illness.

By consistent Buddhist practice, I do not mean that when I was suicidally depressed I chanted hours of daimoku or did gongyo every day. What I did do was continue to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and recite even a portion of gongyo—even if I could only do so silently. I would say the words in my mind while laying on the floor of my room, going back and forth between wishing that the roof would cave in to put me out of my misery, and just praying to not feel like I was in hell. The last time I can remember thinking of ways to take my own life, the scene was just as I've described. In addition to my minimal efforts at daimoku and gongyo, during that period I would lay in bed, mentally paralyzed, glancing over at my altar in between reading the Goshō and *The Human Revolution*. Just that much hope, the hope coming off the pages of those books and from within my own life, coupled with the prayers of SGI

members who I refused to talk to at the time, is what I believe pulled me through.

Today it has been more than 11 years since I've suffered from debilitating depression. As Ms. McDaniel says, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is one of common sense. We are taught to use our Buddhist practice to unveil our innate wisdom so we can take the best actions to challenge our problems. Like Ms. McDaniel and medical professionals, I believe that from a medical standpoint, depression is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. I agree that when we are sick, including when we are afflicted with a mental illness, we should seek professional treatment. I hope I am developing into the type of compassionate person who would never suggest that someone who is depressed should simply chant about it and forgo medical treatment. I almost didn't write this letter, because I don't want anyone to think I'm recommending that my past behavior as a poor example of a patient was OK. It was not OK. It could have cost me my life. Which brings me to the reason why I'm writing this letter. In matters of life and death, I pray to become someone who can wholeheartedly encourage people to never underestimate the power of Buddhist practice to cure any sickness. In my case, when I didn't stick with medical treatments, chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo saved my life. From my own experience I know that Buddhist practice is, as the Daishonin has said, "beneficial medicine for all ills."

— M. LAVORA PERRY,
East Cleveland, Ohio
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Speaking Out

I deeply appreciate Dave Evangelista's (Nov. 26, 1999, *World Tribune*), and Lillian Wilner's (Jan. 21, 1999, *World Tribune*) responses to Jeff Farr's article, regarding authoritarianism in our organization. Ms. Wilner asks the question: "What needs to be addressed now, once we acknowledge this problem, is what do we do to fight passionately against evil and injustice in terms of dealing with it from within the SGI? I have the answer. SGI President Ikeda has given it to me...SPEAK OUT!!! President Ikeda needs us as much as we

need him for the unpolluted flow of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to continue for all eternity. This is why he urges us to study; to become scholars of this Buddhism; not just to deepen our faith and propagate it in an eloquent manner, but to protect our organization from within. President Ikeda states: "The most important things in faith are the Daishonin's teachings and the Soka Gakkai spirit. To protect them, you may have to strictly admonish people in senior leadership positions. There is nothing to be afraid of. When you reflect on the sincere commitment of the members in our great organization and how a single leader's directive can affect thousands or tens of thousands of people, any leader who takes lightly or abuses that grave responsibility is a disgrace and cannot be condoned. If such individuals come to prevail, then the very life and spirit of the Soka Gakkai will die, causing it to degenerate into an organization that betrays the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin" (April 17, 1998, *World Tribune*). It is up to us, the members, not to seek leaders to distill the Daishonin's teachings, but to become wise and strong through our own spirit of study; to become "Generals of Generals" as President Ikeda has stated. I am not saying leaders aren't necessary. They are. A good one, practicing humanistically and challenging his/her own human revolution can make all the difference in a member's practice. But all too often I have seen leaders make authoritarian decisions based on personal opinion, personal likes and dislikes and a desire to seek comfort instead of challenge. When this happens it is vital that we, the members, take them strictly to task to ensure that our local organization functions from a perspective of faith and not small minded ego.

So, as Ms. Wilner asks: "Do we have the courage of a lion" to deal with this issue? It is imperative that we do. The Daishonin writes: "The reason you have not succeeded in attaining Buddhahood from countless distant kalpas in the past down to the present is that, when a situation such as this has arisen, you have been fearful to speak out. and in the future as well, this principle will prevail" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 205).

Speaking out is rarely easy. It takes real courage, but as Nichiren Daishonin and President Ikeda teach us, it is a vital, indispensable aspect of correct Buddhist practice.

— KEVIN HIGGINS,
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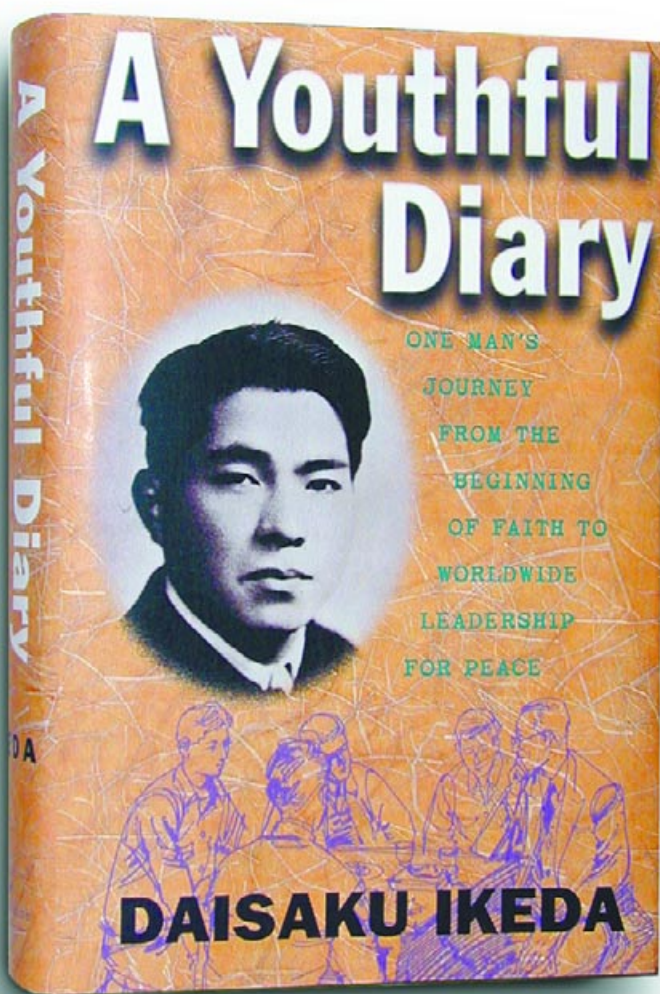
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