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MILLENNIUM SUNDAY:

A Gathering of Spiritual Awareness

Photos by LUCY ESTEPHANOS

By PHIL SIMPSON
ATLANTA

Those who have persevered in the face of hardship and suffering, and have struggled against oppression, will forever be showered in the triumphant and joyous light of the sunrise." These are the words of SGI President Ikeda's message that conveyed his respect for and solidarity with the participants of Millennium Sunday, A Gathering of Spiritual Awareness held April 2 at the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College. (The full text of the message will appear in the April 28 *World Tribune*.)

Many people who have dedicated their lives to nonviolence and peace were on hand to mark the founding of the Gandhi Institute for Reconciliation at Morehouse College. Mrs. Coretta Scott King and Martin Luther King III were among the honored guests at this auspicious occasion. Other distinguished guests included Dr. Arun Gandhi, the fifth grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, representatives of the government of India, as well as local dignitaries.

The Institute, headed by Dr. Lawrence Carter, dean of the MLK Chapel, is being established to be a conduit for Gandhian thought. Some of its partners include the MK Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence in Memphis, UNESCO, the Peace Corps, the India Council of Cultural Relations (New Delhi) and the Association for Global New Thought.

Dr. Carter, in preparing for the event, of which the SGI-USA was among the sponsoring organizations explained that Martin Luther King Jr., as a student at Morehouse College, had learned about Mahatma Gandhi from (then) Morehouse College President Dr. Benjamin Mays, King's mentor. Later, when Dr. King went to Boston University, he studied more about Gandhi and nonviolence. History has

proven the greatness of Dr. King's movement for civil rights in America based upon those studies.

President Ikeda states in his message given on April 2, exactly 42 years after the passing of his own mentor, Josei Toda: "The ultimate and most glorious of human relationships is the relationship of spiritual successors. Your courage has contributed to the groundswell of efforts for human rights around the world, and you have given courage to the SGI."

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima presented Dr. Carter with the SGI-USA Liberty Award; and the Gandhi Institute was presented a collection of SGI President Ikeda's books in ceremonies following the opening, attended by nearly 250 dignitaries and supporters. The attendees also enjoyed a showing of the SGI-USA youth division's Victory Over Violence video and a performance by Nestor Torres, jazz flautist. **WT**



The Millennium Service platform party up close at the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College in Atlanta, April 2. (L-r): Vir Nanda, vice president of Intercept Inc.; Ani Agnihotri, president of the India-America Cultural Association of Atlanta; Rinzing Wangdi, consul general of India; the Rev. Michael Beckwith, founder and senior minister of Agape International Center of Truth; Dr. Martin Luther King III, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Mrs. Coretta Scott King, wife of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; Bawa Jain, secretary general of the World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders; Danny Nagashima, SGI-USA general director; C.T. Vivian, one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s lieutenants during the civil rights movement of the 1960s; Dr. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, and his wife, Sunanda Gandhi, co-directors of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence; and Dr. Lawrence E. Carter, dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College.



(Above) Dr. Martin Luther King III (2nd from left) and Mrs. Coretta Scott King (center) unveil a nine-foot bronze plaque of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' speech. Also pictured (l-r): Grand Master Benjamin Barksdale; Walter E. Massey, president of Morehouse College; Mrs. Christine King Farris, sister of the late Martin Luther King Jr. (Above right) A Gathering of Spiritual Awareness at the launching of the Gandhi Institute for Reconciliation at Morehouse College. In attendance were the Agape International Choir and members of the Prince Hall Masons and the Eastern Star of Georgia. (Below right) Arun and Sunanda Gandhi, on behalf of Arun Gandhi's grandparents Mahatma and Kasturba Gandhi, receive posthumous honorary doctorate degrees conferred by President Walter E. Massey of Morehouse College.



BUDDHISM IN DAILY LIFE

Oneness of Body and Mind

Materialists claim that the physical or material world that can be measured and touched is the only reality, whereas some spiritual traditions see the physical as mere illusion — or something inherently corrupt that exists in order to be transcended, and the spiritual as the ultimate truth.

Buddhism regards life as the unity of the physical and the spiritual. It views all things, whether material or spiritual, seen or unseen, as manifestations of the same ultimate universal law or source of life defined in the Nichiren tradition as Myohorenge-kyo. The physical and spiritual aspects of our lives are completely inseparable and of equal importance. Nichiren Daishonin expressed this in a letter to one of his followers titled "Opening the Eyes of Wooden and Painted Images," stating: "A person can know another's mind by listening to the voice. This is because the physical aspect reveals the spiritual aspect. The physical and spiritual, which are one in essence, manifest themselves as two distinct aspects" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 86).

A person's inner emotional state will be revealed in his or her physical appearance. The feelings of someone in a happy and optimistic mood can be read in their face; there may even be a skip in their step. In contrast, the painful gait and drawn features of a person weighed down by suffering can communicate his or her inner torment even from a distance.

Our inner mental state also affects the physical functioning of our bodies. The most dramatic manifestations of this are laughter and tears, physical signs of our inner feelings. Mental or psychological stress has been linked to a range of illness from skin disorders, allergies, asthma and ulcers to cancer. Depression and hopelessness lower the body's resistance, making us vulnerable to a variety of afflictions. On the other hand, a positive determination to overcome illness can "inspire" our organs and even individual cells toward health.

As SGI President Daisaku Ikeda writes: "When our determination changes, everything will begin to move in the direction we desire. The moment we resolve to be victorious, every nerve and fiber in our being will immediately orient itself toward our success. On

the other hand, if we think, 'This is never going to work out,' then at that instant, every cell in our being will be deflated and give up the fight."

True health and genuine happiness must encompass both the physical and the spiritual. Many of the experiences of SGI members relate to improved health, physical or material conditions. Through the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, they also realize the inseparability of the spiritual and physical aspects of their lives. Over time, this is revealed in both a feeling of physical well-being and a growing clarity and purity of the men-

tal and perceptive processes. What are referred to as the conspicuous benefits of Buddhist practice relate primarily to the physical and material planes. Most crucial in the long term are the inconspicuous benefits of sustained Buddhist practice — increased self-awareness, wisdom and compassion for others. The ultimate inconspicuous benefit, of course, is enlightenment.

Buddhism views a living being as the harmonious coming together of what it terms the five components. These are: the physical aspects of life and the senses; perception, which integrates the impressions received through the

senses; conception, by which we form ideas about what we have perceived; volition, the will that acts on conception; and consciousness, the function of discernment that supports the functioning of the other components. Life is the force or energy that keeps these five components functioning together as a harmonious and integrated whole.

Modern medical science is only beginning to explore the subtle interconnections between body and mind, between the physical and spiritual aspects of life. Ultimately, Buddhism views both physical and spiritual aspects as vital manifesta-

tions of the life force that is inherent in the cosmos itself.

As Nichiren Daishonin writes in "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime": "Life at each moment encompasses the body and mind and the self and environment of all sentient beings in the Ten Worlds as well as all insentient beings in the three thousand realms, including plants, sky, earth, and even the minutest particles of dust. Life at each moment permeates the entire realm of phenomena and is revealed in all phenomena" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 3).

Courtesy of SGI Quarterly

Kansas City Hosts Children's Rights Exhibit

Photos by CHERYL UTLEY



(Left) On March 27, there was a ribbon-cutting and a presentation of a mayoral proclamation endorsing the "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" exhibition from March 25-April 8 at the downtown Kansas City Main Library. (L-r): Mayor Pro Tem Alvin Brooks; Kansas City Board of Trustees, Olivia Dorsey; Susan Arnold, guest speaker from Best Interest of the Child, Inc.; John Ford, SGI-USA representative and Midwest Region leader; and Eli and Solomon Randall. (Right) Children enjoy a balloon demonstration.

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New York Holds Golden Stage Group Meeting

Photos by MICHAEL ANTON

By BILL BLACKARD

The first ever meeting of the newly formed SGI-USA Golden Stage Group named by SGI President Ikeda was held at the New York Culture Center on Jan. 30.

The main prayer room was filled with members and guests, plus friends and relatives. There were at least two members present who had been practicing for 40 years.

The themes of the meetings were "The Power of One" and "The Power of Age." The festivities began with a cultural presentation depicting President Ikeda's seven trips to New York City and the growth of the organization that was reflected by each one of those visits. A narrator presented highlights of each of his trips, beginning with his first on Oct. 13, 1960, ending with the most

recent, in June 1996, by which time there were thousands of local members. New York West Vice Region Leader and Arts Division Senior Advisor Buster Williams led a small orchestra that played selections corresponding to each of the SGI president's trips. These songs, which included "The Impossible Dream," "Oh, Sensei," "Higher Than the Sky" and "Over the Rainbow," reminded the members of many beautiful meetings with President Ikeda.

A highlight of the afternoon meeting was a collective reminiscence by Sheilah Edwards, Sylvia Smith and Olga Ford. Their humorous accounts of the early days of their practice in New York brought tears of laughter and joy to many members. This was followed by the women and men's chorus' stirring ren-



'The Power of One' and 'The Power of Age' are the themes of the first-ever meeting of the Golden Stage Group held at the New York Culture Center.



Sheilah Edwards, Sylvia Smith (standing) and Olga Ford share humorous accounts of the early days of their practice in New York.

dition of "The Power of One."

In his final words, Northeastern Zone and SGI Men's Division Leader Tariq Hasan praised the efforts of the pioneer members who have developed SGI-USA into the vital organization it is today.

Hasan asked the members to keep fighting and enjoying an even greater life while encouraging younger members.

The meeting closed with a rousing chorus of "Forever Sensei," sending the members into the New York chill with a renewed youthful spirit. **WT**

PROFILE:

Murray Soloman

By BILL BLACKARD

Murray Soloman of Endicott, N.Y., began his practice on Jan. 25, 1965. He had agreed to drive his wife, Yaeko, who had been practicing for four years, and some other women to the New York City Community Center for an initiation ceremony. Yaeko had secretly arranged for him to be initiated. He began to practice and soon afterward his home became a huge meeting place for pioneer members.

In 1976, he became general manager for a transportation company in Upstate New York. He and Yaeko moved to Endicott and began to contact members in their local towns. For years they fought to have a community center for Upstate members, and in 1989, they saw their dream realized with the opening of a center in Buffalo. In 1996, early detection prevented him from suffering a major stroke,



and a few months later, he also overcame prostate cancer.

Murray says: "As I look back over my 35 years of practice, I realize that I've received many benefits without knowing it at the moment. No matter what, we will always maintain the pioneer and stand-alone spirit, practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, protecting the Gohonzon and following the guidance of SGI President Ikeda and other SGI leaders." **WT**

PROFILE:

Ethel Corwin

By JIM GERARD

When her son first brought Ethel Corwin to an SGI-USA meeting, she was a timid widower who hated groups, knew nothing about Buddhism and felt Jim was just "going through a phase."

Thirty-one years later, after jetting off to conventions at the drop of a hat, visiting Japan, becoming a district leader in Long Island, N.Y., and engaging in countless activities (including singing in the Sunshine Chorus), Ethel Corwin improbably has found herself in the vanguard of the kosen-rufu movement.

"I thought we'd all forget about it," she says about that initial meeting. "But somehow



we didn't. We just kept going, improving our lives and encouraging each other. I have met so many wonderful friends whom I probably never would have if not for the practice."

When asked to explain her steadfastness of faith, Corwin gives many reasons: She first chanted for her son, Phillip, to re-

turn home safely from Vietnam, and today, Phillip is a successful city administrator. She has three wonderful grandchildren—Jim's children Suzie, Ken and Henry, all SGI-USA members. Four years ago, she survived bowel cancer surgery unscathed.

Mostly, though, chanting makes her feel happy, a joy she tries to convey to those who seek her guidance at the New York Culture Center. Mostly I tell them to believe in themselves and to chant with purpose." Her son had coaxed her onto the guidance staff from her job as a legal secretary. Even though she's not paid for her counsel, she proudly admits, "I get paid in good feelings."

This year Ethel plans to return to the FNCC. "I hope to go swimming this time. Last time it was too cold."

Oh, and by the way, Ms. Corwin just turned 84. **WT**

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SPEECH

THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON THE YOUTH

SGI President Ikeda's acceptance speech on the conferral of an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of Delaware, Newark, Del., the United States, held in conjunction with a Soka Gakkai nationwide youth division leaders meeting, the 17th Soka Group General Meeting, the 15th Gajokai General Meeting and the 23rd Byakuren Group General Meeting, at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall, Hachioji, Tokyo, on Jan. 15.

You Are My Successors!

Soka Gakkai second president Josei Toda declared: "A new era is created by the passion and power of youth."

My hearty congratulations on this first gathering of the new year for our talented youth division members, the leaders of the Soka Gakkai in the 21st century! I want to state clearly, here and now, that you, the members of the youth division, are the successors on whose shoulders the entire responsibility for the future of kosen-rufu and the Soka Gakkai will fall.

A warm welcome also to our fellow members from abroad who have joined us today.

And my deepest appreciation to the interpreters. I look forward to your kind assistance again this year.

Honor From Acclaimed Academic Institute

Most esteemed President Roselle, Professor Callahan, and Mrs. Norton: I humbly accept this honor I have received from your august and internationally acclaimed institution of higher learning, the University of Delaware, as a representative of our SGI members in 148 countries and territories around the world. Thank you very, very much.

In truth, I should have visited the University of Delaware to accept this honor. Before I could fulfill that obligation, however, President Roselle and his party were kind enough to travel to Japan and carry out this dignified ceremony here. I must offer my sincerest gratitude for your consideration once again.

[University of Delaware (UD) President David Roselle; Dr. Raymond Callahan, UD professor of history; and Mrs.

Mary Norton, an educator who has taught courses on philosophy, ethics and critical thinking and who is the widow of UD professor of philosophy Dr. David Norton, traveled to Japan from the United States to confer the honorary degree on the SGI leader.]

Today we also have with us representatives of the SGI-USA, which has made a fresh departure toward the 21st century. One of them, Women's Division Vice Leader Linda Johnson, is a graduate of the prestigious University of Delaware.

Behind-the-Scenes Effort Sets the Stage for Future Glory

Being held concurrently with this gathering today are the respective general meetings of the Soka Group, the Gajokai and the Byakuren Group [behind-the-scenes groups that support the smooth running of meetings and ensure the comfort and safety of members as well as the security of Soka Gakkai facilities], the precious core members who will become the leaders of the kosen-rufu movement in the 21st century. Congratulations on your general meetings! Thank you for your tireless efforts day in and day out. Today's top Gakkai leaders, just like all of you, once exerted themselves diligently as members of the Traffic Control Group (forerunner of the Soka Group) and the Soka Group, supporting the members from behind the scenes. The same is true of many of your seniors in faith.

I would like to accept this singular honor from the University of Delaware together with all of you, as a symbol of the infinite glory that awaits all who work with selfless devotion behind the scenes.

It Starts With a Single Individual

The University of Delaware traces its origins back to a school founded in 1743 through the commitment and dedication of one young man. That young man was a Scotch-Irish clergyman by the name of Francis Alison, who emigrated to America from Ireland. During America's colonial period, there was not a single college nor even a good grammar school in



SGI President Ikeda gives his acceptance speech on the conferral of an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of Delaware, Newark, Del., at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall, Hachioji, Tokyo, on Jan. 15.

any of the British territories there. When Alison realized the lack of educational institutions in his new homeland, he decided to establish one himself.

With great personal effort, he opened a free school in his own home in the township of New London, Penn. Alison served as the mainstay and cornerstone of the school, which became known as the New London Academy. This school was the precursor of today's University of Delaware.

[The free school founded by Alison changed its location several times, setting up eventually in Newark, Del., roughly eight miles from where it began in New London, Penn. It changed its name many times, becoming the Academy of Newark in 1769, and then Newark College in 1833, Delaware College in 1843, and the University of Delaware in 1921. The main campus of the University of Delaware today is in the city of Newark.]

The first students of the free school ranged from 8 to 16 years of age. Today, young people of the same age from the future division are with us. Thank you for your great efforts! In particular, I would like to congratulate the members of the junior high school division on the 35th anniversary of their division's founding!

Inheriting the Founder's Spirit

Alison was an early advocate of the separation of administrative, legislative and judicial powers and other democratic ideals that were truly "revolutionary" at the time, and he shared those ideas with his students. The first graduating class, which had received personal instruction from him, inherited his spirit and went on to make great contributions to American society in the realms of government, business and public opinion. Among them were governors, congressmen, doctors and scholars. Three members of the first class were later to sign the historic Declaration of Independence.

The State of Delaware, where the university is located, was the first state to ratify the new constitution, from which it has earned the nickname, "the First State." Members of the first class of Alison's free school also played an active role in the new constitution's establishment.

Though a group or institution may be small and have only a few members, as long as it has a strong core it is possible to build the foundation for eternal development.

All of you gathered here today are talented members of the "first class" of our youth division for the new century, peo-

ple whose brilliant light will shine across the new millennium. Please forge ahead dauntlessly, with pride and self-confidence, encouraging and supporting each other along the way. Never abandon your faith!

A History of 'Always Giving One's Best Effort'

Dr. Roselle, an eminent mathematician, is the 25th president of the University of Delaware, with its hallowed tradition of more than 250 years. Dr. Roselle says that he wants to be known as the president who did the most for this university, and is committed to demonstrating this resolve in concrete form. He states that this is the way he lives his life.

In accord with this conviction, President Roselle has, over the last 10 years, led the university to unprecedented development, while placing the highest importance on the welfare of each student. For instance, the University of Delaware has been named one of the 10 U.S. institutions demonstrating "bold leadership" in classrooms according to the National Science Foundation. This is a golden achievement that all connected with the university can be proud of.

I hope that all of you, the members of the youth division, will also establish a record of careful, steady achievement in

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the respective spheres of your mission, so that no matter what anyone else may say, you can declare that you've done your very best.

Life, at times, may seem like one long drag, but the challenge is to find a way to make life interesting and exciting. That is the drama of human life. The point is to discover enjoyment and excitement amid the challenges of daily life. Our hearts, our minds, possess a wisdom that enables us to change anything unlimitedly.

The training we receive in our youth, our Buddhist practice and our participation in Gakkai activities all help us build an indestructible, diamond-like spirit that finds life itself a joy. All these challenges benefit our lives.

'Dialogue Among Civilizations' — A New Watchword

Recently, the term *dialogue among civilizations* has become a watchword of our times. Thirty years ago [in October 1970], I conducted a series of dialogues on the subject, "Civilization — East and West," with Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894–1973), a leading proponent of European unification and founder of the Pan-European Movement. Our dialogues were later published in book form in Japanese. From that time, I have actively striven to pursue inter-civilizational dialogue with leading figures around the world.

At the end of my dialogue with the great British historian Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975), Dr. Toynbee took my hand and said to me: "Dialogue will play a major role in forging harmony between the cultures, peoples and religions of the world. In order to bring the world's people closer together, I hope that you, young as you are, will extend this dialogue far and wide." These were his last words to me, and I promised to do as he asked.

With that promise locked firmly in my heart, I set about to engage leading thinkers from every continent in dialogue, and have to this day participated in more than 1,500 inter-civilizational dialogues. And more than 20 of my dialogues with leading intellectuals from around the world have been published.

U.N. International Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations in 2001

The motto of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, which I founded four years ago based on Mr.

Toda's ideal of global citizenship, is "Dialogue of Civilizations for World Citizenship." I was happy and honored that the United Nations subsequently designated 2001 as the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

Next month [February 2000], to commemorate the centennial of Mr. Toda's birth, the Toda Institute will sponsor an international conference in Okinawa, which will be attended by leading scholars around the world. The theme of the conference is "Dialogue of Civilizations: A New Peace Agenda for a New Millennium."

The topic of "dialogue among civilizations" is also slated for discussion at the G-8 Summit to be held in Okinawa in July of this year.

Yesterday [Jan. 14], President Roselle and his party met and talked with officials of Soka University. I received a report of their discussion and it contained some important points, so I would like to share some of them with you today.

Dr. Roselle remarked that while the 19th century was the century of chemistry, and the 20th the century of physics, the 21st century will be the century of biotechnology. The great discoveries in chemistry and physics, he said, have resulted in both positive and negative experiences for humankind. We must take care, he cautioned, that we do not suffer from the same kind of negative experiences in the 21st century.

Mrs. Norton then added that biotechnology touches upon the very secrets of human life, so it is crucial that we proceed based on a firm ethical and moral foundation. There is a vital need today, she said, for philosophy and ethics.

I agree completely with both Dr. Roselle and Mrs. Norton. In fact, this is one reason that I have continually called for humankind to make the 21st century "the century of life."

At any rate, from today I have the honor of being a member of your fine university, a citadel for world citizenship, and I am determined to work even harder in my endeavors.

My young friends of the youth division, please join me in courageously and vigorously rousing great waves of dialogue among civilizations, among people, and on the subject of life.

Why Are We Persecuted?

The late Dr. David Norton, a great philosopher, had a deep understanding of the SGI movement and was always ready with warm words of encouragement and support. Why

is the Soka Gakkai, an organization working to bring the world's people together through its movement for peace, culture and education, maligned and persecuted in Japan? Dr. Norton's reply to this question was splendid. The first reason he gave was the jealousy of an anachronistic clergy. The second reason he cited was a powerful reaction on the part of nationalist, authoritarian and parochial forces in Japan, which are against any movement that seeks to make the people strong and independent.

Despotic leaders, it is true, fear the solidarity of the people. No matter how forbidding such leaders may appear, they are really cowards inside. That is why they fear the forces of truth and justice, and why they persecute them. Nichiren Daishonin, too, was persecuted because of his devotion to truth. Since the Soka Gakkai is an organization dedicated to truth, an organization directly linked to the Daishonin, it is only natural that we, too, should undergo persecution.

Fear Nothing

Dr. Norton, who was always engaged in a relentless spiritual quest, warmly encouraged the members of the youth division, urging them to "fear nothing." He strongly hoped that the youth would work to firmly secure respect for cultural diversity, an indispensable factor for ushering in a new era for humankind, and also particularly defend freedom of religion, one of the cornerstones of democracy.

On June 6, 1944, first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi celebrated his last birthday in prison, while continuing to wage his unrelenting struggle against militarism by engaging the prosecuting authorities in dialogue, rigorously refuting their erroneous views. On that very day, the decisive battle of World War II, the Allied invasion of Normandy, in Northern France, began.

Professor Callahan, who is with us today, is a respected historian renowned for his studies of military history. Why did the Invasion of Normandy, the largest military operation ever mounted, succeed?

Learn Quickly

Professor Callahan has suggested that the reason for the Allied victory was that the Allied forces demonstrated a greater ability to learn quickly and adapt to big changes. How true! We must learn from this lesson of history.

What was the source of their adaptability? While many rea-



SGI President Ikeda, with University of Delaware (UD) President David Roselle (in front), Dr. Raymond Callahan, UD professor of history and educator Mrs. Mary Norton.

sons may be given, we should note first of all that the Allied forces were younger than their opponents.

According to one source, the average age of the Nazi forces guarding the Normandy coast was 45. Some soldiers were 56 or older. Further, the soldiers with seniority threw their weight around, giving rise to a bureaucratic and sluggish organization. In addition, the Nazi defense took its orders from Hitler, who was far away.

Contrast this with the average age of 25 for the Allied forces. The Allies commanded a force of courageous youth, who were undaunted by sudden changes. In addition, their commanders were always there on the battlefield with them, giving orders. The Allied soldiers also burned with a strong determination never to retreat, and to win without fail.

Youth itself is an incredible strength. It is a source of tremendous power. No tyrant is a match for it. Youth in itself means that you are a royal champion of life.

The Soka Gakkai has always won its struggles because the youth have taken the lead. That's why our focus in the future, too, must be the youth. Unless we focus on the youth, we will have no future.

Those of you who are in your 20s, in particular, are our greatest hope. If you make your heart one with mine, our movement will definitely succeed in the 21st century as well. I hope you will rally together those of your same age group and forge a solid alliance of shared purpose.

Since you are young, I hope you will speak out bravely. If you are timid and do not fight for

what is right, you are only preparing the way for your own defeat.

I urge the men to learn more from the strength of women.

For the women, I wish happiness. Becoming happy is the purpose of life. Please walk unswervingly along the path of happiness, letting nothing distract you from its course.

Leading an Exhilarating Life

As a youth, it is your duty to fight against evil and injustice. We cannot give rise to good, unless we bring an end to iniquity. If we don't remove the poison, we will succumb to it; no medicine will be to any avail.

There is nothing more wonderful than devoting one's youth to the cause of justice and truth. Please live out your lives as champions of justice and truth. I want you to win out in all life's struggles with a joyous sense of exhilaration.

Please build a solid foundation in your youth, so that one day you can look back and say: "My life was a good one. It was fun. It was interesting. It was enjoyable."

I am praying, and waiting, for your growth, your victory and your magnificent achievements.

In closing, allow me to offer my prayers for the excellent health of Dr. Roselle and the distinguished guests here today and for the brilliant development of the University of Delaware, which is leading the way to a century of education.

Thank you very much. (Said in English.)

(Translated from the January 20 issue of the Seikyo Shim-bun, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper.)

Toward the Next 30 Years:

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI

Mike Liptan, Portland, Ore.: Fortwo months in 1975, I was a member of the advance stage crew for the Hawaii Convention. At age 32, I had never worked so hard in my whole life. This experience and training have made the 25 years of working and activities since then seem easy. I was only a member for about one year and this helped me establish and continue my practice through which I have gained tremendous personal fortune and happiness. My stage crew experience was truly a treasure of the heart. From another stage crew member, I heard a definition of the concept of being a hero that I think applies to all the dedicated members of the stage crew:



*Heros
Ordinary people who,
under exceptional circum-
stances,
Do exceptional things!*

Besides all the fond memories and friendships, that's what it feels like to participate and work for kosen-rufu. What a wonderful and victorious feeling!

Al Hogan, Waukegan, Ill.: In the late '70s, I was asked to coordinate the culture festival presentation for my headquarters. My dream to produce stage shows and concerts had begun. Bringing people together and creating wonderful performances culminated with the 1st Youth Grand World Peace Culture Festival in Chicago in 1981. All



Participants in the first Stage Crew Conference held March 16-19 at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, came together to celebrate 30 years of effort to support SGI-USA activities. The conference focused on renewing old friendships, making a fresh start toward the next 30 years and discussing ways to attract and raise young people in the stage crew.

the great struggles to bring each aspect of these productions together united me with stage crew members throughout the SGI. I have many fond memories that will live on forever. The negative side of my life surfaced, and I spent eight years spiraling deep into the world of drug addiction. Finally in 1989, I started my ascent. Using passages from the Goshu, daimoku and the will to claim my role in the battle for world peace, I have turned poison into medicine. Today my life is the result of "one who has fallen to the ground and pushed himself up

from that same ground." I have determined to be a role model manager in my workplace, to resolve all personal issues in my life and raise capable people.

Jim Engel-man, Vallejo, Calif.: Working with stage crew members, I saw all different types of talented



people who worked together toward a goal for the Sho-Hondo Convention in 1973. Something in my heart said this is how society should be. I was only a three-month member at the time. Although I had financial fortune, my own home at 22, a good job, still I was miserable. My relationships with women were short term. My impossible dream was to be happy. On my first project with the stage crew, I worked with an extremely talented guy. I knew there were so many skills I could learn from him. I didn't realize it at the time, but the most important "skill" he taught me was faith. He made me feel the spirit and dedication of working toward our noble goal of kosen-rufu. I learned about unity and flexibility. I

learned patience and humility. I learned that with hearts joined as a team, we can reach the impossible. Today my personal dreams have come true, as well. I am happily married. My children are all successful. My daughter practices and has given us a wonderful grandson.

Teri Childs Page, Concord, Mass.: I had a tremendous experience renovating (July



1998-February 1999) our Boston Culture Center. At first I thought what a great opportunity to do a little artwork. Little did I know! I worked every weekend, sometimes scraping, sometimes painting and mostly dealing with dust, dirt and grime. It was the most valuable experience in my SGI years. Only toward the end did I end up uniting with other artists and creating actual wall designs and beautifying the lobby. We chanted many hours together trying to unite. Because of this effort, I have been able to bring



Participants enjoy a bicycle ride amidst the scenic beauty of the FNCC.



Cookie Strong views a photo display titled 'Behind Behind the Scenes', which was compiled using personal snapshots of 30 years of stage crew activities.

Stage Crew Makes Fresh Start

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI



General Director Danny Nagashima lectures on 'The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra.'



Participants celebrate together during the Friendship Exchange.

many of my friends to the culture center, one of whom received the Gohonzon last fall. I also married the man who designed an incredible walkway and who has encouraged me to pursue a life of my dreams. Our efforts to build our castle together has created an indestructible bond. Together we faced enormous obstacles—and won! I hope to continue in this way, forever building and helping to construct a new SGI-USA.

Kitty Thompson, Chicago: During the construction of the Chicago Culture Center, I primarily volunteered to



do landscaping. As a teacher, I had the weekends and entire summer off.

One day, while watering the plants as I'd so often done, I was asked to come inside the Ikeda Auditorium and speak the words "Testing 1-2-3" repeatedly as I was directed by a young man from up in the sound room. From that point on, I have been a member of the audio-visual team in Chicago.

In his book *Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, SGI President Ikeda writes, "It may be that those responsible for the sound system at meetings, as a result of the good fortune they gain thereby, are creating the cause to be reborn as great musicians."



Los Angeles Region Guidance Leader Mike Kikumura (left) encourages conference participants.

This was not my dream; however, it is, and always has been my son's. Now 26 years old, he has practiced since the age of 5. I was not initially supportive of his dream to become a musician. I only imagined hardships and financial struggle for him.

However, this has not been the case. He is an accomplished jazz bassist, formerly the musical director for Maynard Ferguson and currently playing with saxophonist Stanley Turntine. He has traveled around the world and has actualized his dream. This has been my greatest joy and good fortune as we both continue to practice and work for kosen-rufu.

Bill Jones, Denver, Colo.: In 1975, I was working in L.A., preparing for the Hawaii Convention, I had been writing home to my parents about what we were working on. My father, who was a long haul trucker, went to the return address on my letters the next time he was in Southern California. He went, with his big rig, to the Malibu Training Center. There Mr. Inaba was very kind to him and told him how to get to the Culver City warehouse where we were working.

As a father now, I better understand how he must have felt, wanting to get a look at what on earth his son was doing 1,000 miles from home.

I was called to the front en-

trance to meet him, and I walked with him through the work areas where artists were high on scaffolds painting backdrops, carpenters were working hard, welders were making sparks fly. We went up to my work area, where electronics assemblers were working on prototype equipment, draftspersons were diagramming new projects, coordinators were running around with clipboards.

It gave me pause when he looked at me in astonishment, and said, "What in the world is motivating these people? I've never been in any work environment where everybody is concentrating and putting out such great effort." He said he would love to see the result of all this effort, but it was impossible with his workload. I suggested that he could send my mother to Hawaii.

My mother was in the early stages of cancer, which would take her life two years later. She went to Hawaii and made many friends on that trip. The fact that she participated to the best of her ability helped take some of the edge off my sorrow when she passed away. I took so much for granted back then, and people struggling to make a dream such as our Hawaii activities come true were just routine to me.

My father's impression of our work was so profound, because he, like many people in our world, had learned not to

expect much of people. To see people living and fighting for a dream shook him even deeper than the practical cynicism he had developed as a defense mechanism.

My greatest benefit is to quite often realize how great it is to be alive, and to have friends in the SGI, and a mentor like President Ikeda. **WT**



SGI-USA Vice General Director Gary Murie, stage crew leader for almost three decades, talks about the spirit of behind-the-scenes activities.

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

Live Out Your Lives With the SGI

'Live out your lives together with the SGI, the organization acting in accord with the Buddha's decree,' SGI President Ikeda says in this essay on March 16, 1958. 'If you stay true to your mission and boldly walk the great path of faith your whole life long, you will have no regrets.'

My eyes were focused unflinchingly on the future. Yet, seeing the frail condition of my mentor in life, Josei Toda, a deep pain tore through my heart, as if the floodgates of all the sorrow and apprehension I had long harbored had suddenly burst.

On that bright spring day, for some reason a heavy cloud settled over me. My heart sank, and I felt the dimness closing in around me.

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The weather was fine on March 16, 1958. Six thousand of Mr. Toda's proud young disciples had gathered joyfully in the courtyard in front of the Grand Lecture Hall at the head temple. Burning with faith, conviction and passion, they gazed up at Mount Fuji shining under a blanket of snow. A lively buzz filled the air, like a new wave rising from the depths of the sea. Everyone was excited and brimming with life.

Their sights set on the future, these young heroes had stood up like true seekers of the Way, like the champions of truth that they were. Their awareness of their noble mission, the glorious flower of their youth, glowed with a noble, heroic pride on their faces. Smiling as they stood shoulder to shoulder, their hearts were one. Nothing could destroy their sense of unity with their mentor or their spirit of comradeship transcending life and death.

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Six years and 10 months had passed since Mr. Toda's inauguration as second Soka Gakkai president. In that time, he had waged a fierce struggle to propagate Nichiren Dai-shonin's Buddhism, achieving his cherished goal of 750,000 member households. Now he sensed that the end of his life was approaching.

At the grand ceremony of March 16, with the last rem-

nants of his strength, Mr. Toda showed us all the fighting spirit of a life absolutely dedicated to kosen-rufu. It was a spiritual ceremony, in which he transferred the mission for achieving kosen-rufu to his true, direct disciples, the young lions who were to inherit his mantle.

At the beginning of March, the Japanese prime minister notified Mr. Toda that he wanted to visit the head temple on the 16th. Mr. Toda then said to me, "Let's conduct a ceremony [on that day] that will serve as a trial run—a dress rehearsal—for kosen-rufu, in preparation for the future."

Mr. Toda wanted to give the youth a foretaste of what it would be like when the ideals and philosophy of the Dai-shonin's Buddhism had spread widely throughout society and the world. At that time, the Dai-shonin says, the tutelary gods of Japan, Bonten and Taishaku, come to pay their respects (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1022). In a ceremony held in conjunction with the prime minister's visit, Mr. Toda sought to demonstrate this prediction that one day even society's top leaders, who embody the function of such protective forces as Bonten and Taishaku, would respect—and even eventually come to embrace faith in—the Gohonzon.

This vision can also be interpreted as leaders from all around the world, sympathetic to Buddhist humanism, gathering together, forging strong ties of friendship and pledging to achieve peace and happiness for all humanity.

Today, this is happening. Leaders around the world from all spheres, including politics, business, education, culture and the arts—transcending differences of race and nation—are supporting and praising the ideals and activities of the SGI. They visit us to acknowledge and honor the achievements of our organization, which is striving in accord with the Buddha's will.

Each and every ceremony conferring recognition or honor upon us embodies the spirit of the ceremony of March 16.

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In the days leading up to the event, Mr. Toda was already having difficulty walking, but he repeatedly insisted that he would lead the ceremony himself. As a result, I had a fellow member build a litter to carry him. This idea came to me from

a scene in the historic novel *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, where the ailing general Chuko K'ung-Ming leads his troops in battle from atop a four-wheeled cart.

However, when Mr. Toda saw the completed litter, he declared: "It's too big! This would be useless in battle!" Though he could no longer walk unaided, he was always on the battlefield in spirit, dashing about fearlessly as sparks flew from clashing swords.

He was an exceptional mentor, who trained me for the future with every ounce of his strength until the very last moment of his life.

The litter made its way slowly through the thronging crowd of thousands of youth. "It's Sensei! It's Toda Sensei!" Joy spread among the youth. Right to the very end, Mr. Toda loved the youth. Several days later, Mr. Toda said to me, "Daisaku, when I recover my strength, I'm going to travel all over Japan giving guidance from that litter!" He had understood the sincere intention of his disciple all along.

The prime minister, our guest of honor, canceled his visit at the last minute. But nothing mattered to Mr. Toda other than that the youth, to whom he could entrust the future, were there.

Speaking to the thousands of young disciples gathered outside, Mr. Toda declared with a mighty lion's roar. "The Soka Gakkai is the king of the religious world!"

Truly, March 16 was the coronation ceremony of the youth, when they received their royal crowns and royal swords. As disciples, we must never forget the profound significance of that day.

Today, I want to place a crown on the head of each noble youth division member, each of my young disciples, who are striving so hard to achieve kosen-rufu.

It is only by triumphing in various struggles, however, that one earns the right to receive that glorious successor's crown.

In doing so, the first, most important thing is to live out your lives together with the SGI, the organization acting in accord with the Buddha's decree. If you stay true to your mission and boldly walk the great path of faith your whole life long, you will have no regrets. As the great Chinese historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien says, "Though I should



Due to his failing health, the youth made a litter to carry President Toda at the ceremony on March 16, 1958, in which he entrusted them with the mission to accomplish kosen-rufu.

suffer a thousand mutilations, what regret would I have?"

Second, it is vital that you take full responsibility for achieving kosen-rufu. It is important that you have the awareness of being a key player—in other words, not to merely regard yourself as part of the SGI but to view the SGI as an integral part of yourself.

I have done this from my youth. Even when I was a very junior frontline leader in the organization, I still regarded the entire Gakkai as my responsibility. And I agonized, pondered and prayed about how to advance kosen-rufu. In tackling any undertaking, I always tried to put myself in the shoes of my mentor, a great leader of kosen-rufu, asking myself: "What would Mr. Toda do in this situation? What approach would he take?" This is the courageous path of a champion of kosen-rufu.

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I was the master of ceremonies at the March 16 gathering. When Mr. Toda's 6,000 youthful disciples heard his impassioned cry, they were simply overjoyed. When he had finished his address to them, the ceremony came to a close amid a rendition of Gakkai songs.

That day, for some reason, my mentor's life seemed to me like a tenuous flame on the brink of extinction. I could not dispel a heavy feeling of sad-

ness and grief. I painfully sensed that this would be his last journey in life. The joyous struggle that we had shared when he was still strong, the wonderful happiness we experienced in propagating the Law together, now seemed bathed in the last traces of light of the vanishing sun at dusk.

I resolved to walk the lonely path of a lion alone.

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David Rossi, the hero of the novel *The Eternal City*, set in Rome at the turn of the 20th century, declares: "In every true cause someone is called to martyrdom. To die for [what is] right, for humanity...is a magnificent duty, a privilege! And I am ready." This has been my personal credo, ever since I was a young man.

Youth, my life's treasure, who will shoulder the full responsibility for the 21st century! Stand up with me! Even if it's just one of you, stand up and be a lion! Stand up resolutely where you are now, from this moment on! Steadily work to raise the flag of the people's victory here, there, and everywhere!

The Eternal City of the SGI will rise from your fighting spirit.

This essay was published in the "Thoughts on *The New Human Revolution*" series in the March 16 *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 7-8

The 900 Niigata and Uetsu members trapped on a train in a blizzard finally get off the train — they get to spend the night at Nagaoka members' homes.

Throughout the train, members sang such Soka Gakkai songs as “Song of the Sons of Japan,” “Song of Kosen-rufu in Asia” and “Song of the New Century.” When they finished, they were refreshed and invigorated. In the cars that held discussion meetings following the songs, members stood up one after another to share their determinations.

One man's eyes filled with tears as he spoke: “At first I was angry, wondering why, if this faith is supposed to bring us benefits, we had to go through this ordeal! But when I saw the Nagaoka members making their way to and from their homes so many times through the blizzard to bring us food—a trip of an hour and a half or two hours each way—I felt the warm, sincere spirit of the Gakkai.

“I am determined to work my hardest when I get back to Niigata to tell as many people as I can about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to spread this Gakkai spirit, this truly human spirit, widely in society.”

A woman stood up next, her cheeks flushed as she spoke: “The Daishonin says, ‘When

great evil occurs, great good follows’ (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1119). I feel like shouting right now, ‘I'm so happy to be a Soka Gakkai member! I will turn this experience into strengthened resolve to gain great benefit and show actual proof of faith.’”

The mood of the passengers completely transformed.

Meanwhile, the Nagaoka members were busy preparing more food, working without a break or even sleeping.

The next day, Jan. 26, rice balls were again delivered at breakfast and lunch. This time, not only were the stranded members provided with *miso* soup along with the rice, but they were also served generous portions of carrots, cabbage and other vegetables, out of the Nagaoka members' desire to make the meals more nutritious.

Shortly after noon on Jan. 26, the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo telephoned Miyauchi Station. When Kinji Eda took the call, he heard the voice of General Director Koichi Harayama, who asked how the members were doing. He told Eda that the Headquarters was requesting additional assis-



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

tance from nearby chapters and taking every possible step to help the Niigata and Uetsu members. He encouraged them to hang on and not lose heart. When Eda told his fellow members about the phone call, they cheered, fresh courage surging through them at news of the Headquarters' efforts.

A little after 3:00 p.m., the stationmaster came to inform Eda that in the evening the train would move on one stop to Nagaoka Station.

“That's great to hear,” Eda replied. “By the way, will we be able to find lodgings in Nagaoka?”

The stationmaster apologized: “I don't think so. I asked the staff at Nagaoka Station to see what they could do, but all the lodgings are full with passengers from other delayed trains. I'm very sorry, but I'm afraid you'll have to try to arrange something for yourselves.”

Using the phone at Miyauchi Station, Eda called Nagaoka Chapter Leader Masashi Takekawa. There was nothing for him to do but ask the Nagaoka members to put the stranded passengers up in their homes. Knowing how hard the Nagaoka members had already been working

to make and deliver food for them, it pained Eda to have to impose on them further. However, the passengers could not remain in the train any longer. Several of them had heart conditions or other chronic illnesses. It was amazing that they were still in high spirits.

When Takekawa heard Eda's request, he promptly replied: “Leave it to me. Don't worry. I'll get to work right away to arrange places for you to stay. We have to help each other out in times of difficulty.”

These words brought tears to Eda's eyes. “I am so sorry to have to impose on you this way. Thank you very much.” As he spoke, he bowed repeatedly, as if wishing to communicate his profound gratitude to Takekawa with his entire being.

Hearing that they would be spending the night at the homes of their fellow members in Nagaoka, the Niigata and Uetsu members cheered with joy.

At long last, the train started to move. Some 60 hours had passed since it had stopped at Miyauchi Station at 3:30 a.m. on Jan. 24. The train moved slowly, inching its way forward through the blizzard. It stopped several times, but at 5:00 p.m., finally arrived at Nagaoka Station.

Nagaoka Chapter members

were waiting to greet them. The 900 passengers were divided into small groups of three to five people and led off to the homes where they would sleep that night. A few homes had accepted as many as 20 or 30 overnight guests.

Within an hour of the train pulling into Nagaoka Station, all of the Niigata and Uetsu members were on their way to Nagaoka members' homes. The station personnel couldn't believe it. With as many as 900 passengers, experience had led them to expect much confusion and chaos. They were sure that it would take at least two hours to get everyone off to the right destination, and they assumed that some would be left without a place to go.

Deeply impressed, one of the station hands said: “It's amazing that lodgings for all these people under these circumstances should have been arranged so quickly. That's the Soka Gakkai for you! Seeing this has given me an appreciation for the strength of people united in faith and the incredible kindness and consideration of Soka Gakkai members.”

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



Toward an 'American' Organization: What Guidance Does History Offer?

PERSPECTIVE

By JAY HEFFRON
ALISO VIEJO, CALIF.



What exactly does it mean to create an "American" SGI-USA organization, one that, while honoring its Japanese roots, can move into the future with a distinctly American character? Given the many differences between Japan and the United States—in physical geography, in cultural and social mores, and in historical development—"it is only natural," SGI President Ikeda said when he was here in 1990, "that there might be differences in how *kosen-rufu* is advanced in the two countries." What might those differences be? Or to put the question another way: What are some of the unique characteristics of the American people and their institutions that might serve as a basis for the further growth and advancement of our organization in the United States?

These are important questions, for while Buddhist principles like *o-bai-to-ri* (cherry, plum, peach, damson blossoms) and *zuiho bini* (the precept to follow the customs of the locality) remind us of the importance of practicing Buddhism in a way that is unique to us, both as individuals and as members of our respective societies, it is also true that, as President Ikeda reminded us in 1990, "infinite variety derives from the one Law, and the true entity of life is the same in all societies." In geo-political terms alone, we live in an increasingly borderless world, one in which new challenges to the traditional sovereignty of the nation-state abound. In such an environment, we may have to begin to ask ourselves what sense it makes to speak of an American organization loyal to or reflecting a particular set of national traditions. How far should we go in stressing our exceptionalism when clearly the world is moving toward greater and greater interdependence; when our Buddhist values themselves stress such interdependence; and when, as our nation's history teaches us, only in the very broadest terms, if at all, is there a distinctive "American" culture? Even if we could prove to the world's satisfaction that we were exceptional, do we really want to do there as an organization?

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French writer whose classical study of the American way of life is read and re-read today for insights into this dilemma, suggests

something of the impossibility of the task, a difficulty rooted in the American personality itself. "No prudent man dared to be too certain," he observed, "of exactly who he was or what he was about; everyone had to be prepared to become someone else. To be ready for such perilous transmigrations was to become an American." Not only was American identity unfixed and constantly changing, it was an unstable element, "bottled lightning" in the words of another American commentator, holding in containment forces that were both dangerous and illuminating.

The indeterminacy of the American personality, its resistance to efforts to categorize and foreshorten it, does not mean that the materials do not exist for constructing a composite American identity. American character has been forged in a series of collective experiences—in the settlement of the nation by successive waves of immigrants (most voluntarily but many involuntarily; Africans, debtors, and indentured servants, for example), each bringing their own distinctive culture and folkways to the mix; in the two great cataclysms of our history, the American Revolution and the Civil War; in the challenges of rapid urban industrialization; and in the evolution of a culture industry whose stereotypes are at least as important for defining who we are as are any of our most authentic experiences. Running through all of these experiences have been "two inner drives, two central spirits," according to the historian Bernard Bailyn. One of them is an inveterate distrust of power, whether collected into the hands of a single individual, an interest group or the state. Leaders of the American Revolution developed an elaborate system of checks and balances, what another historian has called "a harmonious system of mutual frustration," to control, limit and restrict the use of power and to ensure responsible and humane leadership. This spirit remains a permanent legacy of the Revolution. SGI-USA will be an "American" organization to the extent that it too breathes and upholds this spirit as one of its highest aspirations.

The second inner drive according to Bailyn is the American opposition to privilege; the belief that next to power it is privilege, artificial and man-made, that has blocked the dream of equal op-

portunity for all. "Everywhere in America the principle prevailed that in a free community," Bailyn writes, "the purpose of institutions is to liberate people, not to confine them, and to give them the substance and the spirit to stand firm before forces that would restrict them." The struggle against privilege has often been a bitter one in the history of the United States, forced underground at various times only to burst forth again with new and irrepressible vigor. The immigrant history of the country is a good case in point.

Immigrant diversity, as fundamental as it has been in shaping the United States, has not always been the source of celebration and national pride that we sometimes think. It has also been a source of worry for those who through the ages have sought consensus (and avoided conflict) over the beliefs and values that might guide American development. The emergence in the late 19th, early 20th centuries of key phrases like "Americanization," "assimilation" and hyphenate-Americans was a response to the hardening of racial and ethnic lines of difference, but it was also something else: a conscientious effort to suppress those differences and fashion a vision of America that essentially excluded everyone but its original European settlers.

The notion that ethnic minorities and non-whites might pose a "problem" for the larger, universalizing project of American ultra-nationalists is still with us today, albeit in more subtle forms. It exists in such mandated public displays of loyalty as saluting the flag and pledging allegiance; in efforts to expunge from American speech untranslatable foreign words and phrases, except where they refer to such harmless items as the food we eat or the clothes we wear (no one I think would argue about eliminating the *taco* (Sp), *chow mein* (Ch), *sushi* (Jpn), *denim* (Fr), or *dungarees* (Hindi) from the lexicon); in the elimination of bilingual educational programs and in the growing movement against non-standard forms of English.

The controversy over language illustrates some of the difficulties Americans have had in understanding and accepting the diversity of sub-cultures that have existed and continue to exist in the United States. We no longer simply ask, "What does it mean to be an American?" but now also want to know, more contentiously,

"What is an acceptable language for Americans?" Certainly there was a time, not very long ago, when the desire to retain elements of foreign culture, including immigrants' native language, was stigmatized as "un-American." In the process of Americanizing itself, SGI-USA would be making a great mistake, however innocently or inadvertently, to align itself with this cramped and cramping vision of the American dream. Linguistic diversity is a fact of American life. What decides whether this or that foreign word or phrase enters the common pool has more to do ultimately with usage in a democracy than with policy and prescription.

There is an alternative to the vision of America that sees English language and custom as the primary carrier of our ideals. One that keeps better faith with the quintessentially American struggle against power and privilege. In 1916, the publicist Randolph Bourne called for a transnational America, declaring that America "shall be what the immigrant will have a hand in making it, and not what a ruling class, descendants of those British stocks which were the first permanent immigrants, decide what America shall be."

When we can view the enriching possibilities of other cultures as in some important way our own, we will have begun to appreciate our role as international citizens with an aesthetic appreciation of all cultures (including the culture of our ancestors). For Bourne this decentralized and internationalist pluralism was the only truly "American," democratic route to a "genuine integrity, a wholeness and soundness of enthusiasm and purpose." The alternative was the Melting Pot, "a tasteless, colorless fluid of uniformity" fit only for "cultural half-breeds" and "hyphenates," men and women "without a cultural country, cultural outlaws, without taste, without standards but those of the mob."

More recently, in a talk given as part of Soka University of America's Human Rights Lecture Series, Cornell West, professor of Afro-American studies and religion at Harvard University, criticized the tendency to view cultural and racial differences as "part of an undifferentiated blob. A homogeneous and monolithic conglomerate. Which makes black people interchangeable and substitutable. Which means you only have to ask one what the rest of us think." Other ethnic minorities as well as members of the

urban and rural poor often express the same frustration—the tendency to be seen as "objects and abstractions rather than persons and individuals" tied by bonds of love and loyalty to a particular community or cultural expression. For West the solution lies in developing an "empathetic imagination," an ability to identify with those who are "outside of one's own space and life and lifestyles." Unless we expand that "scope of empathy," we will continue to talk past each other and to misconnect, especially over perhaps the most important, if sensitive, conversation of all, the conversation about race.

When I think of the United States I think of one of my favorite quotes from Nichiren Daishonin in "A Ship to Cross the Sea of Suffering," where it says "All rivers flow into the sea, but does the sea turn back their waters? The currents of hardship pour into the sea of the Lotus Sutra and rush against its votary. The river is not rejected by the ocean; nor does the votary reject suffering. Were it not for the flowing rivers, there would be no sea" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 33).

We have a great tradition in America, one we have often had to fight to uphold, of accepting to our shores and accepting as full citizens people from all over the world. We have not always accepted them unconditionally, expecting them to conform at different times in our history to skewed notions of what it means to be an American. But in our finest hours we have resisted this temptation and have accepted new immigrants cultural baggage and all; indeed we have built one of our most powerful and enduring national myths around the celebration of these foreign cultural customs and traits and our ability to embrace and give full play to them.

An SGI-USA that is able to love and embrace humanity in all its cultural and linguistic diversity, beginning with its own representative membership, will be an American organization in the best sense of the term. It will not get bogged down in the specifics of terminology or in the foreign origins of certain forms and procedures, but strive, as one of the deepest aims of the SGI, to take all that the various people of our organization can offer and create a liberating whole out of it. Our cultural differences from other countries will remain important, but we will be able to see them as differences of degree rather than of kind, all springing nevertheless from the same fundamental hopes and dreams. **WT**

Perspectives printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA or the World Tribune.

Renewed Sense of Mission

I was deeply affected by SGI North American Bureau Director Norimasa Saito's guidance in the Dec. 10, 1999, *World Tribune* issue. That particular time of year, people seem to be more involved with relatives and shopping for friends and loved ones than soaking up guidance. I am no exception. In retrospect, I was chanting for a "theme" for our Paradise Group Meeting when I read the article. I was blown away by his directness, sincerity and honesty. If myoho means in part "to open," Mr. Saito's guidance did just that. It lit up my life. He just kept hitting the nail on the head over and over about goals, achieving major breakthroughs in life, and the point that the Daishonin did not establish the Gohonzon simply so we can wear nice clothes, live in a fabulous house or drive a fancy car. We have to have a higher sense of purpose. Mr. Saito goes on into relationships, the temple issue, and the mentor-disciple relationship. I have a renewed sense of mission!

—NANCY OWENS,
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Regarding Depression

While no one person has all the answers on handling the problem of depression, I would like to share my experience with overcoming it. After practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for almost 15 years, I finally summoned up the courage to chant to get to the bottom of whatever my anxiety/depression problem was and RESOLVE it. Amazingly, shortly thereafter, my brother called me from California and told me of breakthroughs he'd had with a similar problem caused by a chemical imbalance. He also suggested it may run in our family and that anti-depressants may be helpful to me.

Based on Buddhist wisdom, I urged my therapist to refer me to someone who could treat my problem chemically. It worked! Since becoming "chemically balanced," I now feel like my old self from 25 years ago and am able to face my problems with an optimistic attitude. Within one year of finding the correct medication (and continuing to strengthen my faith, practice and study), I ended an unhappy marriage, (my ex and I are now the best of friends), moved from D.C. to New York City, changed jobs three times and living quarters twice (al-

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ways to a better situation), and currently live in a place that I love and look forward to going to a pleasant work environment every day.

I now have the energy to work a weekend job also, as well as to exercise daily and make efforts to support my district through home visits, and by communicating via phone, e-mail and "snail" mail. Additionally, my father passed away suddenly about a month ago and although saddened, I was able to strengthen my faith EVEN MORE and encourage the mourners at my dad's funeral. (Some remarked it was the most ENCOURAGING funeral they had ever been to.)

Instead of feeling guilt-ridden and alternating between blaming myself or others, I now feel like a person who is showing actual proof of the power of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism by taking responsibility to improve my mental health and my life. I am not advocating taking anti-depressants as a cure-all; in my case, finding the CORRECT anti-depressant has been a TREMENDOUS BENEFIT and that I am able to make a greater contribution toward world peace by coupling the correct medication with correct practice.

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Use of Language

I did not think that I would ever be in the position to disagree with Dave Baldschun, whom I deeply respect and admire, but I must take exception to one aspect of his "Perspective" column in the March 17 *World Tribune*. Mr. Baldschun writes "There is no book in English called the Goshu. It was translated to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, which contain his letters and theses."

While I agree that many Buddhist terms need to be translated from Japanese, I deeply believe we should continue using the word *Goshu*. After all, *Goshu* is the name the second High Priest Nikko gave to the Daishonin's writings, and if we are to look at the holy books of the major religions of our time, we find that they all have a two-syllable word to describe them: Bible, Koran or Quran, Talmud, Vedas. There might even be a mystic reason

why humans choose two-syllable words to describe their holy books. The Bible could be further translated as "The teachings of Christianity and Jesus," but it is not. I don't believe we should change the title of *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* to *The Goshu of Nichiren Daishonin*, I just believe that the word *Goshu* should not be replaced. Once every two months, we have a *Goshu* study at the community center here in Memphis. That's easy to remember and easy to write on the calendar. Having a lecture on the writings of Nichiren Daishonin might be more complete, but it sure is a mouthful. So, for whatever it's worth, my vote goes to keep the word *Goshu*, even though I agree with every other point Mr. Baldschun makes in his exceptional article, I just felt strongly about this and had to write.

—RICHARD T. SADLER,
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In response to Dave Baldschun's Perspective (March 17 *World Tribune*) about the need to convey Japanese words in plain English in our organizational jargon, I believe that substituting English for some Japanese words would only serve to weaken our connection to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

All languages in the world continually undergo a process of universality, changing every 5 to 10 years. New words constantly come up in our speech, such as hippy, disco, etc. Buddhism holds that everything is in a constant state of flux. So is language. The addition of foreign words enriches our language. Besides, the American lexicon consists of a combination of languages that came through our multicultural heritage. Many familiar words have foreign origins, e.g., memoir, banquet (French); deportation, deposit, depression, genius (Latin); lexicon, symphony, micro, melody (Greek); opera, ghetto (Italian); altruism (combination of French and Latin); and slalom (Norwegian).

For the past 50 years, words formerly reserved for professional use have been absorbed into everyday language, e.g., email, telemarketing, laser, computer bookmark, etc. We cannot stop the process. No one language can exist in isolation. The prime characteristic of a liv-

ing civilization is the vitality of its language. Openness is a sign of a healthy nation. This Buddhist principle applies to the progress of any language, individual, country or organization.

In the last century, members of the Russian aristocracy spoke French exclusively, to separate themselves from ordinary people, the peasants. You know the end! Now, the nobility is extinct — while the Russian language contains more than 20,000 foreign words. Obviously we need to use common sense when using foreign words, not allowing them to dominate or abuse our language. Still, doesn't Dave Baldschun contradict himself by using words like jargon (French) or mimic (Greek)?

He also states: "There is no book in English called *The Goshu*." It is a term for "writing" in Japan. It was the same with the word *saga* when the English writer John Galsworthy published his masterpiece, using an ancient Scandinavian name in the title. Even though in plain English he could have translated it as "story" or "novel," using this "foreign" word increased the popularity of his book, *The Forsythe Saga*.

Using the Japanese word *Goshu* (not to be confused with "saga") to refer to the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, who was, after all, Japanese, shows appreciation and gratitude. Similarly, the word *Sensei* shows respect for President Ikeda. In the 20th century, only presidents Makiguchi and Toda shared this specific use of the term *Sensei* in recognition of their enormous efforts to propagate Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Some day, these terms may become anachronisms, but with the wisdom we gain through practice, we can gain understanding of the profound meaning behind words like *shakubuku*, *toso*, *gongyo* or *Soka Gakkai*. What riches they add to our cultural heritage!

—TANYA KIVISTO,
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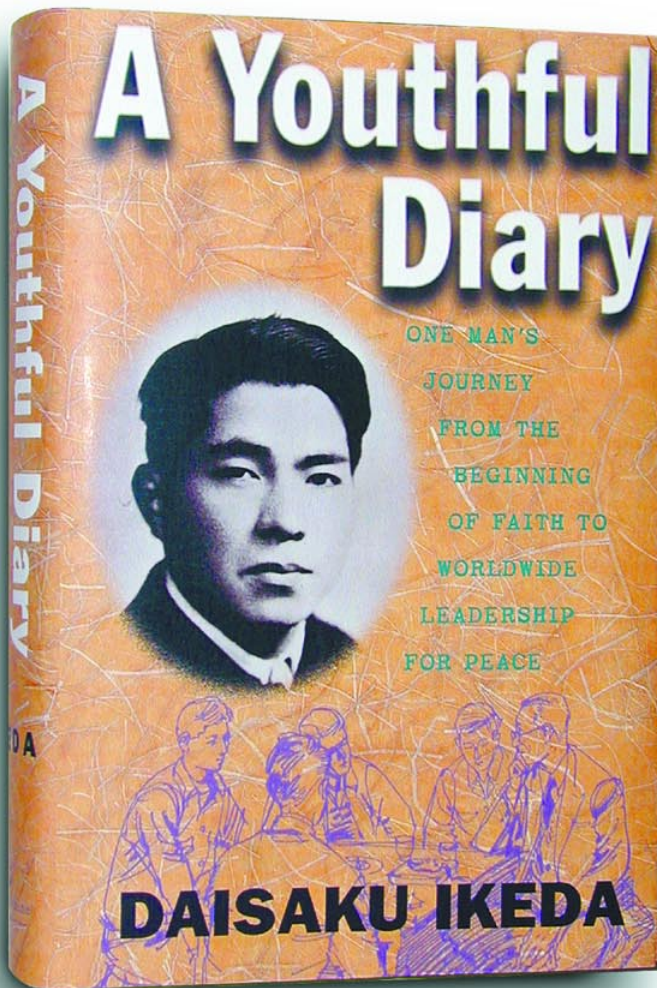
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