

# World TRIBUNE

## IN THIS ISSUE



**FEATURE:**  
VOV concerts held in Puerto Rico and St. Maarten

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## VOV in the Caribbean

By JAMIE LIPTAN  
STAFF WRITER



Dr. Lawrence E. Carter Sr.



Dr. Arun Gandhi



Orlando 'Peruchin' Cepeda



Nestor Torres

The SGI-USA's Victory Over Violence project has become a catalyst for bringing together diverse forces for diverse audiences in diverse venues.

Over seven days in the Caribbean islands of Puerto Rico and St. Maarten, SGI-USA members brought the message of VOV to their communities with the help of four of the world's foremost voices for nonviolence: Dr. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College; Dr. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and founder of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence; Orlando "Peruchin" Cepeda, Major League Baseball Hall of Famer and SGI-USA member; and Nestor Torres, internationally renowned jazz flautist and SGI-USA member.

Through community events, university lectures, media interviews and interfaith dialogues, many islanders were inspired to take responsibility for ending the violence that they see around them (see pages 4-5).

Each island's activities culminated in a VOV concert, featuring celebrated local artists and personalities (see pages 6-7). **WT**



On June 11, SGI-USA members in St. Maarten celebrate General Director Danny Nagashima's announcement of their new activity center, set to open later this year. Photos by Gregory Nakasuiji.

## SUA Dedicates Millennium Trail

By JEFF FARR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Orange County residents had their first chance to enter the Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo campus on June 3. The occasion was the dedication of the university's one-mile Millennium Trail, which circles the campus. The trail is the only one in Orange County to be recognized by the White House Millennium Council as an official community millennium trail.

Throughout the morning, as 500 people toured the 103-acre campus, SUA faculty and staff members were stationed along the trail to answer questions

about each building and the university's plans. Meanwhile, several local organizations participated in a community and health fair in front of the Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda Library.

"I'm pleased to be part of a dedication ceremony that celebrates the year 2000 with such a wonderful gift for generations of bicyclists, runners and walkers to come," said County Supervisor Thomas W. Wilson. The Aliso Viejo Community Association also presented a resolution to SUA on "this national recognition of its contribution to our community."

This successful event came just two weeks after the Orange County Register ran a full-page



Hikers pass by SUA's Student and Community Services Building, which is topped with a copper dome, June 3.

color story on the new campus, resulting in more than 10,000 hits to SUA's Web page, [www.soka.edu](http://www.soka.edu), the day the story ran. SUA received more

than 16,000 hits to its Web page in the month of May.

The first 100 freshmen will enter SUA's liberal arts program in August 2001. **WT**



Soka University President Daniel Habuki (left) and Orange County Supervisor Thomas W. Wilson unveil a marker for SUA's Millennium Trail.

# Earthly Desires

## Back to the Basics

By JEFF FARR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**W**e all have many kinds of desires. They are intrinsic to our being human. The culture we live in often encourages us to pursue our most unenlightened desires. More and more of what we *do not really need*—this is what

we must have to become happy, advertisements tell us.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism asks us to turn all our desires—even our lower ones—into enlightenment. The Daishonin shares his conviction that we can “burn the firewood of earthly desires and behold the fire of enlightened wisdom before our eyes” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 710). In other words, through struggling to satisfy all our desires through Buddhist practice, we bring forth Buddha wisdom.

Of course, we do not want to let our desires control us; we want to

use them in the best way. We can see them for what they are: tools to help us deepen our faith.

This is a different outlook from many religions, including many forms of Buddhism. We may have been taught to try to get rid of our desires, to be ashamed of them. This is tantamount to being embarrassed by our humanity.

It is important for us to discover pride in the connection between our current wants, worries and wishes and our eternal happiness. When we take everything to the Gohonzon, when we

do not hold anything back, our inner life grows in a beautiful way—our minds open to ever greater desires, including the happiness of all people.

“It is human nature to think of oneself,” SGI President Ikeda says. “The important thing is that we go to the Gohonzon just as we are. If we go out of our way to put on an air of nobility, as if all our concerns are lofty ones, then we are presenting a ‘false self.’ The Gohonzon does not respond to lies” (*June Living Buddhism*, p. 37).

Part of having this honest relationship with the Gohonzon can be challenging ourselves to pray for higher desires. This Buddhism does not teach that we should offer selfish prayers

until everything we ever wanted is achieved and *then* start praying for the rest of humanity. We can do both at the same time. Again, our desires for our lives and our desires for kosen-rufu are inextricably linked.

Earthly desires help us practice to the point where all our desires become expressions of our Buddhahood. The Daishonin teaches that “life is limited; we must not begrudge it. What we should ultimately aspire to is the Buddha land” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 214). This Buddha land, which is found in our hearts, is built on the bedrock of every aspiration that we pray to the Gohonzon about. Earthly desires, in short, are our friends! **WT**

JULY 16—‘RISSHO ANKOKU RON’ SUBMITTED

# A Vision Seen With More Than the Eye

## Significant Dates

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

By JEFF KRIGER

SGI-USA VICE STUDY DEPT. LEADER

**O**n July 16, 1260, Nichiren Daishonin submitted a document to the ruler of Japan describing both the cause and solution to that nation's grave misfortune.

In “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” (Rissho Ankoku Ron), Nichiren Daishonin observes that, despite devotion to religious ritual, “Famine and epidemics rage more fiercely than ever, beggars are everywhere in sight, and scenes of death fill our eyes. Corpses pile up in mounds like observation platforms, and dead bodies lie side by side like planks

on a bridge” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 6).

The Daishonin goes on to state the reason for this misery: “The people of today all turn their backs upon what is right; to a person they give their allegiance to evil” (WND, 7). By “what is right” he means the right teaching of Buddhism—the teaching that identifies the treasure within the life of every person, and gives people the power to bring forth this treasure. It is the Lotus Sutra's teaching of the inherent value and dignity of every human life.

By “evil” he meant a teaching that offered no hope for this world, claiming that life in the real world is something to be despised. This meant an ultimate failure to recognize the supreme potential, value and dignity of human life.

The Daishonin deeply grasped the connection between the inner condition of people's

hearts and the outer world. He knew that as long as people's hearts remained dark and hopeless, society would remain dark and hopeless.

Early on July 16, 1945, a group of scientists, politicians and military observers peered out 20 miles across a flat area in the New Mexico desert called Jordana Del Muerto, literally, “Journey of Death.” One physicist, Isador I. Rabi, describes what he observed: “Suddenly, there was an enormous flash of light, the brightest light I have ever seen or that I think anyone has ever seen. It blasted; it pounced; it bored its way right through you. It was a vision which was seen with more than the eye. It was seen to last forever. You would wish it would stop: altogether it lasted about two seconds. Finally it was over, diminishing, and we looked toward the place where the bomb had been; there

was an enormous ball of fire which grew and grew and it rolled as it grew; it went up into the air, in yellow flashes and into scarlet and green. It looked menacing. It seemed to come toward one.

“A new thing had just been born...” (Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, p. 672).

None could know the real menace—the massive carnage and misery that similar devices would wreak weeks later in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We might say that this “new thing” was the offspring of unlikely parents: of global human vices that Buddhism calls the “three poisons”—greed, anger and ignorance—coupled with great ingenuity. It's grandchildren, each hundreds of times more destructive, have spread beyond anyone's imagination, posing a threat that most of us forget to think about.

From the standpoint of Buddhism, belief in the justifiable use of nuclear weapons constitutes an “allegiance to evil.” The idea that nuclear weapons are necessary stems from a fundamental lack of respect for the value of human life. This conviction is the legacy of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda. SGI President Ikeda has been exerting all his energies to realize a vision of the heart—a vision to uproot this evil by spreading and securing a fundamental respect for human life. If the history of this day moves us to ask what more we can do to “establish the correct teaching” of human dignity and to “secure peace,” then July 16 is a truly significant date. **WT**

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## SGI-USA Memorial Held at Rose Hills



On May 28, more than 300 SGI-USA members, family and friends from Southern California gathered for a memorial at the Oasis of Eternity, SGI-USA's cemetery located at Rose Hills Memorial Park.



Participants pay their respects for the deceased by offering ceremonial incense during the recitation of gongyo.

Photos by TONY SUGANO

# What Do You Think About Victory Over Violence?

## CARIBBEAN VOICES



**JOSE LUIS VARGAS, San Juan, Puerto Rico:** I was very impressed by an article that Arun Gandhi wrote about non-violence (in the VOV packet). I kept that article with me all the time since we started this campaign, because it defined very well the message that Mahatma Gandhi was trying to get across.

For me, this campaign has been a personal campaign, not only to practice nonviolence for the community but also to practice nonviolence myself. One of the things that impressed me about this article was that he talks about how we have to see the possibility of having a life without violence just as we can see the possibility of getting an A in school — it has to be an objective.

For me that was very radical, because we are so used to violence — it's such a common trend — and that's the way we expect to live our lives. The article was saying, "No, not necessarily." You see, when it comes to nonviolence, I believe the way it has an impact on society is when people decide to be nonviolent personally, individually. Then they can actually start to impact other people. I practice nonviolence by giving my students the opportunity to learn what I have learned.



**EVELYN RIVERA, with her son, Alex Willoughby, San Juan, Puerto Rico:** Vida Sin

Violencia (Life Without Violence) for me has been a change in terms of work — really applying how to work with my co-workers and being able to show actual proof. At work, I introduced my boss to Buddhism. Everyone at my work knows that I practice, and that I've introduced my boss. This campaign has helped me to understand that it's not just about physical violence, it's also about the way that I speak to people in order for them to react the way I want them to react. And also showing them that I use what I practice in my daily life.

It's also helped me a lot with my son, Alex, who is 14. He spends a lot of time alone. Because he practices, he understands what I have to do. So many times I come home very overwhelmed. I know it's not easy for him. Sometimes not consciously, I express a lot of the anxiety or stress that I've had all day. With this campaign, I've learned to work toward being compassionate and understanding, and not to come home and load it off on him. He's been very compassionate and understanding. When I come home, he wants to know how was the day and what can he do to help me relax. That to me has helped me put a stop to letting out my frustration.

Vida Sin Violencia for Puerto Rico, for me, is knowing that I have to really show society how this works in my daily life, through my actions.



**DAPHNIE ILLIS, St. Maarten:** The junior and senior high school students are taking Victory Over Violence very seriously. What I realize is that my nieces at home are more conscious of the campaign than I am. The little things that you tell them, they remind you: "That's violence. You shouldn't be doing that. You shouldn't be teasing. You shouldn't be calling people names." My niece is 14, and she has taken it very seriously.

With her friends, she is very conscientious. She is like the peacemaker in her class.

The youth members here in St. Maarten are running in many different directions, and sometimes it is so overwhelming that you feel you are not doing enough. But when I see activities like this, then I realize that I have done something. It's paying off!



**PATRICIA O'GRADY, Antigua:** I've been practicing for 13 years. In Antigua, we've been a pretty steady group. There are 12 members. The reason I came to this activity was because I need to grow, and I know the benefit of participating in any activity. I felt like giving some kind of support.

I've understood personally about violence and how it affects your life. I feel that in our kosen-rufu movement and particularly working with other organizations, we need to be aware of how violence affects each of us. We talk about the Ten Worlds — we talk about Anger, and I never understood how much anger was inside my own life. So chanting has helped me realize that you can use anger in a very positive way. It possesses Buddhahood, too.

Coming here has been basically a big eye-opener about violence in our daily lives. We can make a positive choice and take positive action. At the crucial moment, there's always a point where you make a choice, so we're always responsible for what's going on. That is the power of one person making the difference. If you make that difference by not shouting at your child or by doing something good for yourself instead of slandering your life, then it really does make a difference.

**JOY REIPH ARNELL, St. Maarten:** Last year there was a lot of youth crime. There were robberies and fighting at schools. The police were constantly going there.



Every few months, there is something happening. The aggression is there. We have gone to two different high schools to show the VOV video, and then we have a dialogue. The teachers have asked us to come in. Eventually, we are going to go to all the high schools.

Orlando Cepeda has gotten together with the high school students here to talk about his experience with violence. They are receptive, but they can't believe they can see a change. When we talk about one person being able to make a difference if he or she takes responsibility, though, they agree.

We established a VOV Foundation in St. Maarten on May 3 made up of not only SGI members but also people in the community. We have an advisory board for the foundation made up of different leaders of churches and the police commissioner.



**ROBERTO VARELA, San Juan, Puerto Rico:** The major problem with violence is the way that we view it. Maybe we don't kill but we discriminate against other people. Now we are trying here in Puerto Rico to find a way to help. Right now at my campus we are trying to help people by building homes. We don't want to have a news conference to tell people we went to X house to help build a room. That's not the case. We only want the guy to at least be thankful. If he has a problem with drinking or drugs, then we want to help him change his life. When he changes his life,

he can help other people.

I am grateful because I am well. I have good health. But if I don't help other people to live better, to not accept violence as a way of life, then I cannot say that I am grateful. Because if I want to live better, then I want other people to live better also. And if I don't want to see other people live better, then why am I living?

I think the core of a human being is to help others. I think that is what makes human beings what they are.

And I think we have seen changes in the world, but truly these changes have to come from our hearts. If we don't change ourselves, the purpose of our life is in vain.



**TERESITA RODRIGUEZ, San Juan, Puerto Rico:** For me, VOV is something we need in Puerto Rico because we are living in turmoil. There are so many people who need an alternative. We are committed to spreading VOV to society.

Orlando "Peruchin" Cepeda is a good example for us. He was brought up poor and had a lot of stones in the road, but he transformed himself into someone worthwhile.

Peruchin had a chance to talk with a lot of youth in the housing projects in Puerto Rico. The kids were all saying, "I want to be like him." I see that this movement has spread throughout the entire island of Puerto Rico.

One of the chancellors from the Inter-American University and the president of the University of Puerto Rico are very committed, as are other organizations, to trying to get kids off the streets. They see this as an alternative — trying to teach culture and peace rather than violence. We are teaching them that they have to take responsibility for their actions. We have the power to change. **WT**

Reporting and photos by Jeff Farr and Jamie Liptan

# Activists Join VOV Effort



Dr. Gandhi lectures on nonviolence at the University of Puerto Rico, June 9.



University of Puerto Rico students respond to Dr. Gandhi's lecture.



Dr. Gandhi and Dean Carter encourage a student at Carlos Albizu University, San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 8.

**D**r. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and founder of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, joined SGI-USA's Vida Sin Violencia (Life Without Violence, the name of VOV in Puerto Rico) project for three days of events in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Lecturing at the University of Puerto Rico, Dr. Gandhi said: "In today's society, justice has come to mean revenge. This is why we are so violent. But true justice is reformation. We must channel our anger at injustice into reforming society."

Dr. Gandhi also conducted numerous interviews for major television, newspaper and radio outlets. During a live interview on the popular talk radio program, "The Nacha Rivera Show," Dr. Gandhi stated: "The Soka Gakkai International has launched the Victory Over Violence program. I would like all the people of Puerto Rico to participate in it and learn a little more about the philosophy of nonviolence. Let us live our religious beliefs." **WT**

**Arun Gandhi**

Photo by JAMIE LIPTAN



Dr. Gandhi talks about VOV in a live interview on 'The Nacha Rivera Show,' June 8.

Reporting by Jeff Farr and Jamie Liptan  
Photos by Gregory Nakasuji

## Ponce Confers Honor on SGI President



In a resolution conferring an honorary citizenship on SGI President Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda, Mayor Rafael Cordero Santiago of Ponce, Puerto Rico, writes: 'As an authentic visionary of our time, Dr. Ikeda continues to offer his message of tolerance, unity and understanding within diverse cultures.'



Founded in 1692 by the family of Ponce de Leon, Ponce has become a center of Puerto Rican art and culture. The city's plaza, pictured here with City Hall, is adorned with beautiful fountains and statues, including many lions, the city's symbol.

Photo by JEFF FARR



A dialogue prior to Dean Carter's lecture at Carlos Albizu University, June 8. (L-R) Carlos Albizu University President Dr. Salvador Santiago-Negron; Nestor Torres; Dr. Daniel Habuki, SUA president; Dean Carter; SGI-USA member Andy Sanchez; Dr. Arun Gandhi.



Lawrence Carter

On June 9, Dean Carter encourages a student at the Republic of Colombia High School who has experienced racism: 'You know what rejection is. But don't reject yourself. If you reject yourself, you will have nothing to give to other people.'



Dean Carter meets with St. Maarten religious leaders on June 11, sharing his views on the importance of interfaith work for nonviolence.

Dean Lawrence Carter Sr. of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel introduced Victory Over Violence to Caribbean students, scholars and clergy. In a mesmerizing lecture at Carlos Albizu University on June 8, he said: "We have got to affirm each other, irrespective of superficially visible [differences].... Everybody, Dr. King said, is a sacred personality, an autonomous center of value."

Dean Carter spent a lot of time talking with high school and college students one on one; he also visited the Republic of Colombia High School and Sacred Heart University in San Juan.

In St. Maarten on June 11, he spoke to a group of clergy, emphasizing that "the strength to love" must propel an interfaith movement to end violence. "Unconditional love is Soka—the creation of value," he said. "Everyone here is a value creator. We have that chance every moment we breathe." **WT**



Orlando Cepeda celebrates with friends as a street is dedicated in his name, June 8.

Orlando Cepeda

Last year, Orlando Cepeda made his homeland of Puerto Rico proud by becoming a Baseball Hall of Famer. When Mr. Cepeda returned to Puerto Rico earlier this month to start the Vida Sin Violencia program, Puerto Rico was all ears.

On June 8, Mr. Cepeda introduced VSV at various events in San Juan. The day began with the Department of Sports and Recreation naming a street in Barrio Obrero in his honor: Avenida Orlando "Peruchin" Cepeda. Mr. Cepeda told several hundred well-wishers who attended the dedication that "there has been so much violence in my life. I thought that was the way to deal with my problems. But I learned from the SGI that there is another way."

Mr. Cepeda also appeared on *El Show de Remi*, a children's TV program, and visited a recreation center in the community of Luis Llorens Torres, where he received a commendation for his work with youth in the neighborhood. **WT**



Orlando Cepeda encourages little leaguers in the community of Luis Llorens Torres, June 8.

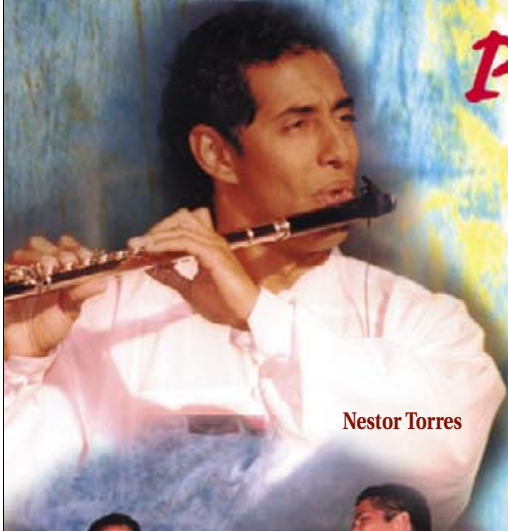


The Department of Sports and Recreation names a street after Orlando Cepeda, June 8.

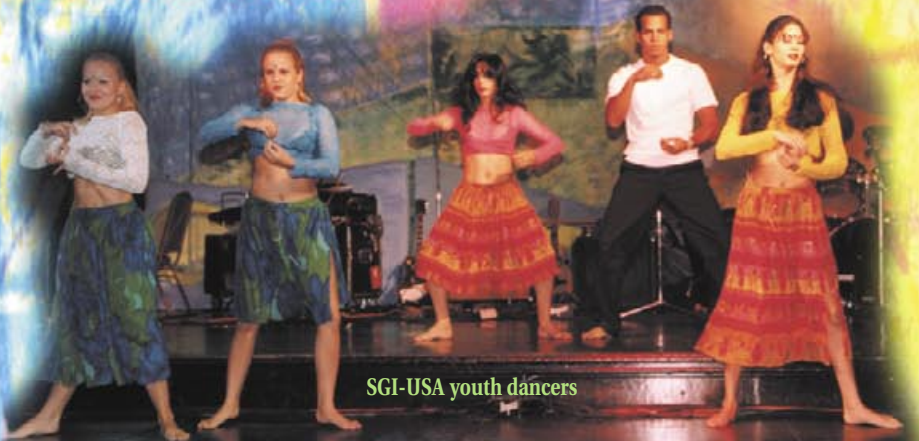


Orlando Cepeda, with José Vega—Puerto Rico's Remi the Clown—talks about nonviolence and his experience in the SGI on 'El Show de Remi,' June 8.

# Puerto Rico



Nestor Torres



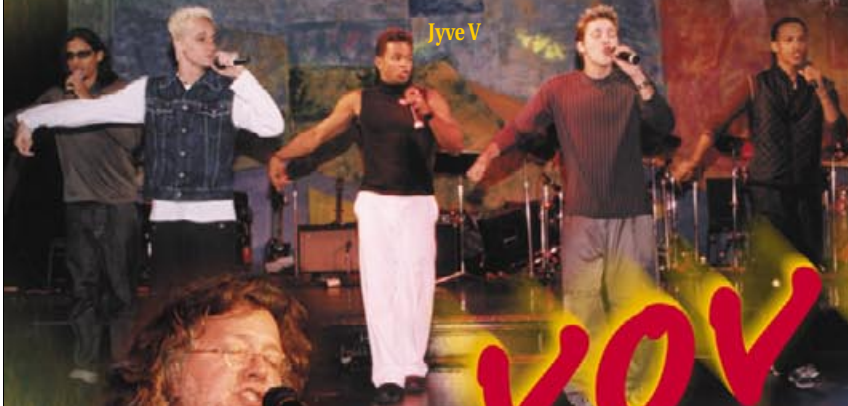
SGI-USA youth dancers



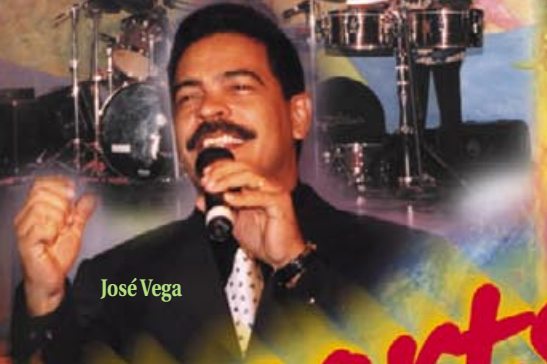
Los Juanes del Pueblo



Edgar Marrero



Jyve V



José Vega

# VOV Concerts



Roy Brown



Maldo

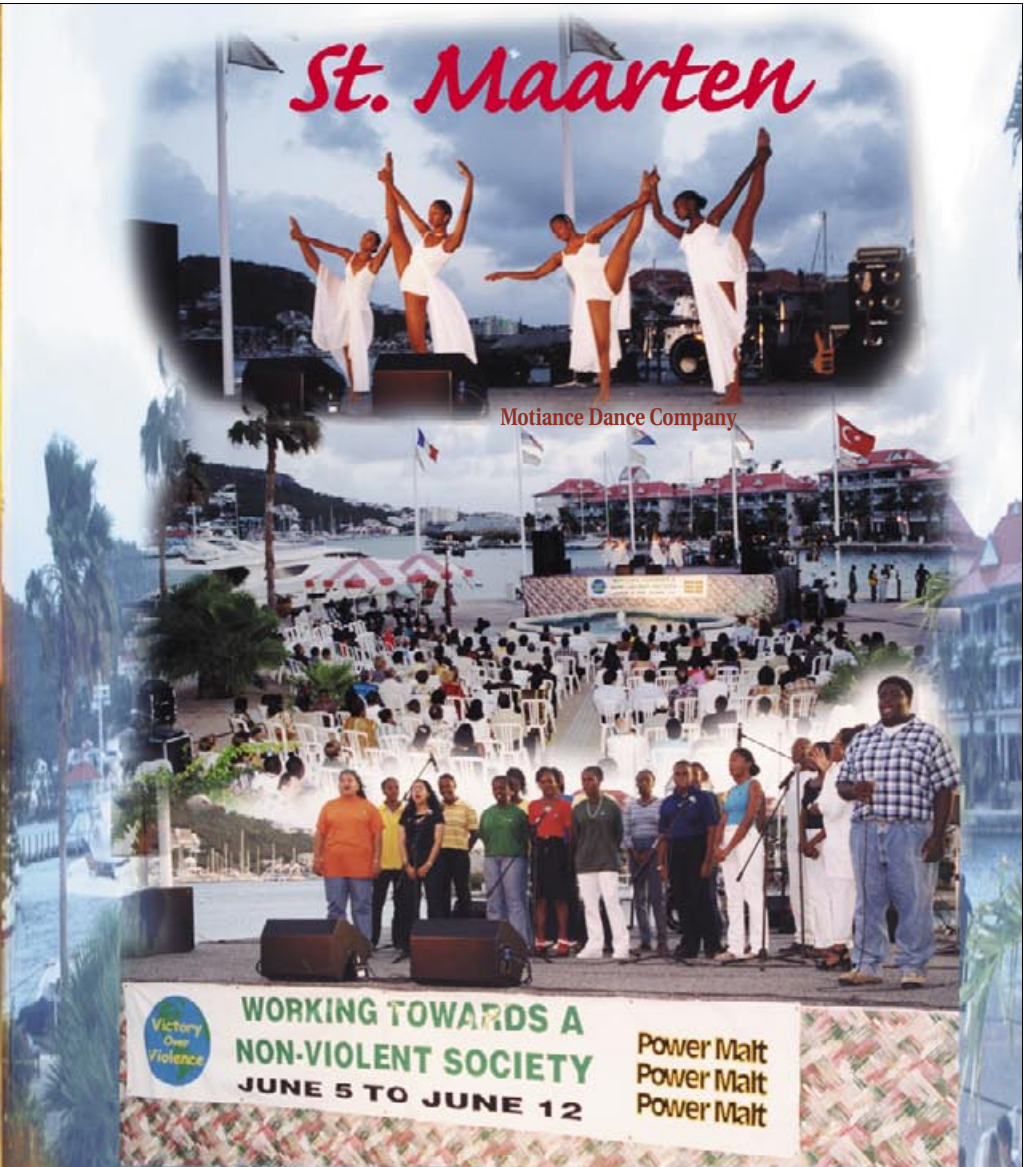
Manolito Rodriguez

Orlando



Astrid Lopez

Orlando 'Peruchin' Cepeda



# St. Maarten

Motiance Dance Company



Nigel Williams

King Bobo

Youmay Dormoy

Nestor Torres with VOV Collective Chorus

EXPERIENCE — JOELLE GONCALVES, SANTA ROSA, CALIF.

# Victory Over Violence, Victory Over Self

**Joelle Goncalves overcomes her fear of confrontation at her workplace.**

**O**n March 11, I celebrated my 11th year of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. One of the greatest challenges throughout my practice has been my deep fear of confrontation and my lack of self-esteem, which weakened my ability to stand up for myself. I have also been known to hold grudges as a convenient way to avoid confrontation.

Three years ago, I was hired to work for a local peace organization in Santa Rosa, Calif., the Peace and Justice Center. I felt I must have changed my karma to work at a place where everyone would get along peacefully. This was the peace center — how perfect, right? Wrong!

The best way I can sum up the challenges I experienced while working there is to include my resignation letter. It was read at the monthly board of directors meeting by the executive director.

The director had only been working there a short time but was the first person to recognize my struggles and encouraged me to write this honest, yet compassionate letter:

"When I was hired as the assistant to the director two years ago, I arrived with a fresh determination as to how I could make a difference in the Peace and Justice Center. Although there are a multitude of things that I have learned since then, the most important has been perseverance.

"When our previous director left a month earlier than had been expected, I caught the ball with no prior training. I was asked to move into her office and began juggling the many tasks that a director has. This included correspondence with members of our community who were left with unanswered questions, unfinished business and unfinished projects due to the abrupt departure of our director. Though fulfilling director tasks without the title, I challenged myself and I persevered.

"Feeling pride in having run the Center alone for six months, I was deeply saddened when I was asked not to apply for the director's position, all the while

fulfilling the director's responsibilities. I recall the day I was abruptly told we were hiring someone new and not asked until the following day how I felt about it. Shocked at the lack of straightforwardness, I was speechless. Though stunned, I persevered.

"I created and sent dozens of applicant packets and typed a thank you for applying letter on letterhead that I had recently redesigned. As the pit in my stomach grew due to feeling ignored in the process, I received many calls from certain board members — not about how I was feeling — but inquiring about the number of applicants.

"How did my feelings fit into this equation? I wanted my opinion to be heard because I would be working every day with this person. I continued to persevere.

"I welcomed our new director, Suzanne. Actually, she was the first to sit me down, ask about my feelings and validate my growing concerns. She immediately recognized my strengths and was comfortable in hearing a difference of opinion. Suzanne is aware of the real challenges that take place: not only the injustice abroad but here in our own Center.

"My final stage in personal perseverance came during the annual dinner meetings. This was the second year in a row that I had suggested we begin the program during dinner so that the evening would not run late. I was not listened to. Other ideas I had were overlooked and oftentimes, with Suzanne as my witness, I was reprimanded for them.

"What could have been different had my ideas been used? The silent auction is the example. I created all of the silent auction materials without review from the committee and coordinated all of the donations as well. The auction went perfectly bringing in nearly \$1,000. For the first time ever, I oversaw a project and used my creativity to the fullest extent. Perseverance.

"I was well aware it was time to give my notice. Before I left, however, what was to be my final contribution? How could I use my experience to create a more welcoming environment for future employees? One of course is this letter, which is a plea that asks, 'If you're going to Celebrate Diversity, then recognize that it involves difference of opinion, and a willing-

ness to trust those of a differing opinion — particularly from youth. After all, are youth not the future?'"

"My second gift was in organizing a Thursday Night titled "Youth Victory Over Violence." It was a new and creative Buddhist-based dialogue about taking ownership of the passive violence in our lives. I've always felt it hypocritical to work for peace in Kosovo while we are unable

to treat difference with respect here in our own immediate environment. The night was a huge success with over 25 people in attendance, 20 whom had never set foot in the Center before.

"In closing, I would like to trust that the experiences described in this letter will be taken into deep consideration and not dismissed because they may be different from the experiences of the board."

**A**fter this letter was read at the Monday night board meeting, according to two reliable sources (I was not there) silence fell upon the room. A group that was always so eager to talk over one another had nothing to say. After 30 seconds of silence, someone said, "I believe we should give this serious consideration." Another agreed. A volunteer who was there to make a presentation decided to talk about my letter instead of giving his report: "I agree with Joelle and I have had similar experiences in the past where I was not listened to."

The final consensus among the board was to hold a special meeting to discuss my letter and the future treatment of all employees. My letter then became a reference tool for future relationships between the board and the staff!

All of this, of course, was made possible through my hours of chanting, forging ahead in local SGI activities, my years of training as a young women's leader and participating in the Byakuren Group. It sounds like a lot of causes, but the key difference for me (this



Joelle Goncalves at the Victory Over Violence display table at the Sonoma County Center for Peace and Justice in Santa Rosa, California.

time around!) was taking action. It would have been much easier to not write the letter at all and leave the Center with my tail between my legs. This type of behavior, however, would be contradictory to what SGI President Ikeda is hoping for from the youth of SGI. Being courageous at the crucial moment became my focus.

Two days after the board meeting, I met with the board president at my house for lunch. Before she arrived, I became paralyzed with fear. The guts it took to write the letter paled in comparison to the confrontation I was about to have. The reason? It was the president whom I had spoken of throughout my letter and she and I both knew that.

She arrived. We made small talk. She then plunged into the letter and critiqued my analysis. We were both on the defensive, there at my kitchen table. However, I knew that my prayers to the Gohonzon would surely manifest and somehow I would turn the conversation around. As I watched her speak, I began realizing that it was our similarities — not our differences — that caused such conflict between us. We were both controlling and strong-willed in order to cover up our deep insecurities. I finally opened my mouth and said, "You know, we are far more similar than we are different." That was the turning point. No more attacks, just raw human emotion and the feeling of meeting a long-lost family member. We had arrived to our personal victories.

At the end of our conversation, she apologized deeply and

asked that "I forgive her." Fighting back the tears was difficult, but I managed to say, "...and if we're as similar as I think we are, what you just said was extremely difficult." She laughed and extended her hands across the table. We held hands and I felt absolute victory in my life. I felt that any grudge I have ever held could be reconciled through this same technique. One week later, she announced her resignation as the board president.

As I look back, I realize that what I wanted most out of my position was to be the Peace Center director. I wanted to flaunt that I had a big position. What ended up happening however was much deeper and quite the opposite. My role was not the directorship — it was to change the way that people treated each other. I laid the foundation for all future employees to have a comfortable working relationship with all members of the Center.

In addition, I was reminded about the importance of standing up for myself and taking action based on the determination I made in front of the Gohonzon. This is the transformation that happened internally as a result of my prayer.

With regard to taking action, I would like to share a quote from President Ikeda that inspired me: "Buddhism is found in the reality of society and daily life. Because Buddhism is in no way separate from this reality, we must strive through our actions to be exemplary models for others" (*For Today and Tomorrow*, p. 227).

That is what my struggle was ultimately about. **WJ**

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 24 SPEECH—PART 1

# WHEN WE STAND UP

**‘When ordinary people stand up, they can change history,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘This is the purpose of our day-to-day SGI activities.’**

*Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 46th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, May 24.*

**T**oday, I will talk with you informally. I hope you will listen in a relaxed, easy mood. We have many SGI members with us from overseas, including representatives from South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, Singapore, the United States, Brazil, Argentina, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Poland. Thank you all for coming from so far away!

**A first-rate person's greatness is recognized by both friends and opponents.**

Congratulations to the Soka University Baseball Team! [The Soka University Baseball Team won first place in the New Tokyo University Baseball League's spring tournament.]

I hope the teaching staff of Soka University will encourage students who are striving hard in various spheres, as if they were their children.

Good leaders encourage and cheer others on to the extent that the other person thinks: "If my effort makes you this happy, I'm so glad that I challenged myself. I will never forget how you encouraged me." Leaders should strive to encourage others with so much feeling that their words remain forever in people's hearts.

A first-rate person's greatness is recognized by friends and opponents alike. Arrogance and conceit just testify to a lack of any real strength or ability.

There is no more humanistic realm than the world of Soka.

**To fight unflinchingly against evil — this is the Soka Gakkai spirit.**

The famous French writer Victor Hugo says: "All things

aid those who do good.... The weather will be for us, the north wind will be for us, the rain will be for us." Indeed, all things side with those who do good. Likewise, all things and phenomena around us function as heavenly deities — the protective forces of the universe.

"Let us fight resolutely against injustice and evil!" This is Hugo's cry. This is also the cry of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda. And this is the legacy of our founding president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. This articulates the commitment of those who champion the cause of justice — the commitment of Buddhists.

To fight unflinchingly against the forces of evil that seek to oppress and destroy those dedicated to truth and justice — this is the Soka Gakkai spirit. To stand by and do nothing when one sees injustice happening is cowardly and hideously self-centered. Please never become that kind of spiritless, apathetic leader. It is vital that you have the acuity to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong. I ask the youth division members to stand up and fight, and the youth division leaders to be in the vanguard of those efforts.

**In unity is strength found.**

Let me share a few Korean proverbs with you.

"In unity is strength."

"We live by unity and die by division."

"A crowd will draw even the lame person along with it."

In other words, even a person with an injured leg can move forward powerfully with the help of others. These are words of wisdom from Korea, a country to which Japan is indebted for the transmission of Buddhism.

Let's show our fellow members in South Korea our great expectations and share our congratulations on the new departure of SGI-Korea, foremost in harmony and happiness!

I hope that Japan and Korea will advance in complete unity. I hope that we will move forward as the best, closest friends in the world.

**A true leader values each and every individual.**

We have Seamen's Group members with us as well. [This is a group of men's and young



On May 24 at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall, SGI President Ikeda encourages members of Soka University's baseball team, which won first place in the New Tokyo University Baseball League's spring tournament.

men's division members who work as seamen, sailors and in other ocean-going occupations.] Let's congratulate them on the success of their historic photography exhibition in India! ["Photographs of Men of the Sea" opened in Mumbai, India, on May 12.]

The world is our stage. We are not limited to Japan. I am always looking to the world. I am always acting for the sake of the world.

Let me tell you a little story that took place some 60 years ago. An American sailor sent a letter to the renowned physicist Albert Einstein, who was opposed to Hitler's leadership. The sailor wrote this letter in February 1939 while at sea in a storm. He had read one of Einstein's richly humane articles and was deeply moved. The sailor wrote of his strong resolve to join Einstein's fight for humanism and human rights.

To his surprise, he received a cordial reply from the great Einstein. Here we can learn an important lesson: A true leader values each and every individual. He or she never looks down on others, respecting them from the heart.

Dr. Einstein's letter communicates his honest, open joy. He says that his hope for better times to come was founded not on political leaders but on the existence of upright people like the sailor, people who seek justice and refuse to compromise their ideals (Denis Brian, *Einstein: A Life*, p. 314). This was the belief of perhaps the

greatest mind of the 20th century, Einstein.

We must place our trust in good people. And there is no group of people in the world better described as upright people who seek justice and refuse to compromise their ideals than the SGI. It is vital that we strengthen and protect this wonderful organization. The advance of our movement will become a source of hope for all humanity.

When ordinary people stand up, they can change history. This is the purpose of our day-

to-day SGI activities. Each of these efforts is an important step forward in kosen-rufu — a step on the great path, the great course leading to the future of humanity.

In any event, I can imagine how delighted Einstein would have been to meet our Seamen's Group members. I'm sure he would have been impressed by you and offered praise for your efforts! I salute you all as the captains of kosen-rufu.

*(To be continued in the July 7 issue)*

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

### Knowing Good From Evil

From This Speech:

To fight unflinchingly against the forces of evil that seek to oppress and destroy those dedicated to truth and justice — this is the Soka Gakkai spirit. To stand by and do nothing when one sees injustice happening is cowardly and hideously self-centered. Please never become that kind of spiritless, apathetic leader. It is vital that you have the acuity to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong. I ask the youth division members to stand up and fight, and the youth division leaders to be in the vanguard of those efforts.

- 1) What kind of injustices or evils do you see around you?
- 2) How do you want to fight them?
- 3) SGI President Ikeda often says that Nichiren Shoshu has treated SGI members unjustly. Why do you think that he says this?
- 4) What are some of the ways that we as individuals can fight this injustice?
- 5) How do you distinguish between good and evil?
- 6) How do you think that Buddhism defines good? Evil?

# REDEFINING THE AMERICAN MAN

## PERSPECTIVE

**Jamie Liptan takes a personal look at the changing role of men in today's society.**

By JAMIE LIPTAN  
SANTA MONICA, CALIF.



Photo by JAMIE HALDEMAN

Lately, I have been reflecting on what it means to be a man in our society, particularly a young man. How do I meet the changing expectations of my family and peers while pursuing my own dreams? Where can I find other men who have successfully met this challenge?

In the past several decades, the societal definition of American men has drastically changed — from one of leaders of the family unit and unquestioned decision-makers for all of society's issues to co-participants in a more fundamental and broad-based democracy. While this shift in roles is completely appropriate from a Buddhist perspective, it has in many ways left young men very much on their own in discovering what it means to be a "true man."

It used to be the place of a "true man" to, without questioning, take up arms and die for his people. He might have nobly taken on a career totally unrelated to his field of interest to support his family, spending his life frustrated and depressed that he never pursued his dreams. He was often told to "take it like a man," and taught that violence was the way "true men" proved their worth in the eyes of others.

These themes have been played out in movies, books, music — and reflected in the lives of men all around us. We can clearly see the effects of such ideas in the violence and destruction we experienced in the 20th century, a time in which men were primarily responsible for society's decisions.

The role of men is changing

very rapidly. Now, we have more choices. We don't have to be the bread-winner — many women are choosing to take on this role. We don't have to be the emotionally removed husband and disciplinary father. We can choose any path in life, regardless of its traditional definition.

The problem for many of us has become that because these choices are so new, there are not yet many role models among the men around us to provide guidance on how to get there. How then, do we become the sensitive yet strong, bold but gentle, confident but humble men that society is clamoring for us to be?

Recently, I have been reading the newly published *A Youthful Diary*, SGI President Ikeda's personal record of growth from 1949 through 1960. This book is incredible! Here is a young man, in the midst of post-war chaos and a society redefining itself, earnestly seeking the best way to become a great man. He is unrelenting in his quest to understand his true nature and foster his character.

He writes: "Scolded by Mr. Toda. Agonizing. All my fault. Must reflect on myself. I believe in Mr. Toda, and I'll strive to the bitter end. I've got to recognize my weak points and

change them... otherwise I'll be miserable all my life. Must advance again, with all my might. Remember the childhood and youth of great men of the past" (*A Youthful Diary*, p. 9).

In another entry, he says: "Periodically, ideals and reality mix and my mind becomes very complex. There are times I want to blame others, while overlooking my own faults. Must not forget to self-reflect and consider my own shortcomings. Want to live powerfully and righteously throughout my life..." (p. 177).

As a young man struggling to better myself, three themes strike me most deeply in reading this book. First, no matter what the obstacle or suffering he is experiencing at the time, he is constantly self-reflecting, desperately wanting to discover how to improve himself. You can often feel discouragement or anxiety in his words, yet he is always writing that he will overcome whatever it is, as if he were trying to convince himself that he could. I am constantly battling for this type of hope in my life.

Second is his unwavering commitment to Josei Toda. He seems hell-bent on learning everything he can from this great man, overjoyed at having

found someone he believed could show him the way to live a valuable life. I am starting to feel the same way about President Ikeda. My fortune at having this time to learn from one of the greatest men to ever live astounds me.

Third is his unwavering determination to save people from suffering. Regardless of his own suffering, he continually expresses his resolve to create a peaceful world free of the terrors of war that he had witnessed firsthand. His example shows me the importance of a commitment to humanity. Through his desperation to help others, he grew into the man he wanted to become.

In scanning society for role models in my own quest to become the best man I can be, there are a few who exemplify one or two of the qualities to which I aspire. To date, however, I have found only one man I can confidently declare is redefining what it is to be a man. I am determined, through continually striving to understand President Ikeda's example, to help pioneer my own definition of a "true man."

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

## World Tribune MAILBOX

### Thanks for Features

I really appreciated seeing the feature on parenting (June 2 *World Tribune*). The messages from parents were inspiring and also encouraging, because the parents shared both their joys and struggles — I can identify with both. From one parent's description of low daimoku days on which her life-condition "bee-lines to the lower worlds" to another saying that parenting compels him to become a better person, to the mention of the happiness that comes from watching our "baby Buddhas" grow, reading these parents' experiences was food for my soul. Also, as someone who is a big advocate of our organization encouraging and supporting 100 percent participatory fatherhood, I thought it significant, appropriate, contemporary, visionary and affirming that dads were a big part of this feature.

—LaVORA PERRY,  
Cleveland, Ohio

I want to say thank you to Matilda Buck for the wonderful article in the June 9 *World Tribune* titled "Prayer: A Real Force for Change."

I have just celebrated my 12th year of practice on June 4. However, for the last six months I have felt very "stuck" with the death of my best friend in November, followed by the death of another dear friend in February, and then my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer in March. I have been going through serious doubt and have had a difficult time with deciding what my prayer should be. After reading this article I realize that I have had serious doubts believing that I am a Buddha (guess that will hold ya back, eh?). I am determined to pray with the belief that I am a Buddha (there, I said it and it felt pretty darn good!). My sincerest appreciation to Matilda for sharing her wisdom.

—KAREN CHRISTEN,  
Brisbane, Calif.

Correction: In the June 2 *World Tribune*, p. 8 article titled "Moving Always Toward the Future," the first line of the second paragraph in the first column should have read: "Second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda was always unstinting in his praise for people who had traveled from afar to attend training courses so that they could contribute to the cause of Buddhism and the realization of kosen-rufu."

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# the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

## 'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 23-24

*Shin'ichi Yamamoto's message 'To the Women's Division' inspires women's division members across Japan. 'Full of happy anticipation, they ventured out, braving the cold winter wind, to tell others about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.'*

Excitement pervaded the women's division leaders meeting with the introduction of Shin'ichi Yamamoto's message "To the Women's Division." The participants listened with bright-eyed enthusiasm as one of the leaders began to read. When they heard the sentence "I state that you, the Soka Gakkai women's division members, are pioneers of the Mystic Law, who champion the cause of true liberation for women," the listeners were deeply inspired.

Many of them were suffering from financial difficulties or illnesses and had been striving earnestly in faith out of a desperate, single-minded desire to change the unfortunate destiny of their families and become happy. They understood now, though, that their Buddhist practice was not merely for realizing their own happiness; it was a means for them to fulfill the much greater, nobler mission of liberating women.

The liberation of women could not merely stop at liberation from discriminatory social policies and practices but would have to include liberation from all misery. Each member was confident through her personal experience that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism was the only way to achieve this.

When women are firmly rooted in the realities of daily life and stand up to bring about

a positive change of the times, the revival of society can begin. Kosen-rufu means to make the community or society in which one lives pleasant and peaceful.

After Shin'ichi's message to the women's division was read, Women's Division Leader Katsu Kiyohara addressed the audience: "This is a historic day for the women's division. I heard that after finishing his first draft of this guidance, President Yamamoto reread and revised it again and again. I also deeply feel that his writing this message on President Toda's birthday is his way of urging us to make Mr. Toda's will our own and realize kosen-rufu without fail.

"In his message, President Yamamoto says that we are the 'pioneers of the Mystic Law, who champion the cause of true liberation for women.' In other words, our mission as members of the Soka Gakkai women's division is not only to create happiness for our families and ourselves but to turn our gaze to society as a whole. We must work to free all women from the karmic chains that bind them.

"We have the responsibility, then, to bring happiness to everyone in our respective communities, members and nonmembers alike. From that standpoint, whatever level of the organization we are responsible for—even if it seems to be only on a small scale, like the block level—we possess an infinitely important mission."

Ms. Kiyohara said with emphasis: "The strength of the Soka Gakkai block-level organization, firmly grounded as it is in the local community, has



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

been proven in times of emergency, such as during typhoons or fires. The exemplary teamwork, cooperation and mutual support our members display in these circumstances have evoked high praise inside and outside of our organization. I can't begin to recount all the times that I have heard people say, for instance, how Soka Gakkai members helped them during a typhoon or worked with them to put out a fire.

"Let's continue to exert ourselves wholeheartedly in our activities for kosen-rufu, resolved to help and encourage each and every suffering person in our communities, not only during emergencies but on a daily basis as well."

Inspired by this meeting, the participants began their activities for the second half of February with a fresh determination. Women's division members all over the country eagerly awaited the publication of the message "To the Women's Division" in the March *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai's monthly study journal. Full of happy anticipation, they ventured out, braving the cold winter wind, to tell others about the Daishonin's Buddhism.

In the latter half of February, Shin'ichi visited the Kansai, Shikoku and Chugoku regions of Japan to encourage the members. The morning of Feb. 20, small groups of people could be seen making their way down the streets of Kyoto, which was covered in a fine blanket of silvery snow, toward Kyoto Station. Construction was finally finished on the Soka Gakkai's long-awaited new Kyoto Headquarters Building, and these members

were on their way to participate in the completion ceremony.

The Kyoto Headquarters was located in a section of Higashi-Kujo in Kyoto's Minami Ward, near Kyoto Station. The new three-story reinforced concrete building rose majestically above the tile-roofed houses of the surrounding residential area. The members who had come to participate in the completion ceremony gathered near the entrance, waiting in the lightly falling snow for President Yamamoto to arrive.

It stopped snowing at about 10:00 a.m., and by 10:30, when Shin'ichi arrived, the sun was peeking through the clouds. Shin'ichi got out of the car a short distance from the Headquarters and greeted the waiting members, expressing his gratitude for all their hard work, as he made his way toward the building.

As he entered the courtyard of the Headquarters, he heard a voice shout, "President Yamamoto!" It came from an elderly woman, who was standing there waiting to greet him. She had been there for quite a while, hoping to see Shin'ichi. In her excitement at finally seeing him, she must have been unable to stop herself from calling out to him.

Shin'ichi walked up to her and said with a warm smile: "Thank you for waiting so long this morning. You must be cold. I don't want you to catch a cold, so let's go inside." Shin'ichi took the woman's hand and escorted her into the building.

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

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# St. Maarten Makes New Start



Philipsburg, St. Maarten's largest city.



St. Maarten's turquoise waters welcome tourists from around the world.



Members from St. Maarten and neighboring Antigua gather at Little Bay on June 11.



SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima announces plans for a new activity center.



Members of the University of St. Martin's Class of 2000.



University of St. Martin President Linda Richardson confers USM's honorary award on SGI President Daisaku Ikeda (accepted by SUA President Daniel Habuki).

Over the last year, St. Maarten SGI-USA members, with the leadership of Valerie and Humphrey Giterson, have won a lot of trust on their island. Introducing the Victory Over Violence project on the island has led to the forming of a Victory Over Violence Foundation with tremendous community support.

The fruit of their efforts was apparent at the graduation of the University of St. Martin's Class of 2000 on June 11. University President Linda A. Richardson spoke at length on the VOV project in her address and presented a commendation from the university to SGI President Ikeda.

The next day, members gathered in Little Bay for a general meeting with SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima, who had some exciting news: St. Maarten will soon have its own SGI-USA activity center. "We are going to create an amazing future for St. Maarten!" Mr. Nagashima declared. **WT**

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI



The USM Voices' performance includes a new version of Nestor Torres' 'Treasures of the Heart.'