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peace, culture and
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Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA, ALISO VIEJO

CREATING A WORLD OF VALUE

The new campus of Soka University of America, now under construction in Aliso Viejo, Orange County, Calif., is steadily taking shape. Scheduled to open in 2001, it will offer an undergraduate program in liberal arts that will enable students to explore a wide variety of subjects while giving them a strong foundation in critical and creative thinking. In this issue, please see pages 6 and 7 for an update on the latest developments at the university.



The Student and Community Services Building on the SUA, Aliso Viejo campus in Orange County, Calif.

Mississippi Celebrates Religious Freedom

By **KIMBERLY MARTIN**
MISSISSIPPI CORRESPONDENT

Moss-laden ancient oak trees graced the lawn of Tullis-Toledano Manor overlooking the beach in Biloxi, Miss. The music of a jazz band wafted in the Gulf breezes and mingled with the laughter of children at play. Watermelon juice trickled down the chins of two little girls holding hands. Adults anticipated the fireworks and cooler temperatures nightfall would bring.

What appeared to be a typical Independence Day celebration was in fact a momentous occasion. The first annual "All-American Picnic," sponsored by the Interfaith Alliance of Mississippi, was a great success. SGI-USA members from Mississippi Chapter joined members of the Jewish, Muslim, Wiccan, Unitarian Universalist and Christian faith groups in celebrating freedom of religion afforded us by our forefathers.

One SGI-USA member was



A young SGI-USA member shares a hula-hoop with a Muslim friend at the Interfaith Alliance of Mississippi's 'All-American Picnic,' July 4.

quoted in the local newspaper, saying: "The goal of the Interfaith Alliance of Mississippi

through this kind of activity is the promotion of mutual respect and tolerance for one another's

differences. Take a look around you. You have every ethnic, religious and racial background

here. It's proof we can do this." The Interfaith Alliance of Mississippi received a \$1,000 grant from the national organization to put on the Independence Day event. The community showed support for such efforts of unity by waiving fees and lowering the cost of equipment, property, banners and t-shirts.

"We're here today to show no matter what your faith, everyone can work together and have fun together," said SGI-USA member Tim Lockley.

The spirit of many in body, one in mind was in action, with people of diverse backgrounds working together toward a single goal. This one event provided a great opportunity to inform elected officials and candidates of the Interfaith Alliance and its mission. Among the many invited dignitaries, candidates running for the United States Senate and House of Representatives were present. Mississippi State Supreme Court Justice Oliver Diaz said, "This event embodies everything the Fourth of July stands for." **WT**

Photo by KIMBERLY MARTIN

SGI-Brazil Holds National Entrance and Beginning Study Examinations

On July 30, more than 12,000 SGI-Brazil members took entrance- or beginning-level study department examinations on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism at 233 locations nationwide. The exam material concentrated on basic Buddhist terms and writings of Nichiren Daishonin. The entrance-level exam material included portions of: "The Opening of the Eyes," "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime" and "Reply to Kyo'o"; the beginning-level exam material included portions of "On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings," "Letter to the Brothers" and "The True Aspect of All Phenomena." At the São Paulo exam site, SGI-Brazil General Director Eduardo K. Taguchi encouraged the examinees to challenge themselves to practice in their daily lives what they had learned.

Soka Gakkai Malaysia Opens New Center

On July 22, Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) celebrated the opening of a new center in Seremban City, Negri Sembilan State. The three-story reinforced-steel, concrete building houses a meeting hall with a seating capacity of 330, and other smaller conference rooms and offices. SGI President Ikeda sent a congratulatory message with hopes that the center would become a training ground for fostering capable people for the sake of peace and prosperity in Malaysia in the 21st century. Also, on July 22 and 23, 1,200 repre-

sentatives from throughout Malaysia converged on the SGM Culture Center in Jalan Cheras, Selangor, to celebrate SGM's 16th anniversary.

SGI-Italy General Director Speaks at Conference on Abolishing the Death Penalty in Assisi, Italy

On July 3-5, the Italian senate sponsored a "Conference on the Abolishment of the Death Penalty" with representatives from 10 European nations, in Assisi, Italy. Countries represented were: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain. Five NGOs, including Amnesty International and SGI-Italy, also sent representatives to observe the proceedings. Last year, SGI-Italy launched a petition against the death penalty and has collected 500,000 signatures to date. Speaking on behalf of the SGI, SGI-Italy General Director Mitsuhiro Kaneda affirmed the absolute dignity and sanctity of life upheld by the SGI, which follows the life-affirming philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. He stated that Buddhism does not condone the robbing of life by any government or individual. On July 4, SGI-Italy hosted an "Abolishing the Death Penalty" concert, sponsored by

the Italian senate. The SGI-Italy members were lauded for their efforts to conduct one-on-one dialogue on the death penalty issue that culminated in the collection of 500,000 signatures.

SGI-Argentina Hosts Women's Seminar

On July 8, SGI-Argentina members hosted a women's human rights seminar at the SGI-Argentina Peace Hall. Guest speakers included Amanda de Perez Esquivel, wife of 1980 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Adolfo Perez Esquivel, and Estela Carlotto, president of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a human rights organization that locates missing children taken from left-wing prisoners by the military dictatorship from 1976 to 1983. Argentina's First Lady Ines Pertine sent a congratulatory message. Approximately 2,000 women gathered to discuss human rights issues.

SGI Members in Togo, Nigeria and Ghana Hold General Meetings

On July 23, SGI members in Togo and Nigeria held general meetings in their respective areas. Approximately 2,300 members from throughout Ghana met at their center in Accra to exchange activity reports and experi-

ences of the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. SGI-Ghana General Director Bobson M. Godonu and an SGI contingent from Japan, headed by SGI-Tokyo Africa Division Chief Kazuichi Namura, also attended the meeting in Ghana. Members from Benin, Burkina Faso (Upper Volta) and Senegal joined the SGI-Togo members at their gathering in Lome City. SGI President Daisaku Ikeda sent lengthy poems of encouragement to the Nigeria and Togo members. Music festivals filled with native costumes, dance and music were also held at each location.

Kingdom of Tonga Names Beach After SGI President

The Kingdom of Tonga recently named a part of its coastline "Daisaku Ikeda Beach." The area is in Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga located among the Tongatapu Islands. The honor recognizes SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's dedicated efforts for world peace. On July 5, King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV met with SGI representatives, headed by SGI Vice President and Soka University of America President Daniel Y. Habuki, and congratulated Mr. Ikeda for the honor. Tonga Vice Prime Minister and Education Minister S. Langi Kavaliku praised the SGI President for his contributions to peace, culture and education. A plaque engraved with verses by Mr. Ikeda was unveiled during a ceremony on the same day. The event was televised nationally on a news broadcast.

Courtesy of Seikyo Press



Creating Community Vision in Chicago

By L.V. SARBER

CHICAGO CORRESPONDENT

On June 24, four SGI-USA members from Ravenswood District in Chicago attended a "Getting To Know Our Neighbors" exchange sponsored by the Council for a Parliament of World Religions. Initiated in 1996 in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago, the Parliament's "Creating Community Vision" project encourages dialogue and inter-religious encounters, hoping that ultimately this will lead to a shared community vision and action on shared concerns.

The project, guided by the Parliament's representative Ann Woelk, is formatted to bring various religious groups together on a rotating basis with a different host for each exchange. At the event, the host community welcomes its visitors, shares its particular history and practice then provides a meal during which informal dialogue flourishes. The June



Participants in the 'Creating Community Vision' project pose for a commemorative photo, June 24.

24 event was hosted by a Zen Buddhist temple.

When the group broke for lunch, everyone was encouraged to pair up with someone from another religion, and while enjoying a vegetarian feast utilized questions provided by Ms. Woelk to help break the ice and get to know one another. Among the questions: "How did you come to worship in Ravenswood/Albany Park? Describe a time when your spiritual values influenced your involvement in your community?"

What would you like to see religious and spiritual communities do together in Ravenswood/Albany Park?"

Besides representatives of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism (SGI-USA), other communities of believers included: Muslim, American Baptist, a lay Catholic minister, the Jain community, Sikh, a Tibetan Buddhist monk, the North Shore Theosophical Society, Hindu Temple, the Presbyterian Church, African Community

United Methodist Church, Bethany United Church of Christ and three nuns from the Brahma Kumari Spiritual University.

According to Ms. Woelk: "The key is to build rapport between diverse groups of people, promoting recognition of our similarities and an appreciation of our differences. Dialogue serves as a vehicle to reveal points where mutually shared purposes converge. These points assist people in the neighborhoods to discern a vision for their community, a vision which will serve to foster collaborative projects and sustain relationships beyond the initial encounter. I'd like to see us rediscover solidarity."

In keeping with the SGI's history of practice for oneself and others, Ravenswood District members enthusiastically look forward to supporting two upcoming activities: a "Stop the Hate" inter-faith vigil on Oct. 5; and the Rogers Park "Creating Community Vision" Peace Festival on Nov. 5. **WT**

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SGI-USA Hawaii Hosts Congressional Forum

By JOANNE TACHIBANA
HAWAII BUREAU CHIEF

The Year 2000 Non-partisan Congressional Forum, held at the SGI-USA Hawaii Culture Center, featured the incumbent State of Hawaii's congressional members, the Honorable Patsy T. Mink and the Honorable Neil Abercrombie and their challengers: Mike Gabbard, Gladys Hayes, Philip Myers, James Donovan and Russ Francis. The forum, themed "The United Nations: Its Impact in Hawaii and the Asia Pacific Region," was sponsored by the United Nations Association (UNA-USA Hawaii Division). It was a unique opportunity to meet and hear firsthand from the candidates in a neutral setting.

Nearly 200 community members filled the Ikeda Auditorium, which provided an impressive backdrop for the forum. The stage was bedecked with the United Nations flag and the flags of its 188 member states and provided an international setting for the event.

A video presenting the his-

tory of the United Nations and local UNA events set the tone for the evening. Each candidate was given seven minutes to speak on the issues outlined and another two minutes to offer further comment. The audience submitted a wide range of written questions, affording the candidates one more opportunity to provide insight into their stand on international issues.

The forum was filmed by the local community public access TV station, OLELO. The two-hour program will be shown statewide throughout the month of August, giving the viewing audience a chance to hear from their congressional candidates in the comfort of their homes.

This event was co-sponsored by a number of civil society groups, including the League of Women Voters, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Hawaii Alliance for Human Rights, Hawaii Pacific University (International Studies Division), Soroptimists International of Waikiki, Pacific Asia Council of Indigenous Peoples, the Toda Institute for Global Peace and



SGI-USA members gather signatures for Manifesto 2000, a petition endorsed by SGI President Ikeda in his 2000 Peace Proposal.

Policy Research, as well as the Hawaii Association of International Buddhists.

To top off the evening, everyone was invited to add their names to Manifesto 2000. In celebrating the International Year for the Culture of Peace, United

Nations Economic, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is spearheading a 100,000,000-signature worldwide drive of ordinary citizens to commit themselves to be responsible for the future of humanity. This message of peace

will be presented to the United Nations General Assembly in September. Each person can sign up at www.unesco.org/manifesto2000. The manifesto is endorsed by SGI President Ikeda and described in his 2000 Peace Proposal. **WT**

BUDDHISM IN DAILY LIFE

Buddhism and Human Dignity

The global debate about human rights — taking place in venues from the halls of the United Nations to the street corners of impoverished communities — has brought to the fore many conflicting value systems and worldviews. Individualism vs. communalism. Modernity vs. tradition. East vs. West. North vs. South. Economic and social rights such as the right to employment and decent housing vs. the civil and political rights to free speech and expression.

In the end, however, all concepts of human rights — including those that do not necessarily use the language of "human rights" — have their basis in some understanding of human dignity. In other words, people merit decent treatment because they possess human dignity, some kind of inherent worth that is theirs by the simple fact of being human.

In some traditions, this dignity derives from God, in whose image humanity was created. In other traditions, the unique capacity to think and reason is

said to be the source of human dignity. More and more, however, the idea of human dignity as the basis for rights and prerogatives over nonhuman nature is being supplanted by the idea of special human responsibilities — to exercise responsible stewardship in nature and to treat all life with respect.

How does Buddhism understand human dignity? From where does it spring? What supports and sustains it?

The starting point for Buddhism is the value and sanctity of life. For example, in one letter to a follower, Nichiren Daishonin states that the value of a single day of life exceeds all other treasures. Buddhism further views each individual life as a manifestation of a universal life force.

As the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore expressed this idea: "The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous

waves of leaves and flowers."

From the Buddhist perspective, given the mind-boggling number of life forms that fill the universe, human life is a rare privilege with special responsibilities. As Nichiren Daishonin, referring to a passage from the Nirvana Sutra, describes this: "It is rare to be born a human being. The number of those endowed with human life is as small as the amount of earth one can place on a fingernail."

What makes human life unique is the scale of our choice, the degree to which we are free to choose to act for good or evil, to help or to harm.

A recent book on the challenges of aging introduces the story of a young woman, married and with young children, who found herself suddenly in the position of having to care for her mother-in-law, bedridden following a stroke. At first the young woman could not understand why this had happened to her, why her already demanding life should be further burdened in this way. Through her Buddhist practice she was able to realize that she could,

depending on how she chose to approach this situation, make of it an opportunity to create value. She was able to transform her initial feelings of resentment toward the older woman into a sense of appreciation.

Ultimately, the Buddhist understanding of human dignity is rooted in the idea that we are able to choose the path of self-perfection. We can, in other words, consistently make those difficult choices for creativity, growth and development. Buddhahood, or enlightenment, is how this state of self-perfection — a condition of fully developed courage, wisdom and compassion — is described. The idea that all people — all life, in fact — have this potential is expressed by the concept, stressed particularly in the Mahayana tradition, that all living beings possess Buddha nature.

In concrete, practical terms, this comes down to the idea that everyone has a mission — a unique role that only she or he can play, a unique perspective to offer, a unique contribution to make. As SGI President

Daisaku Ikeda recently wrote in a book for high school students: "Everyone has a mission. The universe does nothing without purpose. The fact that we exist means that we have purpose."

The older woman in the story likewise sought to find a way to use her severely limited capacities to contribute to the well-being of her household. Since she still had use of her hands, she took up knitting — partly as a form of therapy, partly to make useful things for the family. She also enjoyed keeping watch over the home when the others were away.

From the Buddhist perspective, we always have the option of choosing to create value from even the most difficult situation. Through such choices we can fulfill our unique purpose and mission in life, and in this way give fullest expression to the inherent treasure of our human dignity. There is perhaps no more solid foundation for human rights than a general awakening to the human dignity that resides in every one of us.

Courtesy of SGI Quarterly

EXPERIENCE — RUTH THOMAS, COLUMBIA, S.C.

Pioneer Environmental Advocate Heightens Awareness

SGI-USA member and co-founder of Environmentalists, Inc., Ruth Thomas has been working to prevent pollution for more than 30 years. There are those who think of her as the mother of the environmental movement in South Carolina. Ruth shares her experience as a pioneer environmental advocate with World Tribune staff writer Stephanie Celano.



Ruth Thomas, SGI-USA member and founder of Environmentalists, Inc.

World Tribune: How did you get involved with environmental advocacy?

Ruth Thomas: I read an article in a local magazine about plans to process the radioactive waste fuel of nuclear power plants in South Carolina. I just couldn't stand by and do nothing.

So I called Townsend Belser, the lawyer and former nuclear engineer who authored the article, and said: "I'll do anything. Just tell me what to do." For months I tried to find an organization that would investigate the Barnwell reprocessing plant, and the proposal to recycle uranium and plutonium.

When I couldn't find any, with the help of two other people, I started Environmentalists, Inc. (E.I.), a non-profit organization committed to protecting the environment. With only a limited technical and scientific background, I became Mr. Belser's assistant. I evolved into a key contact for scientists and engineers as well as taking on some of the legal work in a licensing challenge, although I had no legal training. Mr. Belser taught me how to do research and bring out evidence—by the time I finished training with him I felt that I had earned a degree in environmental law.

WT: What is the purpose of Environmentalists, Inc.?

Thomas: E.I. is an educational organization. We're a unique organization that provides a needed service; all the services are provided by volunteers—including mine. What we do is make sure there is complete and accurate evidence and records for decision-makers to make as wise decisions as possible. We do this by many means, but mainly by gathering information through consulting with scientists, health professionals, technical experts and lawyers and studying and understand-

ing the decision-making process of all the various agencies involved, in particular licensing agencies. We also are involved in raising questions and getting necessary hard-to-get documents that help clarify misleading information.

We don't concentrate on a particular environmental issue; for example, some organizations address only the pesticide problem while others limit themselves to preservation of wetlands or other natural areas.

We teach people to represent themselves when there is a pollution problem in their community. Writing one letter to the government is not going to change things. It takes numerous letters, questions, requests for meetings and reports. You will get more cooperation with this approach, rather than one of just expressing opposition.

E.I. has worked on issues related to nuclear power plants, economics of nuclear power and hazardous waste. Also the idea that decision-makers—governments and companies—need to take into consideration the waste problem before they go full-speed-ahead with a technology. We've participated in the proceedings of more than 10 poorly planned projects.

We've also made numerous TV and radio appearances, taken part in educational confer-

ences and seminars—including "The Ecology and Human Life" exhibition sponsored by the SGI-USA—related to nuclear power, reprocessing nuclear fuel, radioactive waste and hazardous waste.

Finally, we contact the press and give them information. Take, for example, the fires in California. The articles I have seen didn't explain how difficult it is to detect the extent of plutonium spread by fires on the Hanford reservation, but nobody tells the public this fact. One way to keep information away from people is not to tell the whole story. That's why we inform the press of relevant environmental information.

WT: Which people or groups solicit your organization's services?

Thomas: Sometimes it's a group of citizens in a neighborhood who come to us because they think their water is polluted or they think a particular facility in their neighborhood is releasing pollution. Sometimes we go directly to them and ask if they need help or if they know their rights. They might not understand the process.

E.I. also works with a variety of organizations, sharing information and providing technical and strategy services.

WT: Do you handle environmental issues primarily in South Carolina?

Thomas: We are involved on

a state, national and international level.

Some say we spread ourselves too thin, but we select issues that other organizations are not following yet. We help out by not limiting the issues. Then we have a method of outreach for other cases.

People or organizations are receptive to us because we've worked with them, let's say, on a local burial site of hazardous waste, and then they will listen to us when we talk about a statewide or national issue such as radioactive waste.

WT: In 30 years of dealing with environmental issues, what progress have you made?

Thomas: E.I. was instrumental in exposing evidence about health and safety risks related to the Barnwell nuclear reprocessing plant in South Carolina. E.I. was the first intervenor in the hearings on the construction of the Barnwell plant. Our efforts attracted the attention and coverage of the press to the dangers nuclear reprocessing posed to the environment and people. This ultimately influenced key politicians to get involved, such as Jimmy Carter, then governor of Georgia, because reprocessing operations at the experimental facility would threaten Georgia's air and water.

It was a slow process that lasted more than six years, but eventually we won out. Through the licensing challenges, evidence was brought

out, which forced the nuclear industry to pull out of the South Carolina project, and the federal government changed its policy banning the recovery and use of plutonium and uranium.

I was involved in a struggle where my work and the work of others prevented a multi-million dollar facility from opening that would have released all sorts of radioactive pollution into the environment—that's enough success to keep me motivated for the rest of my life.

Some people don't believe that I could have been at the center of all that. They just see me as an ordinary former art teacher.

It's known that we have prevented certain sources of pollution from happening and that we're protecting people, particularly children. Children suffer the most from exposure to radiation.

WT: Your life has changed dramatically, hasn't it?

Thomas: Yes, definitely. People who knew me as a child would never have thought it was possible. I was shy and barely said a word; as a child I had a slight speech impediment.

In fact, sometimes as I go over transcripts where I'm cross-examining scientists, I think, "My gosh, is that me?"

My determination has grown over the years as an environmental advocate and as a Buddhist. Based on my roots, I never imagined that I would be considered by some to be a mother of South Carolina's environmental movement.

WT: What attracted you to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism?

Thomas: I was attracted to this practice because I could see that this woman who introduced me to Buddhism had changed even in the short time that I had known her. I asked her what she was doing because she looked happier, more content. That's when she started taking me to SGI meetings in 1978. I was pretty miserable at the time. My husband had died and things were changing with my work with E.I.; the project I was working on had ended. Many environmental challenges remained, but my former fellow workers scattered



Ruth Thomas next to the panel she helped create for the 30th anniversary of Earth Day celebration in Columbia, S.C., April 22.

Photo by TOMO KAWAGUCHI

and contacts went their separate ways. I was lonely and depressed. I was also frustrated at the time by a feeling of not knowing what to do next. There were those who discouraged me from continuing to work on environmental issues. I knew I needed something and I thought, "Well, if being a Buddhist helped her, it could probably help me." I was at a very low place in my life, thinking about giving up.

I was 58 when I was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's

directly to me, offering me the direction and encouragement that I need. For example he says: "There can be no such thing as an easy practice. Understand that true Buddhist practice lies in persevering through suffering and adversity, and overcoming them."

Another favorite of mine is: "There's a saying, 'One lion is worth more than a thousand sheep.' No matter what troubles you may encounter, courageously stand alone, like the lion. Faith of this kind

Photo by TOMO KAWAGUCHI



SGI-USA members Lynn Boyd and B.J., 3, with Ruth Thomas after she received The Century Award for 30 years of environmental advocacy, April 22.

Buddhism. I still remember my first meeting — it was a gathering of women.

WT: You're a pioneer in our Buddhist organization as well as the environmental movement. SGI President Ikeda has written: "Pioneers are self-motivated individuals, people who take the initiative. Therein lies their glory and victory. Those who have guts and make efforts to be pioneers in all areas are great; they are heroes who have broken out of the mold of the ordinary. Such an attitude gives rise to a true joy and sense of fulfillment" (*Daily Guidance*, vol. 2, p. 61).

Do you think this applies to you?

Thomas: Well, in the sense that it's a goal that I try to live up to. I think it's important to have a goal, something to work toward.

So often when I read guidance and poems written by President Ikeda, I feel as if he knows what I am experiencing. That he is speaking di-

rectly to me, offering me the direction and encouragement that I need. For example he says: "There can be no such thing as an easy practice. Understand that true Buddhist practice lies in persevering through suffering and adversity, and overcoming them."

WT: When did you first develop such a pioneer environmental spirit?

Thomas: I actually stopped some men from cutting down some trees to build an apartment complex. That was my first hands-on experience in 1969 or '70 in South Carolina where I lived. There was no thinking about it. I just ran right up to them and told them to stop cutting the tree because the land was not supposed to be developed. That was *real* action. I was just an individual going for a walk.

That night I went door to door collecting signatures in the neighborhood, which I then took to the mayor, who stopped the apartment project.

WT: You're not afraid to speak out, are you?

Thomas: I've criticized Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson and other people in the govern-

ment. I've been critical of the Department of Energy for their decision-making. There are plenty of people who recognize me to be their critic.

These agencies need to be criticized. In fact, they need more people to criticize them, to hold them accountable. They're not held accountable and they act like they don't have to be.

I figure we're helping the government and businesses. If they listened to us, they'd save a lot of money and we wouldn't have as serious environmental problems as we have. We stopped the Barnwell plant and contributed to a national nuclear power policy change.

WT: You've received some recognition for your work, haven't you?

Thomas: In 1989, I received the Jefferson Award from the Institute for Public Service in recognition of my continued efforts for the environment. This national award had previously been given to those who had significantly impacted involvement with children, medicine and other areas. My receipt of this award was the first time in South Carolina that environmental issues received their recognition.

Most recently, on April 22, the 30th anniversary of Earth Day, a local coalition of environmental groups in Columbia, S.C., presented me with The Century Award as a unique, one-time recognition for my 30 years of environmental advocacy in South Carolina. In addition, this coalition created a Ruth Thomas Environmental Advocacy Award that will be given out each year to honor others who contribute significantly to the environmental cause.

WT: You mentioned SGI-USA's "Ecology and Human Life" exhibition. Tell me about your involvement in it.

Thomas: In 1996, when the exhibition came to Columbia, S.C., my attitude about this practice began a transformation. This activity gave me the opportunity to get many other organizations and colleagues and friends involved. I also organized a skit, participated as a symposium speaker, designed an exhibit panel of my environmental activities and was invited to be part of the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

My chanting helps me to work through my feelings of

anger and frustration, which so often go along with being in the environmental movement. The encouragement and support of the SGI-USA leaders and members contribute so much to my being able to continue to take an active part in a variety of pollution concerns.

This year I have become more focused on the power of an individual and how developing myself through Buddhist practice has a direct bearing on how I influence others in my efforts to challenge environmental issues.

WT: Do you feel you're making a difference? And how can an ordinary person help make a difference?

Thomas: Yes, I definitely feel I'm making a difference. That's why I continue to work as president of Environmentalists, Inc. My work has made life healthier by preventing radioactivity from contaminating the air, water and soil in the case of the Barnwell reprocessing plant, as well as limiting the pollution from other facilities operating South Carolina.

The way other people can make a difference is by getting involved in educating them-

consideration is given to the interests of the public.

As we go into the 21st century, I believe that we have many opportunities and struggles. For example, there is a need to continue raising questions and issues regarding the proposal for plutonium recycling from nuclear weapons. Ultimately, as the number of environmental advocates grows, decision-makers will be more responsive to the concerns of the people. As a witness of 20th-century war and violence, I would like the youth to inherit the spirit to ensure that our society is safe and beautiful for future generations. This will take a lot of work, such as influencing decision-makers to make their policies and determinations on as complete and accurate a record of evidence as possible.

WT: What do you see as your next challenge?

Thomas: I plan to develop an environmental youth internship program. The internship program would create an opportunity to teach young people what I have learned through my experience. It will also provide an opportu-

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUI



Ruth Thomas joins in the ribbon-cutting at the opening of the 'Ecology and Human Life' exhibition sponsored by the SGI-USA in Jan. 23, 1996, in Columbia, S.C. (L-r) SGI-USA representative Duncan Howe; Ruth Thomas, president of E.I.; University of South Carolina President Dr. John Palm; and Drs. Winona Vernberg, Dean of School of Public Health and F. John Vernberg, Dean of School of Environment at USC.

nesses. I encourage people to help us, as well as other environmental organizations. Their energy, input and creativity are needed to deal with problems in communities throughout the country, including those in their own neighborhoods. You count. Your presence and participation are needed to assure that

nity for them to teach me how to use computers, videos, the Internet and other new developments for doing research and networking. We could learn from each other.

Tomo and Laura Kawaguchi and Scottie Hazelhurst contributed to this article.

Introducing...Soka University, Aliso Viejo's New Enrollment Team!

Marilyn Gove came to Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo from Lesley College in Massachusetts where she was the associate director of admissions for graduate adult baccalaureate programs in the schools of Management, Arts & Sciences and Education.

At SUA, AV Marilyn is the Manager for Admission and International Student Recruitment for the campus and is part of a four-member student enrollment services team that is responsible for student outreach, individual advising and financial aid counseling. "This new century belongs to our future students, and I want to be there to help foster their development so that they can become capable leaders for peace in

their respective fields." Zainab S. Al-Shabibi, Registrar, came to SUA, AV from Golden Gate University in Irvine. "We are all very excited to be here at SUA, and I know students will be given first priority and that's important for our office."

Maria Spangenberg, Financial Aid Coordinator, joins SUA, AV from the University of California, Irvine. "Students are our first concern, and we have to make sure that they get what they need to be successful."

Andy Marcos is the Coordinator of U.S.-Based Internships and joined the staff after working with San Diego State University.

"I feel I have to know the students well to help place them in a meaningful as well as a successful internship." **WT**



Courtesy of SUA

(L-r) Zainab S. Al-Shabibi, Registrar; Andy Marcos, Coordinator of U.S.-Based Internships; Marilyn Gove (seated), Manager for Admission and International Student Recruitment; and Maria Spangenberg, Financial Aid Coordinator.

SUA, Aliso Viejo Important Dates To Remember

- Oct. 15, 2000**
Deadline for early admission applications
- Dec. 15, 2000**
Early admission decisions announced
- Jan. 15, 2001**
Deadline for regular admission application
- March 15, 2001**
Regular admission decisions announced

Contact SUA Admission at admission@soka.edu or 1-888-600-SOKA

Permanent university address:
Soka University, Aliso Viejo
1 University Drive
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

Web site address:
www.soka.edu

Visitors on a tour of the campus construction site.

Construction Update

- Excavation has begun on the one-acre lake in front of the Student and Community Services Building.
- The steel support beams for

the roof of the Recreation Center are up!

- Construction on four new residence halls has started (next to the four completed halls).

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI



16 New Faculty Members Arriving Sept. 5

On Sept. 5, SUA will welcome 16 new faculty members, bringing the number of current faculty to 21. SUA expects to open with 22 professors in fall 2001 with a 5:1 student/faculty ratio the first year (changing to 9:1 as the university grows).

Major criteria for hiring SUA faculty included their dedication to students, love for teaching and their professional credentials and achievements.

SUA is very proud of its out-

standing faculty, who have come from a variety of institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Texas A&M, UC Berkeley, UCLA, Johns Hopkins, Swarthmore, George Washington, Colby and University of Hawaii. SUA's faculty includes six Fulbright Scholars and the authors of numerous books.

"Our mission is to foster global citizens who will make a difference and make meaningful contributions to society. All SUA faculty will work closely

with students, serving as mentors and role models to help assure their success," notes Gail Thomas, SUA, Aliso Viejo's Dean of Faculty.

Gail adds: "I am extremely proud of our new faculty. To learn more about them, we invite you to visit our Web site at www.soka.edu. Simply click on Aliso Viejo, then Academics...and look under Faculty. Or join us on Oct. 7 for Family Tour Day and meet them in person!" **WT**

I C A , A L I S O V I E J O C A M P U S

Introducing...Gail E. Thomas, Ph.D.

Dean of Faculty and Professor of Sociology

Gail Thomas has been dean of faculty and professor of sociology at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo since August 1998. She has been working hard on recruiting faculty and developing curriculum even though the campus will not open until fall 2001.

"SUA is all about celebrating diversity and creating harmony in our multicultural world," she says. "My family [husband, Emmett Amos, and son, Bradford Amos] moved with me to Aliso Viejo from Texas so that we could all be part of this wonderful opportunity to create a truly student-centered and humanistic university. Everything we do, every step we take, is with the question in mind of how it will benefit our future students. The faculty and I can't wait until they get here!"

Gail, a Fulbright scholar, came to SUA, AV from Texas A&M University, where she held a similar position as professor of sociology and founded and directed the Race and Ethnic Studies Institute. Thomas has also been a visiting profes-

sor at Harvard University and was principle research scientist at the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md. She is widely published in a variety of journals and has edited three books in the areas of education and race and ethnic relations.

She envisions SUA, AV as a vibrant community of students from many countries and cultures. "We value and embrace all facets of diversity," she emphasizes. "As faculty, we are committed to teaching and learning about different cultures and perspectives that our students will bring from around the globe and from our local community."

Gail is leading a team of 22 faculty members who will be working together over the next year to implement a new liberal arts curriculum designed to give students the important skills to succeed in an ever-changing world. "Our academic approach is a non-sectarian curriculum that is broad and will reflect the diversity in our student body," she explains. "We will focus primarily on East-West perspectives...so it's a comparative interdisciplinary curriculum."

"We've attracted a wonderful group of faculty from a number



"As faculty," Gail Thomas says, "we are committed to teaching and learning about different cultures and perspectives that our students will bring from around the globe and from our local community."

of outstanding academic institutions. They're coming from Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Yale, UC Berkeley, Harvard and Columbia University, to name a few...and six of our faculty are Fulbright scholars."

Gail also mentions that as a liberal arts university, the faculty will be committed to educating not just the mind but the heart as well. "Educating the head without the heart is like no education at all," she says. "We seek to strike a balance in nurturing our students' intellect, their creativity and their heart." **WT**



Q & A

WITH

SUA

Send in your own questions, and we'll share the answers!

national students who graduate from US high schools?

Question:
Does SUA, Aliso Viejo have an age limit/restriction?

Answer:
No. The TOEFL is required for all non-native speakers of English who have not graduated from U.S. high schools.

Answer:
No. SUA does not discriminate on the basis of age. However all students must live on campus in the residence halls, and SUA is not able to provide family housing.

Question:
What other languages besides Chinese, Japanese and Spanish will SUA offer in the future?

Question:
Can I go to SUA, Aliso Viejo part-time?

Answer:
SUA, Aliso Viejo will increase language offerings as student enrollment increases. SUA will take student interest into consideration in determining what future languages to offer.

Answer:
No. SUA will be offering only the full-time liberal arts program when we open in Fall 2001. Eventually we may be able to offer other opportunities, but first our primary focus is on the new undergraduate program firmly established.

Question:
Does SUA, Aliso Viejo require the TOEFL test for inter-

If you have questions of any kind about SUA, please send them to SUA at either admission@soka.edu or info@soka.edu. We will use this World Tribune column to share our answers with others who might have the same questions.



SUA Family Day Reservation Form for:

Oct. 7, 2000 May 5, 2001

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

E-mail address _____

Number of other people attending with you? _____

How many prospective students will be in your group? _____

Lunch reservations requested (at \$5 a person) _____

(Please enclose a check made out to Soka University for this amount.)

Will anyone in your group need special assistance for the tour? _____

If so, please let us know how we can assist you: _____

Please return to:
Family Tour Day Reservations
Soka University, Aliso Viejo
1 University Drive
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

Human Rights Lecture Series Commences Ninth Year

Soka University of America, Calabasas, is Southern California's only institution of higher learning offering a continuing free program in human rights. Launched in 1992, the Human Rights Lecture Series provides up-close and personal contact with human rights leaders from around the world.

Soka University of America's founder, Daisaku Ikeda, has said that "humanity is charged with the task of not merely achieving a 'passive peace'—the absence of war—but of transforming on a fundamental level those social structures that threaten human dignity. Efforts to enhance international cooperation and the fabric of international law are, of course, necessary, but even more vital are the creative efforts of individuals to develop a multi-layered and richly patterned culture of peace, for it is on this foundation that a new global society can be built."

It is to these principles and high ideals that SUA students and the general public can openly interact with human rights leaders such as Mrs. Rosa Parks, Dr. Benjamin Spock, Dr. Elena Bonner, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, Dr. Cornel West, Dr. Mary Catherine Bateson, Mr. Carlos Fuentes, Mr. Morris Dees, the Honorable Shirley Chisholm, among many others, on a wide range of important and valuable subjects.

According to Deborah diCesare, SUA program director for the series, approximately 10,000 people have attended the Human Rights Lecture Series since its inception. "It is encouraging to see people taking time from their busy lives to learn about issues such as human rights education, genocide or the International Criminal Court," Ms. diCesare says. She attributes collaborating with the community, civil and human rights organizations, public and private colleges and high schools as the key to the success of the human rights program.

"The community forums sponsored by Soka University of America are a valuable contribution to well-informed discussion of important public issues," says Marvin Schacter of the National Council of the United Nations Association-USA. "The variety of [human rights] topics considered,

and the diversity of opinions expressed, are especially appreciated. They add to the quality of our civic life and strengthen our democratic society."

"This series is exactly what our society is in need of for action and progress," adds Ted R. Leutsinger, vice president of the World Federalist Association. "Only by participating in such well-organized and operated sessions, led by persons of credibility and wisdom, can humankind be prepared and be motivated to take those steps toward the higher levels of which we are capable."

In her experience with the speakers, Ms. diCesare is repeatedly impressed by the humility and commitment of each person and by "how much people willingly risk of themselves for the betterment of humanity."

In a panel discussion on "Civil Rights for American Ethnic Minorities," Mrs. Rosa Parks, the mother of the civil rights movement, stated, "It was the simplicity of doing what's right." Mrs. Parks continued, "In the struggle to bring about equality, justice, peace and goodwill toward all people, and the desire to make America into the America it should be, it is up to us to do our best."

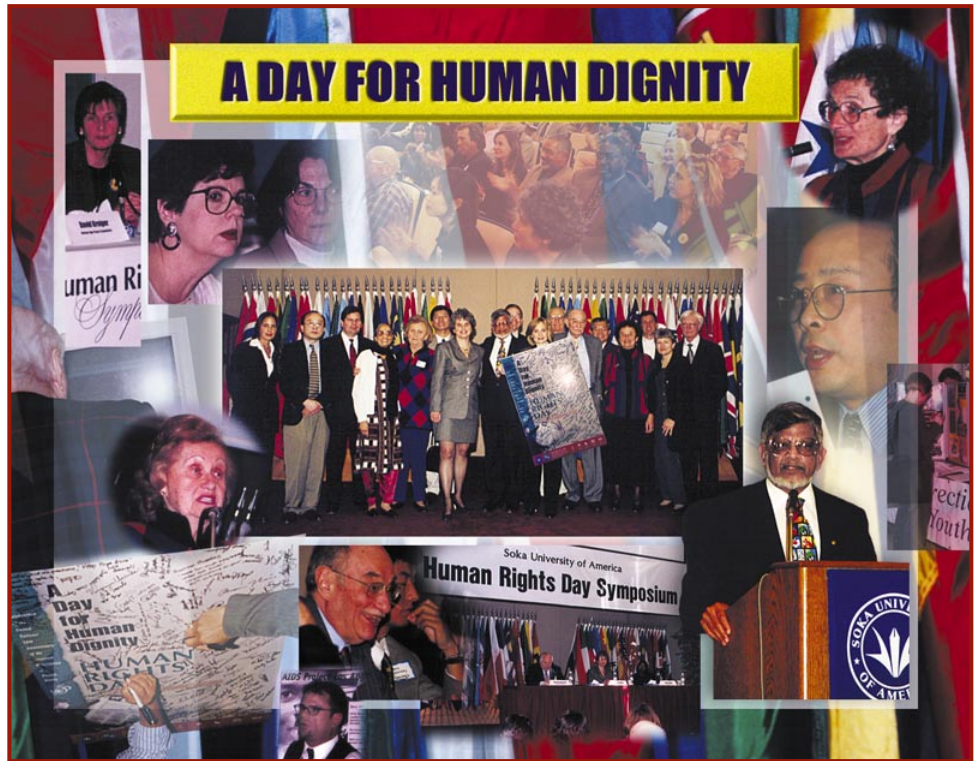
Richard Leaky, the world's foremost paleoanthropologist, addressed a riveted audience about "Africa's Perilous Sport: The Hunt for Democracy" while standing for nearly two hours on prosthetics. Leaky lost both legs in a plane crash and had been attacked with whips and clubs for speaking out to protect the human rights of the Kenyan people.

In his lecture at SUA, the late Dr. Benjamin Spock, internationally recognized authority on child rearing, said: "Research shows that watching violence desensitizes people. Children can tend to lose their horror toward violence. Don't expose your children to violent shows. Even if they say, 'Everyone's watching

it,' tell them you don't care. Parents feel afraid of being different. I hated being different as a kid. Yet it's good."

Continuing to dedicate itself anew to the challenges and causes of peace, this fall's Human Rights Lecture Series will be celebrating the United Nation's International Year of the Culture of Peace on Oct. 26. For more information, please contact the Calabasas campus' Program Development office at 818-878-3780, or by e-mail at prodev@soka.edu.

Soka University of America, Calabasas is an independent, coeducational institution of higher education that offers a 33-credit Master of Arts program in Second and Foreign Language Education as well as an Intensive English Program for visiting students from Japan. The Calabasas campus currently serves approximately 200 students, and is approved to operate by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education.



2000-2001

Human Rights Lecture Series

A continuing Program to create awareness and promote peace, justice and social reform through education.

"Peace Is In Our Hands"
United Nations' International Year for the Culture of Peace

Join Soka University as we salute the UN's International Year of the Culture of Peace for an evening of exceptional presentation and dialog. A panel of expert speakers will address issues of education, tolerance and respect for human rights, followed by an audience-participation question and answer session.

Thurs., October 26
Minuteman Hall
7-8:30 P.M.

Admission Free. No reservations required. Seating is limited and available on a first-come basis.

For additional information call
818-878-3780
or email to prodev@soka.edu

Soka University
of America

Soka University of America
26800 West Mulholland Hwy.
Calabasas, California 91302

101 Freeway to Las Virgenes/Malibu Canyon, exit south to Mulholland, turn left, entrance 1/10 mile.

101 Freeway to Las Virgenes/Malibu Canyon, exit south to Mulholland, turn left, entrance 1/10 mile.

Contact us for our complete schedule of campus activities. Fully Accessible



"Today, around the world, the march of human progress continues to be plagued by conflict, violence, hate and greed. The Culture of Peace is an idea whose time has come. Peace is in our hands. The Charter of UNESCO says it best: 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.'"

Kofi A. Annan,
Secretary-General of the

MIN-ON CONCERT ASSOCIATION

Celebrating the 'People's Music'

The Min-On Concert Association was established in 1963 at the initiative of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda in the hope that the power of the musical arts can transcend cultural differences and unite people through shared emotion, thus creating an ever-expanding circle of friendship.

Min-On literally means "people's music," and Min-On's intention has always been to share joy through music with common people. Its first public activity was a series of free concerts held in parks in Tokyo, Osaka, Sendai, Sapporo and Nagoya in 1964 and 1965. Its first sponsored music master class was held in January 1965 at the Toranomon Hall, taught by jazz drummer Art Blakely.

During its first five years, Min-On carried out cultural exchange with Israel, the (then) Soviet Union, the United States, France, Belgium and Hong Kong. Registered as an independent foundation in 1965, Min-On has since grown to become one of Japan's leading music promoters.

The association strives to make a diversity of music of high quality—from classical to modern and from popular to traditional—available to as wide a range of music lovers as possible.

In addition, Min-On also sponsors musical competitions—for vocalists, conductors and contemporary composers—to encourage the development of new artistic talent. Its public service projects still include school concerts, free concerts, children's theater

and music master classes.

Min-On inaugurated a ballet series soon after its founding. In 1966, the association invited the Soviet National Academy Novosibirsk Ballet to Japan for the first performance in this series. The Ballet du XXe Siècle from Belgium came the following year, and the American Ballet Theater in 1968.

Min-On's major project to mark the 10th anniversary of its founding was inviting the Bayerische Staatsoper München (Munich Opera) to perform in Japan for the first time in 1974. The 330 members of the Munich Opera company delighted Japanese fans with a program of four operas and four special recitals presented in a total of 22 performances.

Among its cultural exchanges during the 1980s, Min-On scheduled three large-scale projects: touring opera performances by the Wiener Staatsoper in 1980, by Milan's Teatro alla Scala in 1981 and by the Royal Opera in 1986. The Japan tour by Milan's Teatro alla Scala was Min-On's most ambitious undertaking since its founding. Planning for the tour began in 1965, when an agreement was reached with Antonio Ghiringhelli, then Teatro alla Scala's general administrator; but it was not until 16 years later that the dream of a Japan tour was finally realized.

The Association also launched a series of performances titled "A Musical Voyage Along the Silk Road," tracing the cultural exchanges occurring along the historical main artery of trade in Asia. A



The Soviet National Academy Novosibirsk Ballet, September 1966.

study group researched the music and dance of Mongolia, the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India during visits to those countries in 1977. The first performances, in 1979, featured vocal music from India, Iraq and China. Each series brought together performers from different countries to explore the theme of cultural exchange along the Silk Road.

As a counterpart to the Silk Road series, another series was launched, titled "A Musical Voyage Along the Marine Road"—a reference to the sea route linking the countries of Southeast Asia. This series began in 1984 with performances by the Thailand National Dance Group.

The Min-On Culture Center opened in September 1997, housing an extensive library and a collection of musical instruments from around the world. To date, the center has welcomed more than 250,000 visitors, including President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana and former President Fidel Ramos of the Philippines. The association is committed to providing support for musical and cultural activities in the 21st century.



The Min-On Culture Center opened in Tokyo in September 1997.



A performance of 'Carmen' by the Royal Opera of London, September 1986.

Min-On's Guidelines

1. To develop a multifaceted music and cultural movement that is firmly rooted among the people so as to share with ever more people the pleasure and inspiration that come from enjoying music and the performing arts.
2. To contribute to a flourishing of music and art in the new age by enhancing musical and cultural activities and developing musical programs designed to cultivate the artistic sentiments of children and youth.
3. To deepen mutual understanding and friendship among all countries by promoting global music and cultural exchange that transcends differences of nationality, race and language.

Courtesy of SGI Quarterly

CREATING PEACE WITH SELF, SISTER AND SOCIETY:

AN INTERGENERATIONAL CELEBRATION

REPORT FROM
THE BOSTON RESEARCH
CENTER FOR THE
21ST CENTURY

BY HELEN MARIE CASEY
BOSTON RESEARCH CENTER

A year of planning by more than 40 women and girls from some 20 organizations culminated in a two-day spring event at the Boston Research Center, "Creating Connections 2000: An Intergenerational Dialogue on Peace with Self, Sister and Society." The gathering brought together women ranging in age from their second decade of life to their eighth decade; African American, Asian, Native American, Chicana and white women; students, professors, theorists, activists, musicians, poets, photographers and writers. In a word, diverse groups that do not often, if ever, meet in one place to celebrate commonalities.

"This is not going to be your typical conference," Virginia Straus, executive director of the BRC, predicted in her welcoming remarks. "The hope of the planning committee was to create a multigenerational, multicultural conversation and experience; to try to get to the values that give life meaning for all of us."

Setting the Stage

Step dancers — the Malden YWCA Girls in Action — set the evening in motion. They celebrated the themes of unity, sisterhood, trust and peace. "We must all do our part to make a certain sound," they explained at this, their first public performance. They set the beat for the second

women's Creating Connections event, like the first one in 1998, also hosted by the BRC, to promote collaboration and friendship among women working for social change.

Poet Jeannette Giannangelo moved the ball down the court with a performance of her poem, "Growing Up," in which she tackled the *ism* — adulthood — by invoking the challenge: Growing up does something to people — it makes people forget who they are. The theme of her poem, "The path you take is yours to choose," reverberated throughout the entire conference.

In her pace-setting keynote presentation, Jacqueline Maloney inverted the behavioral paradigm of "Do. Have. Be." to "Be. Do. Have." She urged conference participants to "take what works for you to be your best self." Her exhortation was: be your authentic self. Don't be the self someone else defines for you because "to be who you are and to do what you are capable of is the only worthy goal."

Posted on foyer walls were inspiring extracts from the writings of prominent women. There was also an exhibit of "Ideal Selves" created by the participants. "My ideal self is who I am now," one woman wrote. "I'd like to take more risks and be less scared," another said. And still another, "I want to make a difference in the world. I want people to know who I am."

Saturday's Activities

Ten concurrent workshops formed the backbone of Creating Connections.

"The time of the woman is now," Gail Anne Kelley, educator, filmmaker and executive director of Earth Action and A Circle of

Women, said to participants in her workshop, "Woman as Peacemaker, Healer and Visionary," reflecting a view, she explained, expressed by many indigenous peoples. Referring to woman as peacemaker, the intercultural mediator suggested, "Before you can make peace, you have to have a common language." Observing that woman's voice has been too often absent, she asked workshop participants to consider what peace looks like to a woman and declared emphatically: "You never know how many people you will affect simply by having a conversation with someone. The power of you is phenomenal. You never know how your words will go out into the world. Words are sacred. This is one of the first things a peacemaker needs to know."

"You cannot have peace without economic justice. Everyone's basic needs must be met," one of the women asserted in answer to the question: What does peace look like? Another participant maintained that individual differences have to be respected, honored and celebrated. Viewing woman as a natural healer, Ms. Kelley suggested that woman's first question in peacemaking should be, "How can I heal the situation?" She decried as a "dire mistake" the inclination in our time to exclude the natural world in our thinking. One participant asked why we don't do a better job of emulating the Native American perspective that decisions we make today should take into account the impact on seven generations.

In another workshop, conducted by executive director of Women's Action for New Directions (WAND) Susan Shaer and founding director of the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy Elizabeth A. Sherman, women were considering the question, What would be different if the president of the United States were a woman? What would have to happen to make it possible for a woman to become president? Presently, only 9 percent of senators in the United States are women; only 6 percent of U.S. governors are women; only 13 percent are in the House of Representatives; only 14 percent are on federal budget committees. One answer presented is that women must learn to make long-range plans for the direction of their ultimate political path if they are going to make it to a top position. Women must also learn to be pragmatic about acquiring a political base and using it to assure an even broader



'Creating Connections' across cultures, generations and interests.



Sharing personal history, opinions and dreams in concentric circles.

work with author Ruth Jacobs; some discussed with facilitators Elaine Theodore and Liana Buddieri body image, sexuality, education about sexuality, self-perception and the impact of culture and of media on an individual's perception of herself as a sexual being. In Mari Wolf's and Yasmine Shah's workshop, "Making Decisions During Times of Transition," women examined "her War Story." Sayre Sheldon's workshop focused on women's writings about war from World War I through the end of the last century. In addition, it dealt with the paradox that often, during war, doors to new opportunities and new freedoms are open to women. It also dealt with the other side of the coin, the issue of women's sexual exploitation by the military and the use of rape,

even to this day, as a weapon of war. Women, Sayre summarized, seem to understand more readily than men do, the effects of war on common people. While they admire heroism, they despise war. It was not clear to the participants that men arrive at the same perspective. The socialization of our young men must change, the women concurred.

Achievements

In essence, what women were doing during the weekend conference was celebrating their sisterhood by sharing insights — insights about how we become who we are and how we become who we want to be. Women were in the process of learning not to short-change themselves.

JOB OPENING

Boston Research Center Seeking a Writer/Editor

Are you a writer/editor/thinker/manager interested in peacework? If so, we need you at the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, a peace institute founded by SGI President Ikeda in 1993. We seek candidates for a full-time opening to head up our successful publishing program, which includes a thrice-yearly newsletter, books used in college courses on peace studies and comparative religion, and conference reports relating to common values, global citizen-

ship, and women's leadership. Please send resume right away with cover letter and brief writing sample/s to Virginia Straus, Executive Director, by mail, fax or email. For more information on the Center's mission and programs, see our Web site at www.brc21.org.

Boston Research Center
396 Harvard Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
phone: 617-491-1090
fax: 617-491-1169
email: vstraus@brc21.org

Discussion Held on Reviving Print Culture

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

On July 14, SGI President Ikeda and Dr. Henry Indangashi, chairman of the Writers' Association of Kenya and vice chairman of the Kenya Oral Literature Association, discussed literature at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji. Observing that television and other visual media are rapidly supplanting print culture, President Ikeda expressed his concern about the debilitating effect this may have on people's powers of imagination.

He also said that the preponderance of violence in the media could incite people—youth in particular—toward violent behavior. The SGI leader argued that the revival of print culture holds the key to the restoration of humanism in society. Dr. Indangashi, who teaches literature at the University of Nairobi and is currently a visiting professor at Soka University in

Tokyo, acknowledged that many middle-class youth in Kenya were moving away from reading and that youth from poor families cannot even afford to buy books.

In addition to discussing Kenya's traditional literature and current literary trends, Mr. Ikeda and the scholar covered Japanese authors and movies that are well known in Kenya. Plans are under way for an ongoing discussion between President Ikeda and the Kenyan scholar to be published as part of the "Dialogue on World Literature" series in Ushio, a Soka Gakkai-affiliated cultural magazine. In the future, they want to discuss such topics as Africa's oral literature, Ernest Hemingway's short story "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and the writings of Kenyan author Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, a friend of President Ikeda. **WT**



SGI President Ikeda meets with University of Nairobi Professor Henry Indangashi, acting chairman of the Writers' Association of Kenya, at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, July 14.

FROM BRC, 10

They were also remembering how many connections there are among women around the world, even when those connections seem to be invisible. For example in one of the Saturday morning interactive exercises, Sumru Erkuty, associate director of the Wellesley Centers for Women, asked women to take a minute to examine the labels in the clothing they were wearing. The clothes had been made in a number of places, including China; Mexico, Taiwan, Bali, Central America. "Who made your clothing?" Sumru asked. "Did the woman who made your clothing wonder who would wear it? Was she paid poorly? What were her working conditions? Could she organize? What would I want her to know about me?" She was indicating that even issues like world trade are personal as well as political.

In dialogue exercises conducted in concentric circles, women talked with one another about who they are and changes they would like to effect. They dealt briefly with questions like: "What do you wish you had been able to ask your great-grandmother?" "What would you have liked changing in your upbringing?" It was an invitation to introspection and internal peacemaking before moving into the realm of social action and external peacemaking.

In her seminal work, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*, Gerda Lerner spoke about women's quest for autonomy. "Autonomy means,"

she wrote, "women defining themselves and the values by which they will live, and beginning to think of institutional arrangements that will order their environment in line with their needs."

Creating Connections succeeded in creating an environment where girls and women from a host of different backgrounds could speak candidly together of their hopes and dreams and could reassess their plans for a future they shape for themselves. As Francine Prose put it,

"You can aim for what you want and if you don't get it, you don't get it, but if you don't aim you don't get anything." The laudatory comments that conference participants were making as they left the Center indicate that this event surpassed expectations.

"It was a truly wonderful event," BRC Program Chair Karen Nardella summarized, "because of all the interaction among three generations of women. People readily shared their concerns and experiences with one another. They were

comfortable with one another. The evaluations we received have been extraordinarily positive. This is an event that seems to exemplify what the BRC's founder, Daisaku Ikeda, has said: The lion's roar of women committed to the creation of peace will be key in ushering in a new 'Century of Life.'" Concurring, participant Anne Shumway, active in Social Workers for Peace & Justice, in her post-conference evaluation described this event as "a joyous conference." **WT**

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THIS BEAUTIFUL EARTH: PHOTO ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA



The Strait at Istanbul

Over there, on the other shore, is Asia!" my wife said, pointing across the water. We stood at the edge of Europe. This was Istanbul, a city spanning both sides of the strait called the Bosphorus. Being there on the shore of the strait that divides two continents vividly reminded me of the reality of "one world."

In this city travelers from Asia first encounter Europe, and it is here that travelers from Europe catch their first scent of exotic Asia.

I came to Istanbul in June 1992. It had been 30 years since my last visit. I had come from Cairo, a little more than a two-hour flight away. Hot red "fire flowers" had decorated the streets of Cairo, but cool-hued tulips greeted us at the airport in Istanbul. Going out into the city streets, the atmosphere that I so dearly remembered from 30 years before had not changed: magnificent Byzantine architecture; obelisks jutting into the Turkish-blue sky; the minarets of mosques; the city's seven gentle hills overlooking the sea; the beauty of Arabic calligraphy, each an artwork in itself; mosaic murals and arabesques. Every scene was like a painting. Filling the air was the scent of spices and coffee, the aroma of barbecued lamb, the clamor of the bazaar.

There were many more cars and tall buildings than before. Suddenly, I noticed a group of people walking with large packages on their backs, and was told that they were on a shopping tour from neighboring Bulgaria. After the Eastern-European revolution of 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the flow of people in and out of Istanbul increased dramatically. They came from Eastern Europe to sell their wares, or to shop for goods in Turkey for sale back home.

The people are strong. To those who must struggle each day to make a living, national boundaries imposed by political powers may be no more than an impediment.

I arrived at my room, from which I had a view across

the Bosphorus. The strait measures about two-thirds of a mile across on average. It is narrow enough to swim across. There is an old tale in these parts about a young man who so longed to be with his lover, who lived on the opposite shore, that each evening he would swim across the water to see her, and then back again. Where there is passion, distance is no object. No place is too far away. If so, then how wide can the "strait" that separates country from country, race from race, really be?

The building in the foreground just overlooking the strait is Dolmabahçe Palace, once the residence of the Ottoman emperor. After the Turkish Revolution, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the fledgling country's first president, moved the capital to Ankara. Whenever he came to Istanbul, however, he stayed at the palace. It was in a room at Dolmabahçe Palace that he died on Nov. 10, 1938, at the age of 57. Since then, the hands of all of the clocks in the palace always point to 9:05, the time that morning of the president's death.

President Atatürk once said, "Cherish old friends, and make new friends." This expresses the heartfelt wish of the father of a nation — his wish that his country, which is surrounded by many neighbors, enjoy lasting peaceful relations. He was deeply aware of the dangers of being isolated from international politics. Japan, which he viewed as a model of modernization, to this day fits his description as "a country with no nearby friends." This is a dangerous condition.

At the Grand Bazaar, endless row after row of shops form a virtual maze for shopping tourists. Istanbul itself has come through a maze of several thousands of years of history. Once part of the Greek world, then a center of Christendom, it is today a hub of Islam. That history has created a mesmerizing multi-layered image. A thousand shades of cruelty and glory, a thousand faces of love and anguish — the thoughts and ideas of

countless lives lived permeate every corner of the city like the scent of musk. A diverse array of people walks the streets: Arabs and Greeks, East Asians, Russians, Eastern Europeans; people with hair as dark as ebony, as read as a sunset, as blond as strands of pure gold. This city is the world.

What is race? Harvard professor Nur Yalman, himself a native of Turkey, has said that racial conflict is not a problem among races, but a problem among those in power. The powerful tend to fan the flames of enmity toward other races in order to garner support for themselves and their aims.

Where is the current of history headed?

Beneath the surface waters of the Bosphorus, there flows a deeper current. The water on the surface flows southward from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara at about two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half miles per hour. Beneath this, however, from about 130 feet down, flows a gentler current in the exact opposite direction.

Amid the tumult of the century's end, the groundwork for a global human family may not yet be complete. Anxiety about the new era has given rise to a tendency to revert to and take refuge in that old tribal consciousness known as nationalism. Japan is seeing a particularly dangerous movement in that direction. Yet beneath this current of the times there flows a gentler, opposing current.

On the evening of the day we arrived, we were invited to attend the Istanbul International Art Festival. Gracing the opening of the event was a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

"Humanity, embrace!" How appropriate a song for this city! Afterward, we went outside to watch a fireworks display. Glowing bouquets of roses blossomed again and again over the night sky of Istanbul.

Fifteen in a series