



EXPERIENCE:

Tomell de Silva, 14, creates a brilliant future at school.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 7 SPEECH

Setbacks Are Wonderful Opportunities

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

'More often than not, defeat makes people cowardly or causes them to grumble and complain,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'But in reality, setbacks and defeats are wonderful opportunities to turn poison into medicine.'

SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 49th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Sept. 7.

As of today, Sept. 7, there are only 116 days to the start of the 21st century. A general review of the 20th century is now taking place in a wide variety of spheres. As part of that review, let us ask ourselves: What was the most brilliant speech of this century — socially, politically and aesthetically?

American intellectuals have chosen an immortal speech by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., leader of a momentous human rights revolution and graduate of Morehouse College. [At this meeting, SGI President Ikeda was inducted into the Martin Luther King Jr. International Collegium of Scholars of Morehouse College, Atlanta.]

Dr. King gave his stirring speech at a historic civil rights

march on Washington, D.C., on Aug. 28, 1963, a hundred years after Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, before a crowd of more than a quarter million, Dr. King cried out those famous words: "I have a dream!" It was the lion's roar of a 34-year-old youth.

Speaking out with passion and fighting vigorously against injustice is a hallmark of youth.

We have a dream — kosen-rufu.

We of the SGI, too, have a dream: the dream of kosen-rufu.

In his speech, Dr. King says: "I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream.... I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.'"

Dr. King devoted his life to this noble dream, and he died a



(L-r) Dr. George Miller, Dean Lawrence Carter and SGI President Ikeda enjoy the view from Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall after the 49th Headquarters Leaders Meeting.

martyr to his cause. Today, we are honored by the presence of two great, wise teachers who have inherited that dream and fought with all their might to make it a reality.

On behalf of everyone here, I offer the warmest welcome to Dr. Lawrence Carter Sr. and Dr. George Miller. Gentlemen, we greet you with deep admiration and profound respect. [Dr. Carter is dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel, Morehouse College, and professor of religion and philosophy. Dr. Miller is professor and director of the Scholars Academy of Lewis University, Ill. Founded in 1867, Morehouse College is the United States' only private, historically black, four-year liberal arts college for men. It has a student body of approximately 3,000 and more than 160 full-time faculty.]

This building, the Tokyo

Makiguchi Memorial Hall, is dedicated to the memory of the Soka Gakkai's first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who cherished a dream of peace and justice, just like Dr. King did, and who died in prison for his beliefs. President Makiguchi, who was driven to his death by the insane forces of nationalism, was one of the great thinkers of this century, a person of whom all Japan should be proud.

I dedicate the honor that I have just received from Morehouse College to my esteemed predecessor Mr. Makiguchi, as a symbol of the brilliant triumph the Soka Gakkai celebrates in this 70th-anniversary year of its founding.

It is now time to leave everything to youth.

In the audience today, we have 250 SGI youth representatives from 45 nations and territories who are participating

in the SGI youth training course. I extend my warmest welcome and deepest gratitude to all of you.

I know that you have traveled long distances, and that many of you have also struggled to overcome great financial difficulties to be here. Nichiren Daishonin would surely have high praise for your strong seeking spirit, saying, "Wonderful, wonderful!" You are practitioners of Buddhism in the truest sense of the word.

A gathering of noble direct disciples of the Buddha, a gathering of warriors for kosen-rufu — this is the SGI. Today's meeting clearly attests to that.

I am well aware of all that you are going through. I "rise and revere you as Buddhas." I welcome you, youthful leaders of the SGI, with all my heart, and I praise and commend you.



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

Participants in the 49th Headquarters Leaders Meeting at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji include 250 youth from 45 countries and regions.

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 6

BODHISATVA NEVER DISPARAGING

Back to the Basics

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

In the 20th chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni shares the story of Never Disparaging, a bodhisattva from a remote time when arrogant priests tried to destroy Buddhism and control people's lives. Unlike those priests, Never Disparaging went around trying to empower everyone he met. "I have profound reverence for you," he would say, "I would never dare treat you with disparagement or arrogance. Why? Because you are all practicing the bodhisattva way and are certain to attain Buddhahood" (*The Lotus Sutra*, pp. 266-67).

How did people react to Never Disparaging's encouragement? They beat him up and called him names. Not once, not twice, but all the time, over many years. And he just kept telling them the same thing: "You will become Buddha!" (p. 269).

Through this sincere kind of practice, Never Disparaging eventually realized such a vast state of life that all who had tried to hurt him came to deeply respect him. In the end, they came to practice Buddhism correctly. While relating this story,

Shakyamuni reveals that "in fact he [Never Disparaging] was none other than I myself!" (p. 268). Nichiren Daishonin similarly applies this story to himself, seeing in it a parallel to the way he was persecuted for sharing this Buddhism.

The point is that we can all relate to Never Disparaging's story to our own lives, to the unique struggles for kosen-rufu each of us goes through. "Those struggling in the forefront of our movement are themselves Bodhisattva Never Disparaging," SGI President Ikeda teaches (August 1999 *Living Buddhism*, p. 23).

For us, as it was for Never Disparaging, the purpose of our being born, the purpose of our coming to practice this great philosophy, comes down to how we can treat others. In "The Three Kinds of Treasure," the Daishonin says that "the heart of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings is the Lotus Sutra, and the heart of the practice of the Lotus Sutra is found in the 'Never Disparaging' chapter. What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's profound respect for people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 852).

Do we have Never Disparaging's reverence for others? Do we act on it? When we do, our friends, loved ones and even our enemies are naturally led to true happiness. **wt**

Campout Reveals Physical, Spiritual Courage

By ANNE MARIE McINTOSH
WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENT

Rope and rock climbing, canoeing, fishing and dialogue were but some of the fun activities featured in the annual Washington, D.C., Junior High/High School Summer Campout Aug. 18-20. The youth gathered at a campground in beautiful, rural Maryland, strongly determined to encourage one another, connect with the SGI organization and SGI President Ikeda, strengthen the basics of faith, practice and study and develop their friendships.

The young people encouraged one another at every turn—cheering a friend to make it to the top of the rock climbing wall, working together to complete a ropes course, applauding one another's performances at the talent show or lending a sympathetic ear when a young person shared some of his or her personal struggles.

By the time the discussion groups got under way, even those who hadn't known a single other person there before the weekend had grown comfortable enough to speak up. During a dialogue on how to talk to friends about Buddhism, 13-year-old Diar Chichester spoke bravely about his personal hell in school when he discovered that his Buddhist be-



Photo by ANNE MARIE McINTOSH

Participants in the annual Washington, D.C., Junior High/High School Summer Campout get to know one another.

liefs made him unaccepted in his environment. Encouraged by his friendships with the other members to realize that others go through the same struggles, Diar resolved never to give up his practice of Buddhism.

With such breakthroughs in friendship and in faith, the purpose of the campout had been accomplished. Ariana Bock, JH/HS region leader, remarked: "This is what makes the SGI such a unique youth organization. Through profound dialogue we can share and learn from each person's courageous practice."

During discussions on mentoring, several youth expressed their deep respect and admira-

tion for people in their lives who had suffered much but were still strong mentors for them. Other lively discussions concerned Victory Over Violence as well as Soka Spirit and the history of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

The finale was a video and presentation about the new Soka University of America campus in Aliso Viejo, Calif., opening May 3, 2001. Steve Wunder, young men's region leader, expressed his determination, saying: "SUA, AV is President Ikeda's dream for America. Let's work together to make this dream a reality for the sake of America and the entire world!" **wt**

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EXPERIENCE — TOMELL DE SILVA, ORLAND PARK, ILL.

'Freely Shaping My Future'

Tomell de Silva creates a brilliant future through challenging himself at school.

"I have a dream!" A quote we all have come to know. But unlike Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream, I had a dream that any young child would have. A dream that I believed would never come true. My dream was to have friends, to feel accepted and be happy, and to do well in school. But these things remained just dreams. From the first grade, I struggled with these problems.

I am 14 years old and currently in ninth grade and have been an SGI-USA member since birth. Most of my life, I have lived in a predominantly Caucasian community, and was one of two minority students in my school. I am half African American and half Japanese.

It was a struggle from the beginning. I was constantly excluded from any social life at school, and as for my grades, they were among the lowest in the school. When report cards were issued, there was not enough room for the teachers to write additional comments like "very talkative!"; "extremely disruptive!"; "needs severe improvement!"; and "lacks understanding!" My parents, puzzled at the low grades and comments, were disappointed, and could not understand why.

My parents chose to send me to Sylvan Learning Center, which promised to help me achieve at least one grade higher in one class by the end of the year. Unfortunately, it didn't help.

Devastated once again, my parents withdrew me from the daily classes and hired a home tutor, thinking that it would simulate a "home schooled" feeling. As before, the results were unsuccessful.

I lived in agony and pain. I didn't understand why I was doing so poorly, and to a certain extent, didn't care. My lack of motivation and understanding of my schoolwork often brought my mother to tears. She would cry at night pondering why her son was doing so badly. She chanted Nam-myohorenge-kyo every day for me to improve and to be happy. But every year, she was brought to tears once again.

My social life looked no brighter than my education. I didn't see myself as being different from any other person, yet I was being excluded for reasons that I could not understand. My peers in school would often talk to me at the beginning of the year, but as the year progressed, they slowly faded away until the point where they ended our friendship. This cycle happened yearly, and I began to doubt my ability to do anything. I felt as if there would be no end to my struggles.

As I grew older, the problems worsened. In fifth grade, I was not only being neglected by my peers but also my teacher. Whenever I raised my hand to answer a question, she never acknowledged me. She simply waited until one of the other students raised their hand. She also constantly made mistakes in my grades by placing a lower one in her grade book than the actual grade given to me. She would yell at me often for no apparent reason.

As these incidents continued, I began to realize what was really taking place. I was being discriminated against because I was different. I told my mother, and I will never forget the dreadful look on her face as I poured out what was happening at school every day. She was shocked and her face reddened with anger.

In no time, she spoke with the school principal but he simply told my mom that there was nothing wrong, and that the teacher was not excluding anyone in any way. He even declined to meet with her saying that there was no need and nothing more could be said or done. In disbelief and completely infuriated, she hung up the phone. This was only one of many similar instances.

When questioned, the teacher claimed it was simply a mistake. But that "mistake" was made more than five times a quarter, each quarter.

Nothing ever seemed to go right for me. I felt despised by my peers and teachers. No matter what I did to succeed, I always felt like I failed.

Although my mother has a very strong Buddhist practice, I did not pray consistently. My determination and will to chant were at an all-time low. I knew theoretically that if I chant my life would improve, but since I hadn't experienced anything life-changing, I doubted it

would work.

My mother knew my suffering and throughout my life she encouraged me about the tremendous benefits of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. At my lowest point, I finally gave into my mother's urging and began to chant on a regular basis. During the two-year period from fifth to seventh grade, my practice became more consistent.

Seventh grade was a major turning point for me. I had completely regained my confidence and rebuilt my self-esteem and will power. Proud of my "new" self, I entered seventh grade with a fresh outlook and a will to fulfill my dreams. I made the determination to no longer be held back by my bad grades and to make friends.

During this time, I accomplished one of the most astounding things—I made the honor role. I was overwhelmed with joy and I will never forget the first time I saw my name on the honor role board. I also began to develop lasting friendships and totally turned around my relationships with my teachers.

In eighth grade, I accomplished every one of my dreams and even surpassed the standards I set for myself. For the first time, I was elected by my peers to represent them on the Student Council Board, which organizes dances, school activities, extracurricular activities and various sports. Furthermore, I was elected by the staff of the school to join the Principals Council, which is a board that gives the student body power to change or improve the school. It is tremendously hard to get elected to either of these boards and maintain the level of performance expected. And when only 10 students are picked out of nearly 400, then the job becomes even more pressured. All the students were counting on us, and I was determined to fulfill the requirements and meet all of my goals.

On top of that, I achieved a 4.0 grade point average—there were only five students who achieved this for the year. At the commencement ceremony, to congratulate all of the honorees, I received a Medal of Honor and a special certificate. It was one of the happiest times in my life. I will never forget that day.

That night, I chanted in appreciation for the evening's events.

On my graduation day, June 2,

a very special honor was given to me. I was one of two students out of a class of 363 to receive the American Legion Award, given to only the top students who exceed not only in academics, but also in sports and other activities. My parents were so proud of me. I could honestly say, at that moment, I was the happiest person on this earth.

I am now in high school and attend the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, which I love. This is a private school, which only accepts a limited number of new students. We are treated as if we are college students, with all the freedom and responsibility. It's one of the most prestigious high schools in Illinois—and it is very diverse. I am also succeeding in everything I do there.

I feel appreciative to have this opportunity to receive such a tremendous education. I believe that a good education is the key to success and to a better world. I believe a good education leads to a better understanding of the world, and a better understanding of the world will help create peace. The dream of a peaceful world is so obscured by hate that it often seems impossible to accomplish. But I believe it can be done.

Some people believe that an education will simply get you ahead in life and serves no other purpose, but it does more. Hatred, ignorance and prejudice are often caused by a lack of education; they are learned, not inherited. Through education we can come to appreciate the diversity of this world, instead of hating our differences. Through learning and understanding each culture, each ethnic group and each contribution made by different people, we expand not only our knowledge but also our own lives. By educating myself, I am able to have a better understanding of how each of us is interconnected.

I read SGI President Ikeda's guidance daily because it helps me to direct my life. I can always encourage friends my age when they are struggling and now they feel compelled to read his guidance, too. He says: "Your teen years are a period to build the foundation of your future happiness. It is the age when your



Tomell de Silva, 14, on his eighth grade graduation day, June 2, holding his diploma and the American Legion Award.

body and mind are still very fresh and flexible, and you can absorb many things that will be important to you for the rest of your life. It is the age when you can master some skills or devote yourself to studying, in which you can freely shape your future as you please" (*The Way of Youth*, p. 51).

My goal is one day to be like my stepfather, who is my mentor in life and the one person I can look up to. I would like to become a cardiovascular surgeon not only because my father is in the field of cardiology, but because I want to help people and save lives.

My faith has developed so much through this experience and I feel I'm beginning to grasp Buddhism more. I changed my attitude in my prayer. I no longer beg when I pray, rather I've found that the strength to accomplish my goals comes from within with a prayer of determination.

I owe my success to my Buddhist practice because it has enabled me to expand my power—and to my family, who has always been there, right by my side. I want to thank my brother who has encouraged me as well as made me a stronger person both physically (we wrestle a lot) and mentally. Finally, I want to thank my mom for her continuous encouragement. She is another mentor, guiding me through the roughest times in my life. I love my family for everything they have provided for me. I am truly thankful. **WT**

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

Elevating Our Lives to Buddhahood

‘The self that exists at that moment of death is the one that will continue throughout the state of death and beyond into the next life,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘That is why Buddhism teaches that we must elevate our lives to the state of Buddhahood while we are alive.’

Part two of a discussion on life and death among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division leaders Teruhiko Yumitani (young men’s leader) and Yoshiko Ueda (young women’s leader).

Teruhiko Yumitani: Everyone, at one point or other in their lives, wonders why they are born, why they die and what happens after death.

One of our high school division members said his uncle’s death really set him thinking. When he saw his uncle’s lifeless form, he said, he thought it looked like a wax figure. He could not quite grasp what death meant.

Yoshiko Ueda: Another student writes: “When I have a lot of problems and am having a hard time, I wonder why I am alive — what the point of it all is. I feel so lost sometimes, and it makes me feel sad and hopeless about life.”

Yet another says: “When my grandfather died, I thought about life and death. I wondered why it is that people can die so easily, just like that. I also regretted that I had not done more for my grandfather while he was alive.”

We should give deep thought to the question of life and death throughout our lives.

SGI President Ikeda: To ponder the question of death in this way is in itself extremely valuable. It is proof of our humanity.

Generally, as people grow older and get caught up in the busy routines of daily life, they tend to gradually stop thinking about such fundamental questions. But the question of life and death is a very important one — one that we should give deep thought to throughout our lives.

If we compare our existence to a tree, the question of life and death is like the tree’s roots. While it may seem like we have a whole variety of problems and issues to deal with, they are no more than the leaves and branches, which are all connected to the fundamental root issue of life and death.

Yumitani: Some people take the attitude “I am still young. I do not need to think about such things now. It can wait until I am old and at death’s door.”

Ikeda: Well, perhaps we can look at it in the following way: Suppose we have a high school freshman. She wants to decide on her plans and goals for her freshman year. But she cannot meaningfully do that without deciding what her plans are for the whole duration of her high school years.

Yumitani: That makes sense.

Ikeda: So she tries to plan her entire high school career. But now she finds that, unless she thinks about what she is going to do after graduation, she cannot plan her high school years wisely, either.

Ueda: Yes, unless you at least have a rough idea of what you want to do when you leave school — whether it be finding a job or going on to college — you cannot really decide how to best spend your time at high school.

Ikeda: In the same way, you cannot really meaningfully contemplate the question of how you should live your life unless you know what happens to you after life’s “graduation” — in other words, after death.

Yumitani: Yes, I see what you mean.

The view that there is no life after death leads to the degeneration of ethics and morality.

Ikeda: That is why it is so important for you to be young philosophers and deeply ponder this question of life and death in your youth.

If people let themselves be guided by the belief that there is no life after death, they can easily succumb to thinking they can do what they like. And when they hit a deadlock, they may think they can just put an end to their lives and be done with it all.

Yumitani: Yes, hypothetically.

Ueda: I agree. Going back to the example of high school, I am sure if there were nothing after graduation, most high school students would think it pointless to study so hard.

Yumitani: Well, people who believe there is nothing after death might still make some effort so that they could live a pleasant, enjoyable life during the time they are here. But they probably would not work hard to perfect themselves or serve others.

Ikeda: Of course, the reality is that not everyone who thinks that death is the end lives recklessly with absolute abandon. Not only are there social restrictions against that, but deep in our hearts, human beings intuitively know that life is eternal and there is a right way for us to live.

Yumitani: There are also people who say that precisely because this is our one and only lifetime — because there is no life after death — we have to make the best of the present. But not everyone thinks this way.

Ikeda: In today’s world, the materialist view that there is no life after death has become prevalent. I think that is the reason that ethics and morality have degenerated into mere pretense. Dostoyevsky, in his great novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, has the character Ivan make an observation to the effect: “Supposing there is no God, what then would be a crime? Wouldn’t all things be lawful?” If we replace “God” with “life after death,” the same question holds. We would have a world where anything goes as long as you do not get caught.

Yumitani: In fact, that seems to be the way the world is heading.

Individuality never ceases to exist, although in death it becomes intangible.

Ueda: Some people ask: “Is death really the end? And if so, doesn’t that mean that everything in life is empty and meaningless?”

Ikeda: We are beings who

search for meaning in life. As long as we have a meaning, we can withstand any suffering. But without a meaning in life, we can have everything we want and still be completely empty, our spirit slowly dying. Just as you have to adopt the larger perspective of your entire high school career to give meaning to your first year, you have to adopt a larger perspective to see the meaning of your life. That larger perspective is the perspective of this lifetime and what happens after death.

Without that perspective, you will not appreciate the true meaning of your life. This is why a person’s understanding of life and death is so important.

Yumitani: Buddhism teaches that life is eternal. In our last discussion (Sept. 15 *World Tribune*), you described the universe as a great living entity, like a vast ocean, and each individual life as a wave on that ocean.

Ueda: When the wave rises up from the surface of the ocean, that is life. And when it merges back into the ocean, that is death.

Yumitani: I am still a little unclear about what exactly that “merging” means.

Ikeda: Mr. Toda once said that if you drop some ink into a pond, it dissolves and disappears. That is what death is like. Later on, if you use some device to recapture the components of the dissolved ink and bring them together again, that is life, he said.

Yumitani: Though an individual life merges back into the life of the universe, its identity does not disappear.

Ikeda: That individual life does not cease to exist. When it encounters the right conditions, it will once again be manifested. But if you ask whether that life exists as a tangible thing, the answer is absolutely not. We cannot locate it here or there in the universe. It has become one with the universe as a whole.

It is neither existence nor nonexistence. In Buddhism, we refer to this as the state of non-substantiality.

Let me use a metaphor. Today, radio waves in infinite number are crisscrossing the globe. Right here and now there are radio waves of all different frequencies — for radio and TV broadcasts and the like — flying all around us. Some of them originate in Japan, some in other countries.

Though we may say those waves exist, we can neither see nor hear them. We cannot smell or touch them. But if we have a radio, a TV set or some other appropriate receiver, and we tune it to the right frequency, we can hear the sounds and see the images those waves carry.

Yumitani: A TV set becomes the necessary condition to make an invisible wave visible in the form of a video image.

Ikeda: We could perhaps call this the wave’s transition from death to life. Of course, this is just a metaphor.

In much the same way, though, individual lives merge into the universe upon death. They do not crash into each other. And, by the same token, they do not ride on someone’s back or hold hands! Each becomes one with the universe, yet retains its individuality.

Your physical and spiritual energy cannot be separated in life or death.

Ueda: Is that individuality different from the concept of a spirit or soul that is separate from the physical body?

Ikeda: Completely different. Buddhism teaches that such a thing as a substantial, separate soul does not exist. In all life, mind and body — the spiritual and physical aspects — are one. Both in life and after death, an entity’s physical and spiritual energy cannot be separated from each other. They are one and indivisible.

It is just a superstition to believe that the soul or spirit can separate itself from the body and fly about here and there. Life — in which the spiritual and physical are always one — merges into the great universal life, while preserving its individuality.

Yumitani: When we die, the brain is destroyed, so how can there still be any spiritual energy? The reason that most people today think there is nothing after

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'Such things as seeing ghosts or hearing voices happen when your life force is weak.' (Above) Hamlet confronts the ghost of his father, from Shakespeare's 'Hamlet,' with Henry Irving in the title role.

death is that they believe that the spirit or mind resides in the brain, and as such it cannot persist after the brain cells have died.

Ikeda: That is an important point. I have gone into this question in detail on various occasions, and I hope you will study those discussions and writings, too. But the main point is that the brain is the place or physical vehicle for the activity of the mind or spirit—it is not the mind or spirit itself. That is the correct way to look at it.

For example, the great French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson compared the relationship between our brain and consciousness to a hook and the clothes hung on it. When the hook is gone—that is, when the brain is dead—the clothes fall to the floor. In other words, mental activity becomes impossible. But the hook is not the clothes.

Ueda: Speaking of Bergson, I understand that the first time you were invited to a Soka Gakkai discussion meeting at the age of 19 and heard that it was a gathering where people talked about “the philosophy of life,” you asked, “Are you referring to Bergson?”

Ikeda: Yes, that is right. Bergson was active about a hundred years ago, which is no doubt why he used the metaphor of clothes and a hook. Today it might be better to use the example of televised images and sound and the TV set or monitor that is needed to make them appear.

In this scenario, memory and other mental activities are like the images and sound. They cannot appear without a TV set, which is like the brain. And just because your favorite screen idol appears on television does not mean you

will find a picture of him or her inside if you take the TV apart.

In the same way, when the brain dies, mental energy loses the vehicle for manifesting itself, but that does not mean that that energy itself has ceased to exist. Nor does the body's physical energy cease to exist when the body dies. It loses the vehicle for its activity and becomes latent, dormant.

Yumitani: And the next time we are reborn, such latent energy becomes active again, doesn't it?

Ikeda: Yes, the dormant energy is manifested and activated once more when the phase of life is entered again. However, strictly speaking, our lives are not “reborn”—they exist continuously. The identity of our lives does not change.

Our lives—in which body and mind are one—continue unchanged. The essence of life is not one where a soul leaves the body and flies up into the sky or something.

The realm of life is full of mysteries.

Ueda: I have heard of people who say they have seen a ghost or heard the voice of their dead grandmother. Are such experiences just dreams or illusions?

Ikeda: No, those can be real experiences. But the person is not seeing a ghost. It may be that the waves of a person who is in the state of death overlap, for some reason, with the waves of the living, and the living person experiences something like a vision or the voice of the dead person.

The realm of life is full of mysteries. You might think of it as similar to cases when for some reason you hear another conversation on your telephone

line while you are talking to someone else.

Yumitani: Yes, I sometimes find that happens when I use my cell phone.

Ikeda: Mr. Toda used to say that such things as seeing ghosts or hearing voices happen when your life force is weak. You are weak, so you are overpowered by other's signals, and you end up acting like a radio or TV receiver for them. That is why you are the only one who hears or sees these things.

If your life force is strong, that will not happen. In fact, by chanting you can send the waves of the state of Buddhahood to such an individual and help him or her find peace.

Yumitani: There are some lives that do not merge peacefully into the life of the universe, then?

Ikeda: Yes, some merge back into the universal life in dreadful pain and suffering. Some are terrified, as if a horrible monster were pursuing them. And some sleep restlessly, as if troubled by nightmares.

The sound of our chanting reaches the lives of those in the state of death.

Ueda: Can we help such individuals with our chanting?

Ikeda: Yes, we can. The sound of our chanting reaches the lives of those who have entered the state of death.

Of course, it also reaches those who are still alive. The power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo can illuminate anywhere in the universe, even the farthest reaches of the state of Hell, filling it with the warm light of hope, peace and comfort.

The Mystic Law is comprised of the Chinese characters *myo* and *ho*. *Myo*, mystic, symbolizes death and *ho*, law, symbolizes life. Together, as the Mystic Law, they represent the oneness of life and death.

Both life and death are phases of our existence. Though life and death may seem completely separate and independent of each other, the identity of our life that exists within that dynamic is one and unchanging. It continues forever through alternating periods of life and death.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental rhythm of that eternal life. That is why chanting has the power to help even those in the state of death.

Yumitani: What determines whether an individual life suf-

fers or is at peace after death? Do Hell and Eagle Peak really exist?

Ikeda: Yes, they do exist. But they are not in any one place. The state of Hunger is not somewhere beyond Saturn, and Eagle Peak is not just the other side of the sun. I want you to study more about the Ten Worlds [Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood], but the important thing to remember is that just as the Ten Worlds exist within each person, they exist within the universe, too.

The life of a person whose basic tendency while alive is the state of Hell will, after death, merge into the universal state of Hell. The state of Hell exists in our lives, but we cannot say that it is any particular place within us.

Just because you have a toothache, you cannot really say that the state of Hell is in your tooth. Your whole being is in pain, and your whole being is in Hell. In the same way, when a person whose basic life-tendency is the state of Hell dies, the whole universe for that individual becomes Hell.

Our basic life-tendency determines which of the Ten Worlds we are in after death.

Ueda: What do you mean by “basic life-tendency?”

Ikeda: It is the core nature or tendency of your life that you always return to. Everyday we are subject to many external causes and conditions that prompt various emotions and responses. We get angry, we laugh, we reflect. And our lives are always in a state of constant change.

Nevertheless, everyone has his or her own different life-tendency. For instance, there are people who are fundamentally angry by nature and always quick to lose their temper. There are people with weak life-force who are easily depressed, and people who live in the state of Bodhisattva and always think of others first. Our basic life-tendency is what determines which of the Ten Worlds our lives will end up in after death.

Yumitani: That sounds pretty frightening!

Ikeda: After death, there are not the same external causes and conditions as there were in life, so that your life-tendency becomes your entire state of being. In life, even a person whose basic state is Hell, who

is always suffering and for whom life itself is painful, may experience moments of joy or pleasure. But after death, such a person experiences only the state of Hell.

Ueda: That sure is a great motivation for doing our human revolution while we are still alive!

Ikeda: A person's basic life-tendency becomes most clear at the moment of death. A veteran nurse who has cared for the terminally ill and been with many of them in their final moments says: “It seems that at the end of life your entire life flashes before your eyes, like a movie. Not your becoming president of the company or succeeding in business or things like that, but what kind of a life you lived. Who you loved and were kind to, and how. In what ways you were callous or cruel. A sense of satisfaction at having lived according to your beliefs or a deep hurt at having betrayed them. All of what you were as a human being comes rushing at you. That is death.”

Yumitani: Hearing that really makes one stop and think.

Ikeda: At that moment, neither fame nor money, knowledge or status can help you. Your friends and family cannot help you. You must face the truth of your self alone. Death is truly strict—it is uncompromising.

And the self that exists at that moment of death is the one that will continue throughout the state of death and beyond into the next life. That is why Buddhism teaches that we must elevate our lives to the state of Buddhahood while we are alive.

We must do our utmost to cultivate and enrich our lives as human beings. That is the purpose of our Buddhist practice.

Nothing is more important in life than doing our human revolution. And the younger you are, the easier it is to accomplish. **W**

For the Spanish-Language Pages

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Spanish Pages to:

wtspanish@sgi-usa.org

FROM SPEECH, 1

I sincerely pray that, uniting with SGI youth around the world, you will strive to make the dream of Dr. King and the dream of Mr. Makiguchi a reality in the 21st century.

We must leave it to the youth. The new century is completely in your hands. We must pass the baton to a new generation of capable people. Youth, I am counting on you!

Prayer can even change DNA.

Dr. Carter gave a speech on Aug. 22 at Mercer University, Georgia. In it, he says, "Scientists now believe that they can substantially prove that prayer changes DNA." This is a thought-provoking statement as we consider science and religion in the 21st century. He highlighted that work is under way to prove scientifically how powerful prayer can be.

Dr. Carter has also illuminated the lofty path of spiritual transmission between mentor and disciple. He has edited a book on Dr. King's mentor, Benjamin Elijah Mays, who was president of Morehouse College. It is a book filled with the rich pearls of wisdom of a great educator.

For instance, these words of Dr. Mays are quoted: "The test of good religion is...not how we treat the man highest up, but how we treat the man farthest down.... [T]he real test of my religion would be...not how I treat the educated, but how I treat the

man who can't write his name" (*Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King Jr.*, p. 64).

This is a profoundly compassionate point of view. I hope that all leaders of the kosen-rufu movement will bear these words in mind in their interactions with others. As leaders, it is important that you always humbly serve your fellow members. Please never let yourselves grow arrogant.

Dr. King fought on the side of the oppressed and suffering. This is what the SGI is doing. This is our greatest pride and our strength.

Dr. Mays also asserts: "It is not sufficient for Morehouse College to produce clever graduates, men fluent in speech and able to argue their way through; but rather honest men who can be trusted in public and private life — men who are sensitive to the wrongs, the sufferings, and the injustices of society and who are willing to accept responsibility for correcting these ills" (pp. 201–02).

These words express the basic foundation of humanism and resonate with the core teachings of Buddhism.

In accord with this ideal, Morehouse College has produced such exceptional leaders as Dr. King and many other talented, capable people who embody these qualities.

We express our deepest respect for Morehouse College's more than century-long tradition of fighting for justice.



SGI President Ikeda makes his first visit to the Soka International Women's Center, where he views the painting 'Happy Mother,' Sept. 9.

The mission of SUA is to benefit all humankind.

Morehouse College has always been open to ideas from other cultures. In that regard, I especially admire that, through its powerful commitment to learning, Morehouse College was instrumental in introducing Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence into the civil rights movement, where it became a potent force for change.

In more recent years, Dr. King's practice of nonviolence or passive resistance has been transmitted to Europe, where it

played a crucial role in bringing democracy to the countries of Eastern Europe.

If we go back, we can trace the inspiration for Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence to the great Russian writer and thinker Leo Tolstoy, while Tolstoy in turn had been inspired by Henry David Thoreau, the noted American Renaissance thinker. Thoreau read the quintessential teaching of Mahayana Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra, in a French translation, and was powerfully influenced by its ideas. Here we see a grand chain of spiritual inspiration spanning the globe.

I am one of many who pray that we will make further progress in the coming century in expanding and strengthening this magnificent alliance of respect for the sanctity of life that enfolds our blue planet.

I want Soka University of America to shoulder this profoundly humanistic mission and to become a university capable of fresh, innovative value-creation for the benefit of humankind.

Right now, outstanding students from across the United States and the world are applying to be members of the historic first graduating class of the university.

Two of the classroom buildings on the campus have been named the Linus and Ava Helen Pauling Hall and the Mohandas and Kasturbai Gandhi Hall. These names are symbols of our dedication to learning from the great men and women who have championed world peace, in the open-minded spirit of Morehouse College, which we look upon as an older sibling.

America is crucial for the future of kosen-rufu.

SGI-USA is making tremendous strides forward. The United States is a crucial center of the world today, and it is a crucial center for kosen-rufu.

I have heard that in October, to commemorate the 40th anniversary of my first trip to the United States, in 1960, large general meetings will be held all over the country, including a meeting of 10,000 members in Los Angeles. I thank and congratulate my friends of SGI-USA on this wonderful occasion with all my heart!

At President Ikeda's urging, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima then came to the microphone and vigorously called out in English to the assembled SGI-USA members, "Let's all fight together to build a new, great SGI-USA!" The gathered members cheered in approval.

Incidentally, I have heard that it was a dialogue with a dedicated educator, an SGI-USA women's division member, that paved the way to the wonderful friendship we enjoy today with Dr. Carter. In every country, in every region, the activities of our SGI women are blazing new trails of hope and trust. The power of women is truly awesome.

Way back in the 13th century, the Daishonin wrote, "There should be no discrimination among...men or women" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 385). He loudly proclaimed that the lives of all human beings are fundamentally equal. True to his golden words "A sage is one who fully under-



The Soka International Women's Center opens in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, Sept. 8.



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

Mrs. Kaneko Ikeda (center), SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck and other representatives attend the Soka International Women's Center opening, Sept. 8.

stands the three existences of life—past, present, and future” (WND, 641), the Daishonin saw far into the future.

Tomorrow, Sept. 8, with SGI women representatives from many nations gathering to celebrate the event, the new Soka International Women's Center will be opened. Congratulations! [The new building is located a short distance from the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo.]

I want all our SGI leaders to value women and their contributions to the utmost. Men must be strong and resolute when they confront those that seek to harm us, but they must never scold or be disdainful toward our pure-hearted women's and young women's division members. I want you all to know that we have entered an age where such arrogant leaders will not be tolerated.

The key to winning is going to difficult places.

Dr. King's movement faced a series of perils and obstacles, and there were times when it was forced to endure bitter setbacks. But each time, Dr. King bravely took action, launching a fresh offensive to overcome those reverses.

To fight back with even greater determination at the direst of times—this is the standard practice of truly brilliant leaders.

More often than not, defeat makes people cowardly or causes them to grumble and complain. But in reality, setbacks and defeats are wonderful opportunities to turn poison

into medicine.

Dr. King took his movement to Birmingham, Ala., a place that had some of the harshest racial discrimination of the day. He believed that a single victory in the most difficult place could change the course of events and become a driving force toward total victory in the overall struggle for freedom and justice.

Going to the most difficult place—that is the key. All too often, people flee when a problem arises, when they are faced with a demanding situation. But a first-rate leader purposely goes where the most trying challenges lie. This is the mark of a great human being.

Dr. King demonstrated this spirit with his own life. And it is here that I see his strength.

I, too, have sought out the hardest challenges, and that is why I have won each time. This is true in any struggle.

From the time I became Soka Gakkai president, I have continuously prayed that I might successfully protect the organization that Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda founded—that I would face every persecution alone, and that no one else would suffer.

Leaders should always speak clearly.

Dr. King resolved to expand his movement in the most inhospitable place, creating a momentum as powerful as a raging storm. To do that, he led the way, going there himself, calling on small local groups and speaking with people from all walks of life. This is a point I hope all of you will

cussing the heart of the issue at hand. Always courteous and polite, he was above all sincere in his exchanges with others.

Leaders must speak clearly. Making vague statements that lead to confusion or a lack of proper understanding will not do. It is important for leaders to grasp the essence of a problem, clearly identify the source of others' worries and to then outline a concrete plan of action.

Victory and patience belong together.

Dr. King's patient, thoroughgoing dialogues with others eventually won over the hearts of those who, through doubts and misunderstandings, had become too emotional to reason clearly. One after another, they rose up and agreed to join the struggle.

Patience is victory.

Dr. King also made sure that the leaders stayed in close, constant communication and worked together in a spirit of mutual encouragement and support, so that no one's efforts would be wasted. Through a quiet struggle focused on getting his message across to one small group of people at a time, he succeeded in increasing the momentum and strength of his movement.

As leaders, do not be popularity seekers, the kind of leaders who say grand things at large meetings but never take any responsibility and never really do anything. I want you to learn the true art of leadership. Unless you do, people will not follow you.

The unified movement that Dr. King built grew with the power of a rushing torrent, until it claimed the support of millions of ordinary people and finally achieved a dramatic victory. It was Dr. King's unshakable con-

viction that the universe sides with truth and justice.

Let us have that same conviction! Let us not be limited by the narrow confines of Japan but create a momentous movement that the entire universe will support, achieving resounding success in our aims.

Good people need to break their silence.

Our members around Japan are advancing in high spirits. Congratulations to the men on this leaders meeting today! Earlier, Kansai Region Leader Takeshi Fujiwara called out for a “men's revolution.” I like the sound of that! Let's carry out a men's revolution!

May each of you strive with pride and vigor, further expanding your state of life. I ask all the men to think of themselves as the Dr. Kings of the 21st century and take the lead to victory and growth.

Dr. Mays believed that injustice triumphs only when good people are silent. We Buddhists share the same belief. The fearful forces of darkness that robbed Dr. King, Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. Makiguchi of their lives are alive and well today in human society. It is part of the unfortunate karma of humankind. And the world is still rampant with the spiteful, destructive spirit of those who envy decent, honest people and try to destroy them through slander and lies, through verbal violence.

Many, many Asian leaders feel uneasy about the rise of reactionary nationalism that Japan is evidencing. Expressions of grave concern about this dangerous trend are unceasing.

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 8
Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



The sailboat chandelier in the Soka International Women's Center is meant to symbolize Soka women, who turn any kind of wind into a tailwind, using it to advance.

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



SGI President Ikeda expresses his gratitude for being inducted into Morehouse College's Martin Luther King Jr. International Collegium of Scholars, at the 49th Headquarters Leaders Meeting.

FROM SPEECH, 7

It is crucial for good people to break their silence and to speak out boldly and freely. We cannot transform the tragic cycle of human history unless they do, thereby expanding and strengthening the forces of light that champion truth and justice. The Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that unless good wins over evil, the disasters that afflict our society and our age will continue unabated (see WND, 1114).

Let all the Soka Gakkai members in Japan pledge today that we will make the most of the golden opportunity of the unique challenges that lie ahead

next year, at the start of the new century. Let us work to achieve an unprecedented alliance of people 10 million strong that is committed to the ideals of peace and humanism.

We shall overcome everything!

No matter how bitter the struggles they faced, Dr. King and Mahatma Gandhi were always surrounded by smiles and warm laughter. This is because they always encouraged and roused the spirits of others with their own unaffected smiles of invincible hope.

A life of challenge is bright. Those who advance toward their ideals are cheerful. For they are

advancing toward victory.

And in the case of Dr. King, wherever he went, the vibrant, joyful chorus of "We Shall Overcome" resounded. Is there anyone in the audience who can sing this song?

In response, a number of people rose and sang an impromptu chorus of "We Shall Overcome."

Thank you!

We shall overcome! With that determination, let us march boldly toward victory, setting our sights on May 3, 2001.

In closing, I pray with all my heart for the excellent health of

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

No Discrimination in Buddhism

From This Speech:

Way back in the 13th century, Nichiren Daishonin wrote, "There should be no discrimination among...men or women" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 385). He loudly proclaimed that the lives of all human beings are fundamentally equal. True to his golden words "A sage is one who fully understands the three existences of life—past, present, and future" (WND, 641), the Daishonin saw far into the future.

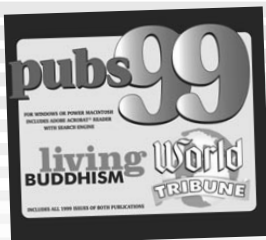
- 1) For a Japanese priest in the 13th century to say that "there should be no discrimination among...men or women" was revolutionary. Why did the Daishonin believe this? How was his idea based on the teachings of Buddhism?
- 2) The roles of men and women have changed a lot in the recent decades in America. Do you feel that men and women are now equal? How do you think that the roles of men and women will change in the new century? What part do you think Buddhism will play in this?
- 3) Do you believe that "the lives of all human beings are fundamentally equal"? If you do, how do you put your belief into practice? Are there times when it is hard to do so?
- 4) What will it take for all human beings, all across the world, to treat one another as equals? Do you think that will ever happen? When?

Dr. Carter, for whom I have the greatest respect and admiration, and everyone else in attendance. And for the boundless prosperity of the United States and all the nations represented here today. **W**

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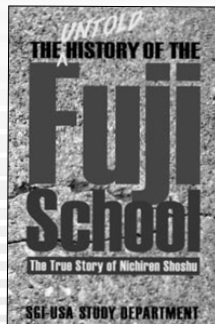


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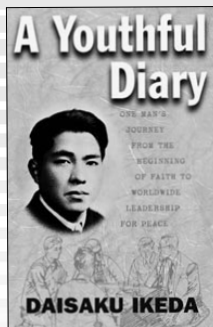
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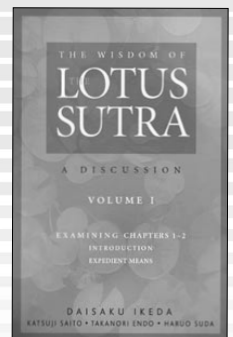
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Albany Chapter Shares VOV Project

By BRYANT WILLIAMS
ALBANY, N.Y., CORRESPONDENT

It started with a simple comment in April made by a local youth member: "I wish they would bring the Victory Over Violence Exhibit here one day." That was the beginning of a four-month campaign led by the youth of Albany Chapter. After reading the March 17 *World Tribune*, they talked about VOV at the monthly youth meeting. They decided they would bring the exhibit to update New York for the "Tuesday In The Park" festival on Aug. 1 in Schenectady and for the African American Arts Festival at the Empire State Plaza in Albany on Aug. 5.

It was suggested they do a car wash and yard sale to raise the money to pay for the exhibit costs, covering shipping and materials. As soon as the determination was made, the obstacles began. During the entire month of May, it rained every week. So, the youth came up with a new plan: "A Bake Sale For Peace."

Members donated money for supplies and the youth baked cakes, cookies, muffins and even some special items. Many chapter members took orders at their jobs for baked goods and the youth baked them that Saturday. At the World Peace Prayer Meeting that Sunday, they set up a table and sold every item.

The next week, they held another bake sale in front of the local WalMart store. When a customer would purchase an item, they would receive a VOV flier and bookmark and have the opportunity to sign the Pledge for Peace. Between the two sales, more than enough money was raised and many people found about VOV.



Members of Albany Chapter after a planning meeting toward their VOV activities.

Although this started out as a youth activity, members from all four divisions worked together to make it a success. The entire chapter chanted for the success of the event.

The public relations committee for the event made the determination to have 2,000 pledges signed at both events. The committee met with the mayor of Schenectady, Al Jurzynski, to show him the "Quest for Peace" video and talk about the Victory Over Violence project. He was so moved by the video, he asked to sign the first Pledge for Peace for the city of Schenectady. The mayor gave his full support when the youth explained that they wanted to work with the school district to share the VOV project.

More than 20,000 attended the "Tuesday in the Park" festival on Aug. 1 in Schenectady.

All the members greeted people and explained to them about the SGI and VOV. The booth stayed busy the entire day. Many people would come back with family and friends, telling them they really needed to sign a pledge.

The following weekend at the African American Arts Festival in Albany, members drove from Binghamton, Hudson, Ithaca and New Jersey to support the booth. Once again, the message of peace was well received by the community. One member spent the day riding his bike around getting pledges signed and bringing people back to the booth. The energy from the booth permeated the entire section it was in. Of those who sign the pledge, some had experiences in their own life with violence, others had family members and friends going through tough situation and

some just wanted to be a part of change in the world.

Between the two events, there were 1,300 pledges signed—and the members were still not finished.

On Aug. 19, a seminar was held on Buddhism and Victory Over Violence at the Schenectady Public Library. The guests were treated to presentations and dialogue about nonviolence. The second part of the seminar was about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and the SGI-USA. It was a wonderful way to finish off the August VOV Campaign.

This activity reached out to many inactive members, giving them a fresh new look at the SGI-USA, and gave the youth a tremendous sense of accomplishment. In the end, the members of Albany Chapter grew much closer. **WT**



The four-panel Victory Over Violence exhibit was at the heart of the members' efforts to educate their community about nonviolence.



Members share the 'Pledge for Peace' during the African American Arts Festival in Albany, Aug. 5.

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Practice for Others Benefits Me

PERSPECTIVE

By JANICE BENNETT
WASHINGTON, D.C.

In January 1998, I started my own home visit activity. I did this to break my weekly routine of leaving work and going straight home and feeling sorry for myself. So I decided to visit two people who did not come out to SGI activities very often. My purpose in visiting them was to get to know them better and to encourage their practice of Buddhism in the SGI. At the same time, I had heard that practicing for others is important, and I wanted to practice correctly to gain benefit for my life.

I had my own specific plan as to how these home visits would go: I would arrive at their homes, talk with them a few minutes, recite the evening prayer with them, and then leave. Afterward, I would pat myself on the back and say what a good person I was for helping my friends practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

This was the plan, but from the time I started visiting my



Photo by ROBIN MEADER

friends, the home visits did not go as I had planned.

Once I entered their homes and we sat down, my friends would start to talk about their problems. They seldom wanted to start chanting right away. In fact, sometimes we would get very little chanting in. I became frustrated because my friends were not following the plan I had in my head! Sometimes I would have to listen to them for what seemed like a long time. This was no easy task, because anyone who knows me knows that I like to talk! At times as I sat listening to my friends' problems, I would feel like there was something I should have been able to do to help them solve those problems. I even had the nerve to think that

I had the answer to their problems in my head. At other times, I felt helpless and discouraged. Even so, at the end of each visit, my friends would thank me and give me a hug. Because of this, I kept going to see them, even when it was difficult for me. I was visiting my friends as a "practice for others"; in other words, I saw the home visits as a way for my friends to learn more about Buddhism.

The question I had never asked myself was "How was this home visit activity benefiting me?" As I thought about this question, I came to realize a couple of important points. First, that a person's problems are very real to them (even if they seem to me to be easy to solve). Second, if a person feels like they can trust me enough to tell me their problems, it means that they believe I care about them (and they will start to care about me, too). In this way the home visits allow me to deepen my faith and my friendships.

At this point in my 15-year practice, my listening skills began to become stronger. And then I read something written by SGI-USA Vice Women's Leader Linda Johnson (from a

women's meeting in New York City, April 9), which said: "We tend to expect, merely because we are practicing a religion, that people ought to be perfect. The minute we find out they are not perfect and [are, in fact,] human, we are profoundly discouraged. This is a practice of human revolution. Without challenges we would not grow. I am coming to understand that every person in my life exists to teach [me] how to become a better human being."

With this in mind, I began to sincerely chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo every day to understand what my friends were trying to teach me. I prayed for their happiness so that when I went to visit them I would be refreshed and ready to listen once again.

And then one day, a "light bulb" went off in my head and I realized very clearly that I did not have the solution to anyone's problems but my own. But there were a few things I could do: First, I could chant with my friends and in this way offer them the hope that comes from practicing Buddhism. Second, just by listening to their problems, I could show them that I cared and in this way, too, offer them hope

for their future happiness.

I have been visiting my two special friends for over a year now, and it is they who have taught me these important lessons.

Because of our home visit activity, I believe that I have become more compassionate and patient with others. I also have improved my ability to listen and have become less judgmental about others' circumstances. From my friends, I am learning that when a person feels they can talk to me, that means they trust me and will be glad to see me when I do visit them.

This activity has, I believe, strengthened my character and is helping me to stop running from my own sufferings. For I see some of myself in each of these women. I realize that when these women let me enter their homes to visit with them, when they smile at me and ask me where I have been, when they offer me a glass of water, when they give me a hug and say thank you, it is I who should thank them for helping me to be the bodhisattva I want to be.

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

Photo by FUJII CHU



SGI-USA Members Support Los Angeles Korean Festival

More than 100 SGI-USA members supported an information booth at the 27th Los Angeles Korean Festival, Sept. 21-24. The booth's focus was the SGI's global movement for peace, culture and education. More than 700 people visited the booth for dialogue with the members, and 185 people signed up to receive further information on the SGI and Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. The organizing committee saw the festival as a great opportunity to reach out to this burgeoning Southern California community, now estimated at 600,000 Korean Americans.



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

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

Question:

I graduated from high school several years ago, and the teachers/counselors/principal have retired or are no longer there. How can I get recommendations?

Answer:

The purpose of the two academic recommendations Soka University, Aliso Viejo requests is to learn more about you from someone who is familiar with

your academic ability. If you have attended any college classes, recommendations could come from college professors or counselors. If you have tried to find former teachers/counselors/principals and failed, please contact the SUA Admission office.

Question:

Do I have to take the SAT/TOEFL test before I can send in my application? Do I have to get all of my recommendations back to send them in with my application?

Answer:

The application, your FAFSA form (if applying for financial aid) and your application fee should be sent in together. Your essay may be sent in separately, if you wish. Your test scores will be sent in separately from the testing agency. Your three recommendations should be sent directly to SUA from the persons writing the recommendations. SUA's enrollment services team will let you know what we have received and what (if any) pieces of your application file are still missing. SUA cannot review any application until your file is complete.



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 answer with others who might have the same questions.

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PART 46-47

Shin'ichi Yamamoto realizes that 'the Soka Gakkai had entered a period of rough sailing. Having set sail into society and out onto the open seas of the world, it was inevitable that the great ship of the Soka Gakkai would encounter raging waves.'

After it had been disbanded, the former central leaders of Taipei Chapter were summoned to the Taiwan Garrison General Headquarters and made to state in writing that they would no longer carry out religious activities.

This was not the end of the Taiwan members' troubles, however. In fact, it was just the beginning.

The police stepped up its surveillance and crackdown on members. Some members had their homes raided and their Gohonzon seized. Others had their copies of the Nichiren Daishonin's writings and other Soka Gakkai publications, as well as their Soka Gakkai pins and other items, confiscated.

Still others were threatened with imprisonment if they continued practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism. In some cases, people were denied promotions at work when it was learned that they were members. Others were demoted or laid off.

Although the freedom of religious belief of the individual was constitutionally guaranteed, the reality was that the members in Taiwan were robbed of even

that right once their organization had been disbanded.

This daunting trial was to clearly reveal whether or not the members' faith was genuine. Fearing persecution, those who had been practicing solely for personal recognition and profit quit practicing one after another. But Chapter Leader Zhu Qianxun and the other members with genuine faith regarded this hardship as an honor, and they rose to the occasion like courageous lions.

Zhu was a mid-level manager with a promising future at a large cement manufacturer. When the police began watching him, the company management pressed him to give up his Buddhist practice. Of course, Zhu's determination never wavered. As a result, not only was his future advancement at the company blocked, he was removed from his managerial post.

Forced into a position where he had little real work to do, Zhu could now leave the office earlier than usual and make use of his vacation days. Taking advantage of this extra time, he began translating the Daishonin's writings into Chinese. Moreover, he chose to translate

them into classical Chinese in order to achieve the highest degree of accuracy. Having decided to make this work his personal mission, he went about it with quiet diligence.

In 1997, this undertaking would finally be completed, 34 years after Taipei Chapter had been ordered to disband. It was published as the first Chinese-language edition of the Daishonin's writings.

Zhu also formed a harmonica corps for young people during that time. This was prompted by his belief that if culture and the arts are inextricably linked to religion, then the Buddhist spirit of humanism could be passed on to the next generation through cultural activities.

It was Zhu's firm conviction and resolve that one can uphold one's faith and live a life dedicated to kosen-rufu under any circumstances.

Zhu frequently made time to visit and encourage his fellow members. He wanted to see them gain great benefit and develop unwavering conviction in their Buddhist practice. Those he encouraged chanted daimoku in earnest and experienced the benefit of faith.

They could not help sharing their joy with others, and some of those they spoke to began to chant daimoku as well. Even during this wintry time for the Soka Gakkai in Taiwan, the correct teaching of Buddhism steadily and naturally took deep root in society.

Eventually, Taiwan began moving toward democratization, and a more tolerant attitude toward religious activities was adopted. Martial law was lifted in 1987, and in 1990 the Soka Gakkai was at last registered officially in Taiwan as a Buddhist association. Some 27



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

years had passed since the dissolution of Taipei Chapter.

In the years to come, the Soka Gakkai organization in Taiwan would win high acclaim for its contributions to society through its many cultural and other activities, and would be recognized on successive occasions by the Ministry of the Interior as one of the most outstanding civic organizations in Taiwan.

When Shin'ichi Yamamoto learned that the organization in Taiwan had been forced to disband, he keenly understood that the Soka Gakkai had entered a period of rough sailing. Having set sail into society and out onto the open seas of the world, it was inevitable that the great ship of the Soka Gakkai would encounter raging waves.

It was clear, for example, that once the Komei-kai parliamentary groups embarked in earnest to bring about political reform in Japan, the Soka Gakkai, as the groups' main supporting body, would come under attack by the established political parties. It was also evident that governments around the world would begin to keep a watchful eye on the organization.

The Soka Gakkai advocated global citizenship, and its goal was peace and happiness for all humanity. However, any effort to open channels of communication and exchange with socialist nations would attract criticism from the democratic nations of the West, and vice versa. The Soka Gakkai had to

be prepared for this.

In this context, the Soka Gakkai's movement for worldwide kosen-rufu — an undertaking to link human hearts in a bond transcending differences in ideology, nationality and ethnicity, and to realize lasting peace — was a momentous experiment in the history of humankind.

No matter how rough the waves or how fierce the winds that pounded against the great ship of the Soka Gakkai, Shin'ichi had no choice but to keep steering with all his might toward the landfall of a new century in order to plant a flag of victory for all humanity. The future of kosen-rufu depended entirely upon the helmsmanship of the youthful 35-year-old president.

On the horizon lay May 3, which would mark the third anniversary of Shin'ichi's inauguration.

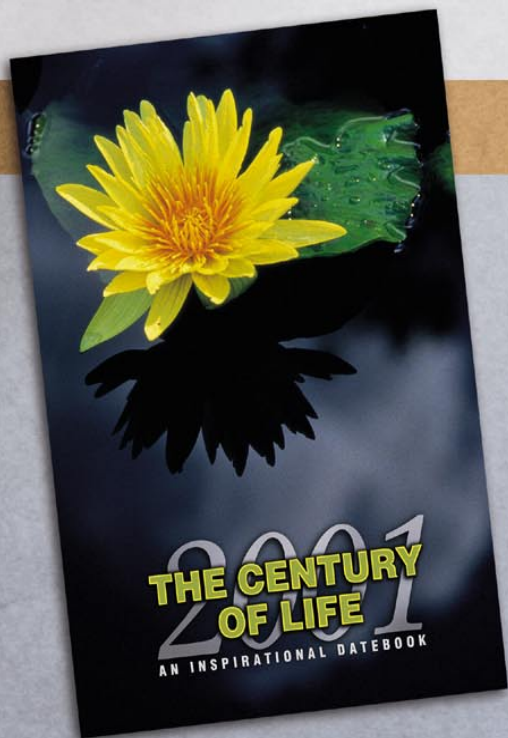
This concludes the "At the Helm" chapter and Volume 7 of The New Human Revolution.

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

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Calendars for 2001!



The Century of Life 2001

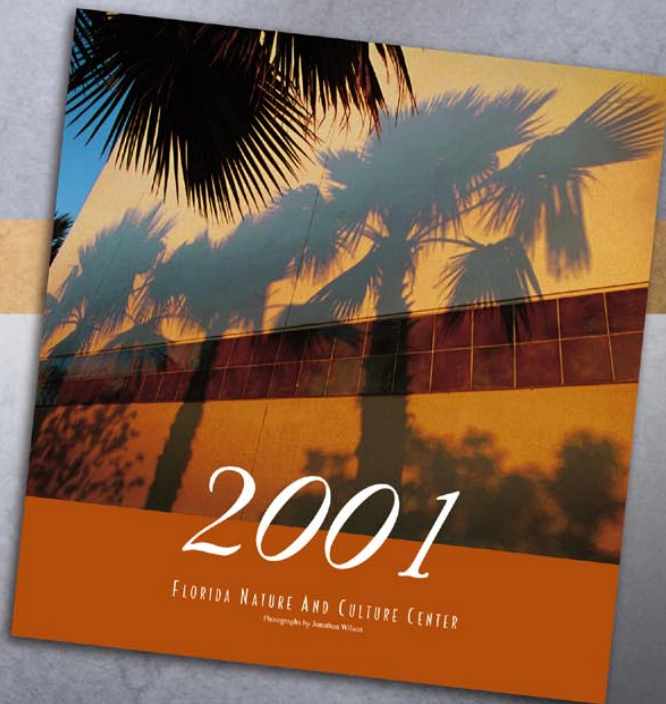
The Century of Life datebook is back with a new edition for 2001. This gorgeous week-by-week calendar features stunning photography by SGI-USA members together with inspirational quotes from SGI President Ikeda. This year we've added a place for phone numbers and addresses, too.

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