

## **FINDING MY WAY TO SUA**

### **BY NKOSI KRESS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK**

The moment I heard about Soka University of America, I knew I would study there one day. Having been born into a family that practices Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I'd heard about and seen tapes of the various Soka schools, but never imagined attending college on such a campus as the one in Aliso Viejo, California.

When I graduated from high school in 1996, I pursued a professional career as an actor, singer and dancer for several years. I began with Alvin Ailey American Dance Center and eventually was promoted into Ailey II, a junior dance company. After touring, I auditioned for "The Lion King" on Broadway and made the final cut. I was completely blown away. The Gohonzon continues to amaze me every day.

While performing intensely on Broadway I received information about Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo and immediately applied for early admission. I kept chanting and was determined that I'd achieve my goal, no matter what. When my life-condition began to sway I'd refer to *For Today and Tomorrow*, where SGI President Daisaku Ikeda writes: "Even in times of hardship, the important thing is for each of us to determine that we are the star, protagonist and hero of our lives and keep moving forward. Putting ourselves down and shrinking back from the obstacles looming before us spell certain defeat. Through making ourselves strong and developing our state of life, we can definitely find a way through. As long as we uphold the Mystic Law throughout our lives, we can break through any impasse and surmount any obstacle. We will also be able to lead all those who are suffering to happiness" (p. 209).

Although I emerged from the mud just as a lotus into an amazing arena as a professional performer, I felt as if there was something missing from my life. I'd originally received a scholarship to a private college in Chicago and intended to begin classes in the fall directly after graduating from high school, but I wasn't 100 percent sure I was ready to commit, so I moved to New York to fulfill my dream of performing. I had no idea how protected I was and fortunate my circumstances would be.

Eventually, if my desire to perform waned, I'd apply to college. Well, when I reached Broadway I hit a serious wall. After a couple of years, I'd had enough of the performing world. What was I thinking? This was how I made my living to support myself? Though I got fed up with the politics of show business that constantly plagued me, in fact it was great to understand and confront this reality at such a young age. This was an inconspicuous benefit before my eyes. After a year and a half of performing in "The Lion King," I began to plan my next step in life. I knew, without a doubt, it was time to go to school.

I began chanting three hours a day on June 27, 2000, my birthday. I had just turned twenty-two. I began applying to various schools and realized Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo would be the best choice. The application process was not an easy task because I'd been out of school for several years. Although my heart was set on getting in, I focused on chanting for the best thing to happen for my life.

I was anxious and nervous. Since I applied for early admission, when December rolled around I got butterflies. Would I be rejected or put on a waiting list? Mind you, I'd visited SUA, AV for a campus tour on October 7, 2000, so I was familiar with the environment. I absolutely loved the landscape.

I was able to overcome my doubts and was successfully accepted into Soka University of America! I will be making an imprint on history by joining the first freshman class and learning

from such a phenomenal staff and faculty. Being the first early admission student for the Northeast Zone makes me want to carry out my mission even more. I plan to study behavioral sciences to become either a psychotherapist or an art therapist.

I am determined to lead a doubt-free life starting today and promise to get straight A's at SUA to encourage every single human being I come in contact with. I'm so excited and can't wait for classes to start! It will be an arduous task but I'm up for the challenge.

To the future students of SUA, I'd like to say never doubt the Gohonzon. I waited four years for this huge benefit. Don't give up; there is always a way to victory!

Mom, this one's for you!