

EDITORIAL
THE POWER OF OUR VOICE
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In sharing Buddhism with our friends, we put into practice Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching that ‘the voice does the Buddha’s work.’

America is a country filled with voices. From the TV set at home to the water cooler at work, we encounter a wide variety of voices every day urging us to do many different things: “Buy this.” “Vote for that.” “Put your faith in so-and-so.”

Add to the mix our voices—the voices of the SGI-USA, voices offering Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism to the American people. To introduce the Daishonin’s Buddhism in such a noisy country takes lots of courage. We never know for sure if people will understand us, if they will really *hear* what we are saying.

Trying to think of the best way to explain this profound philosophy to those unacquainted with it can be quite a challenge. Our friends may ask us many questions that are not easy to answer. There is also the chance that, despite our best intentions, they may react negatively.

But if we are brave enough to give it our best, we can help our friends, we can help this country, and we can help ourselves.

The spirit to want to share Buddhism ultimately comes from the depths of our lives—from that most gutsy life-condition of all, Buddhahood. If we were not Buddhas, we would never think of talking about these most deeply held beliefs with other people.

This process of sharing always brings out our Buddhahood more and more, making it stronger. Making it *louder*, if you will. This is what the Daishonin is talking about when he says, “The voice does the Buddha’s work” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708).

The whole history of the SGI has been based on this idea. The first three Soka Gakkai presidents used their voices to open up a path for the Daishonin’s Buddhism to spread from Japan to the world. The only power they had was their voices—they were by no means powerful men in society.

When we see SGI President Ikeda winning trust for our organization with world leaders and top intellectuals today, we are actually seeing the result of 70 years of “doing the Buddha’s work” through dialogue. This is how the SGI became as strong as it is.

From the beginning, there was great resistance to the SGI’s voice. Presidents Makiguchi, Toda and Ikeda each raised his voice against oppression, including from the Japanese government and the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. All three had to experience unjust imprisonment for speaking out for the people in this way.

But “the voice does the Buddha’s work” also means—as the three presidents have proven—that our voices can eventually overcome any kind of obstacle we face in the pursuit of kosen-rufu. Our voices, just our voices, are more powerful than any prejudice, than any negative force that is out there trying to stop us.

This summer, as we invite friends to our Family Youth Festivals—or even ask them to participate in creating the festivals—all we need is the power of our voices to win their understanding. “Our friends may be seeing the SGI-USA for the first time. And they will be seeing it through us, through the dialogue we have with them and through our behavior

toward them,” says SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima. “If we tap the same courage President Ikeda has to speak about our movement, we will surely be able to reach everyone’s heart.”

The only thing that has ever changed society for the better, after all, is the voice of the people: The voice of those with a strong sense of mission. The voice of those courageous enough to tell anyone what they really believe. The voice of those determined to spend as long as it takes to convince everyone of the truth.

In our case, it is the powerful voice of those who speak a vibrant new language that the 281 million people now living in America have long been waiting to hear—the language of Buddhist philosophy.