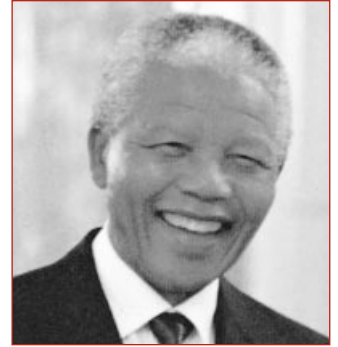


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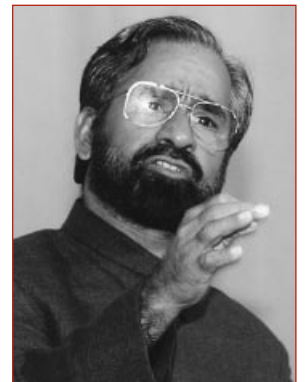
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COVER: Chryss Ruybal and her daughter Stephanie Cohen attend a vigil at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, Sept. 11.
Photo by CINDY YAMANAKA/The Orange County Register

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From Our Readers

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VALUES AND BEHAVIOR

Dr. Ohnishi's article, "A Historical Perspective of the Philosophy of Value" in the August 2001 *Living Buddhism*, was a much appreciated reminder that our inner values determine our overt behavior, our attitudes, and ultimately our direction in life. While Plato, Descartes, Kant, Emerson, Thoreau, Dewey, Makiguchi and others have identified and systemized values into a philosophical stance, we ourselves create our own individual philosophy of life — knowingly or unknowingly — through our experiences and reactions to those experiences.

We would be wise to review our own philosophy of life in comparison to the philosophers cited in Dr. Ohnishi's article in a conscious effort to ensure that our own views of happiness, value, goodness and beauty enhance our life and those around us at home, work, school and elsewhere. Through chanting, we can examine the effects of living with our beliefs daily. Dr. Ohnishi has offered us guidelines from great philosophers to enrich this process.

Hope C. Bliss, Ph.D., Annapolis, Maryland

PHILOSOPHY OF VALUE

I just wanted you to know how much I enjoyed Stanley Ohnishi's piece in the August 2001 issue of *Living Buddhism*, "A Historical Perspective of the Philosophy of Value."

Actually, whenever I see something by Dr. Ohnishi, I make sure to read it ASAP because I find his writing so thoughtful, so packed full of things I need to learn, so clear, even moving and inspiring. I hope to see more of his pieces in LB in the future, for that reason. And thanks so much, of course, for the wonderful job you do all around!

Nancy Hodes, Ph.D., Lake Forest, California

Correction

In the article "Deliberately Creating the Appropriate Karma" in the August issue, page 7, left-hand column: the word *tenuous* should be *tenacious*. We apologize for any confusion.

CORRECTED ON CD-ROM

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Frequently Cited Sources

For convenience, all citations from the following works will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows after the first listing:

— *The Writings of Nichiren*

Daishonin: WND, followed by the page number.

— *Gosho Zenshu:* (The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin in Japanese) GZ, followed by the page number.

— *The Lotus Sutra,* by Burton Watson: LS, followed by the chapter and page number.

Eradicating THE EVIL OF TERRORISM

Let's continue and increase our efforts to create the kind of world we want to live in. Each of us has a vital mission to change our environment and spread the message of hope and peace. With united prayer and action, we will make a difference.

feel a deep sense of sorrow at the incredible loss of life and destruction caused by the tragedies at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in rural Pennsylvania. Many of us are struggling with the intense pain and mixed feelings that such horrific events produce. I am sending my deepest prayers of sympathy to all who have lost a friend or loved one because of these atrocious attacks.

On September 23, I visited an SGI-USA member who lives close to the World Trade Center. He lives on the fourteenth floor of an apartment building, and his bedroom window looks down on Ground Zero. I looked out that window and thought, "Six thousand people died here. We should do gongyo for them." We faced the site and prayed for every person lost, and that the cycle of violence would end.

Despite the devastation of September 11, this is a significant time in our movement for world peace. As Nichiren Daishonin writes, "When great evil occurs, great good follows" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1119). This is an opportunity to create the kind of change in our lives and in society that protects human civilization. These things that have happened may be beyond our present comprehension, but as we struggle to understand, we should remember that this is exactly the time when we must be courageous in our efforts.

In "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the

Peace of the Land," Nichiren Daishonin addresses the many calamities and tragedies of thirteenth-century Japan, "Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil" (WND, 15). In regard to the current situation, what is this one evil?

Buddhism defines evil as that which harms oneself and others. "Good" and "evil" are not separate entities. The principle of 'three thousand realms in a single moment of life' further explains that all ten states of life are contained within one another. Every moment of life simultaneously possesses the potential for good and evil, and even when one is manifest, the potential for the other is always present.

Because of the concept of the oneness of good and evil, we are offered a clear message of hope: that the evil events of September 11 actually have the potential for good. There is nothing in the world that is either all good or all evil. This is not to diminish the outrage and anguish we feel; rather, it's an opportunity to strengthen our resolve to create value.

It is prudent to be cautious in what we identify as the enemy of humanity. It is definitely a mistake to consider Islam or its adherents as evil. It is evil when religious leaders are willing to sacrifice other people's lives for their own purposes. That is a function of the darkness that exists in one's heart. We are not faced with a philosophical or doctrinal evil; we are faced with the potential for evil that is inherent in human life.

This is an opportunity to create the kind of change in our lives and in society that cultivates a new civilization. Everything that has happened is beyond our comprehension, but as we struggle to understand, we should remember that this is exactly the time when we must be courageous in our efforts.

In any religion — including ours — there may be individuals who come to power and do not act in accord with the teachings in which they claim to believe. In that case, they are functioning according to the evil in their own hearts. We must distinguish between that negative function of the human heart and the profound philosophy of the Koran. History has shown that much evil has been committed in the name of religion. That evil does not originate from the teachings of any religion; it stems from the distorted minds of the leaders who mislead people.

It is our responsibility to work to eradicate the evil of terrorism. Even though, at times like this, it may seem that we are powerless to change people's minds, we cannot allow evil to work its way further into society. In *For the Sake of Peace*, SGI President Ikeda advocates dialogue as a means to global harmony. He tells us that dialogue must be based on respectful compassion for all parties involved rather than rhetoric. He goes on to say: "The Buddhist approach can, I believe, loosen the shackles of abstract concepts and language that can be so destructive. Thus freed, we can use language to the greatest effect and can engage in the kind of dialogue that creates the greatest and most lasting value. Dialogue must be pivotal in our endeavors, reaching out to all people everywhere as we seek to forge a new global civilization" (p. 57).

One thing that must be done before effective and open dialogue can take place is to rid ourselves of discriminatory thinking. Shakyamuni called this an invisible arrow piercing the hearts of the people. President Ikeda elaborates further that "The 'arrow' symbolizes a prejudicial mindset, an unreasoning emphasis on individual differences" (p. 44). This attachment to differences enables evil to lurk in our hearts. It is virtually impossible to have respect and

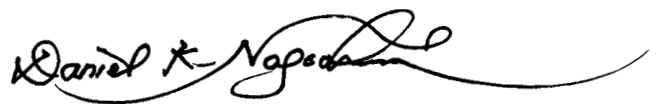
compassion for someone we see as lesser because of their religion, race, class or gender. It is far more valuable to see the commonality of all human beings.

In addition, the importance of education cannot be overstated when it comes to our efforts to eradicate the roots of terrorism. President Ikeda emphasized this in a recent issue of *World Tribune*: "There are a number of short-term measures that may be implemented to combat violence and terrorism, but the only viable and fundamental long-term solution is education. There is no other alternative but to educate people on the loftiest humanitarian values and views of life in order to establish a foundation of peace and stability for humankind in these times of tumultuous change" (September 28, p. 1).

Humanistic education has the power to open hearts and change minds. It can create a peaceful world by encouraging the learners to become global citizens, thereby breaking down walls of division. Humanistic education actively shows the learner that everything in life is interrelated. When people are convinced of the close relationship between themselves and the world in which they live, it becomes difficult to act in ways that devalue the existence of another.

Let's continue and increase our efforts to create the kind of world we want to live in. Each of us has a vital mission to change our environment and spread the message of hope and peace. With united prayer and action, we will make a difference.

Daniel K. Nagashima



SGI-USA General Director

The Eternity of Life

We often take our lives for granted — especially when we're young. We think we're going to live forever. But, from one moment to the next, nobody knows what will happen. A person could be alive and well one moment and dead the next.

Perhaps it was with sobering thoughts such as these that Nichiren Daishonin exhorted believers to “First study death, and then study other matters” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1404).

I've always found this quote intriguing. How exactly does one study death? After all, can anyone really say what happens when we die? Death is the “great unknown,” and that's why it's so frightening. Furthermore, we perceive the inevitability of death long before it happens, which can be worrisome, even tormenting. This fear and suffering keeps us from thinking seriously about death and impedes our happiness.

Buddhism addresses the fundamental questions of life and death in a way that can alleviate if not erase the fear of death and the consequent suffering; it elucidates the eternity of life. In the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” the Daishonin offers the following perspective: “Regarding life and death with abhorrence and trying to separate oneself from them is delusion, or partial enlightenment. To clearly perceive life and death as the essence of eternal life is realization, or total enlightenment. Now Nichiren and his disciples who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo awaken to the ebb and flow of birth and death as the innate workings of life that is eternal” (GZ, 754).

In the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the eternity of life is expressed by the passage, “There is no ebb and flow of life and death, and there is no existing in this world and later entering

extinction” (LS16, 226).

Though it is natural to see birth as a beginning and death as an end, this is an incomplete perspective. Buddhism teaches that we repeat the cycle of birth and death continuously. Death can be likened to sleep. We feel rejuvenated when we awake from a good night's rest. Similarly we can view death as a time to refresh our lives for our next existence. Death then, just like sleep, is not something to be feared.

The “Life Span” chapter clarifies that the Buddha's life is eternal and that we are in no way separate from the life of the Buddha. It describes the Buddha as life itself and defines that eternal life as the Mystic Law. By chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we can experience the reality of the life-state of Buddhahood, not just learn it as a philosophical concept. Through this practice of chanting the Mystic Law we come to understand the oneness of life and death with our lives.

Although life is eternal, we must not stop striving to improve our circumstances in this lifetime simply because we can “wait for the next life.” President Toda described rebirth as follows: “While our lives melt into the universe, they do not blend in with the lives of others. Each life retains its integrity and experiences joy and sadness depending on the person's actions while alive — as though crying or laughing in a dream” (*Lectures on the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 3, p. 111).

It is fundamental to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism that cause and effect operates throughout past, present and future. Similarly our lives are continuous from existence to existence. The causes we've made in past existences are manifested as joy and suffering in this life, and the causes we make in the present shape our future. A carefree, live-for-the-moment attitude is living with perpetually missed opportunities; we

“Death will come to each of us some day. We can die having fought hard for our beliefs and convictions, or we can die having failed to do so. Since the reality of death is the same in either case, isn’t it far better that we set out on our journey toward the next existence in high spirits with a bright smile on our faces, knowing that in everything we did, we did the very best we could, thrilling with the sense ‘That was truly an interesting life?’”

will always be accountable for the causes we make.

Though it is preferable to die of old age, merely living a long life doesn’t guarantee that it will be fulfilling. And measured against eternity, a short or long life makes little difference. What’s important is that we each strive to live a life of quality based on a sense of mission.

Shakyamuni is said to have lived until the age of eighty. Nichiren Daishonin lived until he was sixty. Soka Gakkai President Makiguchi lived until seventy-three and Josei Toda, till fifty-eight. Though their life spans varied, each one dedicated himself without restraint for the sake of *kosen-rufu*. They fulfilled their respective missions and attained Buddhahood in life and death. In examining our own lives, regardless of the circumstances of our deaths, if we dedicate ourselves fully in our unique missions, we will likewise experience Buddhahood.

There may be times when peoples’ deaths confuse us. In our attachment to the idea that living long is the deciding factor for a victorious life, we can become discouraged if someone we know and care for dies unexpectedly or doesn’t live a long life. However, in *The New Human Revolution*, President Ikeda states: “Even if a person who practices this Buddhism should die young, his or her life would not have been in vain. That person’s life and death will have profound meaning and will serve to teach something very important to those who remain” (*World Tribune*, August 17, 2001, p. 9). With faith, it is possible to discover this meaning. As we experience the death of loved ones, we can turn them into opportunities to learn about death in a way that will help us learn how to live.

The saying “To live well is to die well” takes on great meaning. Our challenge as Buddhists to improve ourselves is the correct way to live happy, fulfilled lives, and in doing so we are guaranteed that

when our time comes we will die happy.

Too often we find ourselves putting off important matters precisely because we don’t take death seriously. We find ourselves saying things like, “I’ll practice Buddhism more devoutly when I’ve got more time.” “I’ll care for my health,” or “I’ll spend more quality time with my family and friends.” Before we know it, years have passed and we find we have not kept any of these promises.

Buddhism teaches us to live and practice faith “with the profound insight that now is the last moment” of life. Imagine if we challenged ourselves to approach life with this attitude, how much more alive we would feel. How much more appreciation we would have for our very lives. How much more of ourselves we would invest in every opportunity to interact with other people. The efforts we make toward our own and other peoples’ happiness based on the Mystic Law — be it reciting the sutra, making dinner, or offering a kind word to a stranger — would be joyful rather than burdensome. In making every moment count, we’ll have lived a life without regret no matter when we die.

President Ikeda summarizes the importance of being true to ourselves succinctly: “Death will come to each of us some day. We can die having fought hard for our beliefs and convictions, or we can die having failed to do so. Since the reality of death is the same in either case, isn’t it far better that we set out on our journey toward the next existence in high spirits with a bright smile on our faces, knowing that in everything we did, we did the very best we could, thrilling with the sense ‘That was truly an interesting life?’” (*The Buddha in Your Mirror*, p. 202). ☸

By Stephanie Celano, based on *Yasashii Kyogaku* (Easy Buddhist Study) published by *Seikyo Press* in 1994.

Seeking the Light of Peace

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 — OUR TRAGEDY AND CHALLENGE

T*he real seeds of peace lie not in lofty ideas but in human understanding and the empathy of ordinary people.*

While radicalism is fated by its nature to resort to violence and terror, the most potent weapon in the arsenal of the gradualist — the radical's opposite — is dialogue. We see in Socrates the steadfast commitment to dialogue, to verbal combat from which there is no retreat, and an intensity that is, in some literal sense, death-

defying. Such dialogue can only be sustained by resources of spiritual energy and strength far greater and deeper than will be found among those who so quickly turn to violence (p. 40).

Courage and hope are essential; we must never lose these vitally human qualities. Each of us must awaken to our unique mission as protagonists in the transformation of history. And we must unite in a shared human struggle to confront and resolve the pressing problems facing our planet (p. 180).

From For the Sake of Peace by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda

The unprecedented terrorist acts of September 11 have changed the world forever. The following pages contain comments of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, friends of the SGI, SGI-USA leaders and others.



Seikyo Press

Addressing the issue of terrorism, SGI President Ikeda says, "The importance of dialogue cannot be overstated."

Seeking Peace Through Dialogue

(Excerpts from the September 16–17, 2001, *Seikyo Shimbun*, the organ newspaper of the Soka Gakkai)

Ignorance is a dangerous thing. Without factual knowledge, stereotypes and the imagery they spawn invariably assume a momentum of their own, proliferating out of control.

Just because the perpetrators of the appalling terrorist attacks are believed to be of Arab descent, I pray that people will not immediately jump to the conclusion that all Arabs are dangerous and that Islam encourages violence. It is in no way true that all 1.2 billion Muslims in the world are violent. Even the recent revival of Islam, which is sometimes confused with Islamic fundamentalism, is not a monolithic mass movement. The extremists constitute a very small minority; the vast majority are moderates.

Obviously, every act of terrorism is reprehensible and wrong, regardless of its motive. Yet we absolutely must not treat terrorism as an inevitable consequence of faith in the tenets of Islam.

The Middle East issue is one in which the Palestinian issue, the Gulf War and vested interests in the oil industry and military-industrial complexes have become entangled with other factors in a massive and complicated snarl. To view this as a conflict between good and evil is simplistic and dangerous.

Humankind will never see the light of peace as

long as one party seeks to subjugate the other by force, both sides caught in a vicious cycle of reprisals that exacts an eye for an eye, a life for a life.

It is because we cherish and admire the values and ideals of Western civilization that we urge humanity to resolutely pursue the path of nonviolence that is truly worthy of the civilized world. We insist that a just and equitable international tribunal be established to try those responsible for acts of war and terrorism. We insist that every effort be rendered so as to transform distrust into trust. I believe this is the most effective and fundamental antidote against terrorism and its repugnant worship of violence.

The importance of dialogue cannot be overstated. Nothing must be allowed to impinge upon its free exchange. For unless we put an end to an era dictated by sheer force of arms, the twenty-first century will be no different from the twentieth, and we will regress once more into a century of war.

There are a number of short-term measures that may be implemented to combat violence and terrorism, but the only viable and fundamental long-term solution is education. There is no other alternative but to educate people on the loftiest humanitarian values and views of life in order to establish a foundation of peace and stability for humankind in these times of tumultuous change. What we must strive to bring about is a century upholding the dignity of life, a century predicated upon humanistic education. ☸

A MUSLIM CALLS FOR SANITY

His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is widely recognized as a world leader for peace, human rights and intercultural dialogue. He is also the third president of the Club of Rome and the first recipient of the Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Prize, which was awarded to him at the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College in Atlanta, on April 8, 2001. We are printing his message to the American people at the time of the terrorist attacks on September 11 to offer a perspective from a Muslim and world-renowned humanitarian.

Not as moderator of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, nor as a Muslim directly descended from the Prophet Muhammad, but as a member of our common human family, I wish to express my deepest condolences to the families, friends and colleagues who have lost loved ones in the heinous attacks in New York and other cities of the United States of America yesterday (September 11, 2001). I further extend my deepest sympathy to the people of the United States of America, to all concerned humanity and to President George W. Bush. The world's faithful stand aghast at the tragedy that has befallen ordinary people of all nations and faiths who live within the United States, and I condemn unequivocally this outrage against humanity.

Respecting the sanctity of life is the cornerstone of all great faiths.

Such acts of extreme violence, in which innocent men, women and children are both the targets and the pawns, are totally unjustifiable. No religious tradition can or will tolerate such behavior and all will loudly condemn it.

Terrorism is by nature indiscriminate, killing civilians of all ages, colors and persuasions; it intimidates individuals and communities the world over; its very existence depends upon its ability to perpetuate fear; it is perhaps the most dreadful tool used to express violence.

The proliferation of terrorist cells operating throughout the world challenges us all, particularly governments, which will have to address this provocation at all levels in the twenty-first century. A piecemeal approach will not do. Nor will a reaction based upon conjecture as to whom might be responsible. In times like these, it is easy to act immediately and to think things through only once irrevocable decisions have been made.

I therefore urge the United States and the international community to exercise restraint in the face of this daunting challenge. And I urge that this challenge be seen as a global challenge, for terrorism affects all nations, large and small.

I also urge all people of goodwill to recall the wise words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who said that hate, like cancer, "begets hate and violence begets violence in a never-ending circle of destruction."

In the aftermath of this heinous crime, there is the risk that specific communities, such as the Muslims, will face violent repercussions; Islamophobia is not, alas, an uncommon form of xenophobia and intolerance. So it must be emphasized that all ordinary Muslims stand together in condemning such acts of terror. Contemporary Muslim societies have been largely shaped by the recent legacy of their colonial subjugation. Yet, despite their often-grim social reality, ordinary Muslim men, women and children abhor those who



World Tribune

SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda (left) talks with Prince El Hassan bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on April 8, 2001, when the prince received the first Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Prize.

would use violence to air their grievances.

Muslims, Christians and Jews have a common shared history. The politics of the Middle East must not be allowed to destroy the natural capacity that people of faith have to live together and to work together. We must always hold fast to the moral values contained in our common heritage despite the conflicting rights and comparable injustices still separating us. Bloodshed is no answer.

Yesterday's tragic events serve to remind us that the world today is increasingly interconnected. And as borders come to lose their meaning, no nation can afford to isolate itself. We are moving toward a single world with a single agenda and that agenda must be set with a view to fostering reconciliation and understanding.

Although tit-for-tat measures may sometimes appear to be an attractive option in the short-term, we in the Middle East know that they only make a mockery of any and all attempts at real peace — between traditions, between nations, between civilizations, between equals. We ourselves have failed to develop a civilized framework for disagreement.

Sometimes, too, we reject international processes that just might allow us to find a new way forward. This is a mistake and one that must not be repeated in the context of the struggle against terrorism. A common consensus must be reached to strengthen UN Security Council Resolutions encouraging international cooperation against terrorist activities. Our goal will be to tighten the noose around terrorist networks and their supporters. World leaders and religious representatives across the globe must also send out a clear message that terrorism is anathema to any religion and must be isolated from it.

As we contemplate, in the days and weeks ahead, the horrific images of devastation now etched in our memories and share the grief of our neighbors in the United States, we will also search for other ways to reinforce our common humanity and identify our common fears. For make no mistake about it: yesterday's attacks were aimed at one world composed of many nations and not at one nation alone. ❁

HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, September 12, 2001

TERRORISM AND NONVIOLENCE

In the following response to the September 11 tragedies in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, Dr. Arun Gandhi is speaking on behalf of the M.K.Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, which he founded. We offer his perspective as an expert in the philosophy of nonviolence established by his grandfather, Mohandas K. ("Mahatma") Gandhi.

BY ARUN GANDHI, PH.D

Understandably, after the tragedy in New York and Washington, D.C., on September 11, many have written or called the office to find out what would be an appropriate nonviolent response to such an unbelievably inhuman act of violence.

First, we must understand that nonviolence is not a strategy that we can use in a moment of crisis and discard in times of peace. Nonviolence is about personal attitudes, about becoming the change we wish to see in the world. Because, a nation's collective attitude is based on the attitude of the individual. Nonviolence is about building positive relationships with all human beings — relationships that are based on love, compassion, respect, understanding and appreciation.

Nonviolence is also about not judging a person, as we perceive them to be — that is, a murderer is not born a murderer; a terrorist is not born a terrorist. People become murderers, robbers and terrorists because of circumstances and experiences in life. Killing or confining murders, robbers, terrorists or the like is not going to rid this world of them. For every one we kill or confine, we create another hundred to take their place. What we need to do is to analyze dispassionately what are those circumstances that create such monsters and how can we help elim-

inate those circumstances, not the monsters. Justice should mean reformation and not revenge.

We saw some people in Iraq and Palestine, and I dare say many other countries, rejoice in the blowing up of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It horrified us, as it should. But, let us not forget that we do the same thing. When Israel bombs the Palestinians we either rejoice or show no compassion. Our attitude is they deserve what they get. When the Palestinians bomb the Israelis we are indignant and condemn them as vermin who need to be eliminated.

Television Has Desensitized Us

We reacted without compassion when we bombed the cities of Iraq. I was among the millions in the United States who sat glued to the television and watched the drama as though it was a made-for-television film. The television had desensitized us. Thousands of innocent men, women and children were being blown to bits and instead of feeling sorry for them, we marveled at the efficiency of our military. For more than ten years we have continued to wreak havoc in Iraq — an estimated 50,000 children die every year because of sanctions that we have imposed — and it hasn't moved us to compassion. All this is done, we are told, because we want to get rid

of the Satan called Saddam Hussein.

Now we are getting ready to do this all over again to get rid of another Satan called Osama bin Laden. We will bomb the cities of Afghanistan because they harbor the Satan and in the process we will help create a thousand other bin Ladens.

Some might say, "We don't care what the world thinks of us as long as they respect our strength." After all, we have the means to blow this world to pieces since we are the only surviving superpower. Do we want the world to respect us the way school children respect a bully? Is that our role in the world?

If a bully is what we want to be, then we must be prepared to face the same consequences a schoolyard bully faces. On the other hand, we cannot tell the world "leave us alone." Isolationism is not what this world is built for.

All of this brings us back to the question: How do we respond nonviolently to terrorism?

The consequences of a military response are not very rosy. Many thousands of innocent people will die both here and in the country or countries we attack. Militancy will increase exponentially and, ultimately, we will be faced with another, more pertinent, moral question: what will we gain by destroying half the world? Will we be able to live with a clear conscience?

We must acknowledge our role in helping create monsters in the world and then find ways to contain these monsters without hurting more innocent people and then redefine our role in the world. I think we must move from seeking to be respected for our military strength to being respected for our moral strength.

We need to appreciate that we are in a position to play a powerful role in helping the "other half" of the world attain a better standard of life not by throwing a few crumbs but by significantly involving ourselves in constructive economic programs.



"Nonviolence is not a strategy that we can use in a moment of crisis and discard in times of peace. Nonviolence is about personal attitudes, about becoming the change we wish to see in the world."

World Tribune

What Is Good for the World

For too long, our foreign policy has been based on "what is good for the United States." It smacks of selfishness. Our foreign policy should now be based on what is good for the world and how we can do the right thing to help the world become more peaceful.

To those who have lost loved ones in this and other terrorist acts, I say, I share your grief. I am sorry that you have become victims of senseless violence. But let this sad episode not make you vengeful, because no amount of violence and killing is going to bring you inner peace. Anger and hate never do. The memory of those victims who have died in this and other violent incidents around the world will be better preserved and meaningfully commemorated if we all learn to forgive and dedicate our lives to helping create a peaceful, respectful and understanding world. ☸



Gerry Hall

NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE ACTION

A Dialogue on the September 11 Tragedy

The day after the tragic events of September 11, a group of SGI-USA staff and national leaders sat together and shared their thoughts. It was an impromptu gathering of friends, much like what was occurring around the country. It was not a search for definitive answers as much as a chance to open hearts and comfort one another. We decided to include part of the discussion in this issue to encourage others to dialogue, to share with friends in these difficult times. Participants: Greg Martin, Matilda Buck, Mike Bynum, Guy McCloskey, Alexis Trass, Dave Baldschun.

Dave Baldschun: The terrorist attack yesterday seems like an impossible event to understand. Do you remember events when you were growing up that altered your view of the world? I remember the

Cuban missile crisis and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy as events that made me feel the world was not the safe and predictable place I thought as a child.

Greg Martin: I was thirteen when Kennedy was shot in 1963. I vaguely remember it as being a terrible thing. The assassination of Dr. King in the summer of 1968 was definitely a kind of awakening to a sense of social consciousness for me. It totally shocked me. I felt most of the people I knew, and things in general, were never the same. After that I felt a growing sense of hopelessness and despair. Even demonstrating against the Vietnam War lost its meaning and any sense of making a difference. It became an excuse to get high and be grungy and cause trouble, but when Dr. King was shot and then the riots broke out and Bobby Kennedy was shot — it all seemed to lose its point after that. I had an ideal '50s childhood. It was like an Ozzie-and-Harriet childhood. But then the missile crisis, the Kennedys, Dr. King and all of this, it was all boom-boom-boom, wake up. It was reality; it was horrible. It was like living in a dream and waking up to a nightmare.

Matilda Buck: For me, it was similar in some ways and very different in others. In my own family life, I always felt the world wasn't safe, I always felt something bad was going to happen. So even when those events occurred — actually the one that was most frightening was the Cuban missile crisis — they were almost confirmations of the inner direction of my life. I didn't ever feel like giving up, because I knew this was the way life was. I would just endure.

Guy McCloskey: I remember what I was doing November 22, 1963, when they announced President Kennedy's assassination. I did not have a happy or secure childhood, and I knew from an early age that the world was not a safe place. When I encountered Buddhism in the late '60s, I had just come back from overseas, I had been discharged from the army, and I had no hope. I was a survivor, but survivors just survive. It's not a very human way to live.

Alexis Trass: Growing up, I felt very safe. My parents provided a home that felt like a safe haven for me. I remember hearing about certain events in the news or something my parents might have been talking about. It could have been a natural disaster, a

shooting or anything that took lives or destroyed property. I knew that bad things happened, but it never occurred to me that those same bad things could happen to me.

The last time I felt so vulnerable was when I was in high school and the Gulf War was going on. I wasn't concerned about my personal safety as much as I was about the men and women who served in the military. I was thinking and learning more about life in general and Buddhism, in particular, and I remember feeling concerned about what we were doing in the war.

The events of September 11 have made me feel completely vulnerable, anxious and devastated. I've been thinking a lot about my personal life and grievances I carried and everything came into perspective. I've had epiphanies before, but nothing like this. Everybody I was mad at yesterday, today I have no ill feelings toward them, none.

Greg: Exactly! Before this I had a list of ten major concerns. Since yesterday, I realize that most of them aren't even concerns at all.

Mike Bynum: The Gulf War eleven years ago also shook me at my foundation. I was in the Navy then and we were deployed to the Persian Gulf just before hostilities with Iraq. During that time, there was an atmosphere of fear, constant fear, because we didn't know whether or not Saddam Hussein had nuclear weapons. I was a lieutenant junior grade at that time. That was my first assignment. It was a very stressful time.

My ship was in the Gulf when Operation Desert Storm started and dead Iraqi soldiers would float down into the Gulf. Whenever we came across a body, we would pick it up and bring it to the ship so that it could be sent back home. I was involved in several of these pick ups. Looking at the faces of these dead young men, who looked no older than nineteen or twenty, is something I will never forget. I think that was my defining moment. I chanted for each of these individuals and remember feeling so angry because they were obviously misled about what they thought was most important, and what was

“If it had not been for the tragedies of my youth that left me so disillusioned, I don’t know if I would have even considered practicing Buddhism. But those difficulties were the perfect fertilizer for developing a sense of commitment. I definitely joined this organization in the early ’70s with a sense of mission. It was not about benefit. Benefit was there, of course, but I was definitely motivated by a sense of mission to improve the world, to do kosen-rufu.”

worth sacrificing their lives for. It was a feeling of sadness, of pain, but then always followed by anger.

Dave: How can we view these tragedies in the context of our Buddhist practice? Can they motivate us to deepen our commitment to kosen-rufu?

Mike: Yes, I think so. When we were in the middle of our hostilities in February 1991, my New Year’s issue of the *World Tribune* arrived. Right on the cover in big letters was “The Year of Peace and Development.” The timing of the arrival of the *World Tribune* was precisely what I needed. That theme for the year became my mission. More than ever, I needed to dedicate myself to peace.

Greg: Yes. If it had not been for the tragedies of my youth that left me so disillusioned, I don’t know if I would have even considered practicing Buddhism. But those difficulties were the perfect fertilizer for developing a sense of commitment. I definitely joined this organization in the early ’70s with a sense of mission. It was not about benefit. Benefit was there, of course, but I was definitely motivated by a sense of mission to improve the world, to do kosen-rufu.

Guy: Today is a matter of me regaining perspective and of recognizing that it is urgent to realize kosen-rufu. This discussion is helping me to regain perspective, conviction, hope that our movement is real, and that we’re doing something.

Alexis: I agree with Guy. Yesterday, I thought I was taking kosen-rufu seriously. I realize now that whatever contributions I’ve made toward that end, I can

be doing more. I’m not sure what I can do right now, but I refuse to believe that I can’t do something.

Matilda: We will probably never be the same again, and I think it could be for the best. I think America has moved out of its adolescence. I am grateful that I haven’t just been glued to the television watching something happen; because of my involvement in the SGI-USA, which is connected to every kind of person everywhere all over the United States and the world, I was interacting with so many people. It wasn’t some theoretical thing — I could be part of the moment and maybe be of help.

I started to practice Buddhism in 1972 because at my first meeting I had the tiniest glimmer of hope. They told me I could chant for anything, about anything, and I believed them. There was something in their eyes that gave me the hope that maybe I could be happy, maybe things can be OK. I have seen that hope blossom in my personal life. I still hold that hope about the world.

Dave: Emotionally, the attack produced a great sadness about life, about humanity itself, that this is what we’ve come to. It’s the kind of sadness that transcends the event but is relevant to the overall condition that the world finds itself in. How can we best understand this?

Matilda: The root cause has to be at the smallest increment in the heart of a human being, in the collective hearts of human beings, people who feel that there is no hope. When we talk about the Ten Worlds, one definition of *Hell* is that there is no way out. So, peace has to start in the hearts of people.

When people are truly hopeless, they feel they have nothing to lose — including their lives or the lives of others. There may be injustice, but it isn't just some giant social or economic injustice — their hearts have been closed off. The greatest thing is that the human heart can be healed, can expand, can find the highest potential in life.

Mike: The terrorist attacks obviously rock us at the very foundation of what we believe. I think, for the Pearl Harbor and the Holocaust generation, this must have been how they felt. The best thing that could come out of this now is resolve and a sense of mission unlike we've ever had before.

Buddhism has at its most fundamental point the sanctity and the respect for all life. When faced with an attack like this, it's very difficult for a lot of people — myself included — to temper, to restrain the feelings of rash and just anger. There's the initial shock, and then there's the incredible feeling of pain for the individuals involved, the innocent people who were killed.

We've lost our sense that "we're safe because those things that we see around the world don't happen here." That's probably the way to describe what's going on: the fear that we're not safe, even just going down the street, going into a high-rise building. The more I think about it, I think that such attacks and this mass destruction were implemented by individuals. These individuals had a certain view of what was important and what was right and just, and that's why they did what they did. But it's obviously not based on value for life. It's the same thing that I felt in the Persian Gulf. Those of us who do value life, as Nichiren Daishonin teaches, understand that to take more life in retaliation cannot be the solution.

Dave: When I joined SGI-USA, we were at war in Vietnam. Every time you turned the TV on, every single night, seven nights a week, they had news footage of body bags and combat and blood and agony on the one hand. Then we had riots at universities, riots in the streets on the other. I remember thinking: "What's the use of trying? This world

is so crazy, so out of control, why would I want to live in this society?" To many people of my generation, dropping out was the only option. It was either armed revolution or getting stoned and forget about it.

But what happened when I joined SGI-USA, and to a lot of people who joined then, is that because of those societal conditions our passion for kosen-rufu was very intense. We had found a solution to the world's ills. We felt that if we didn't do kosen-rufu right away, the world was definitely going to come to an end. Everywhere you looked, the signs seemed very evident that the world needed kosen-rufu right away. That's why we were motivated to do so many Buddhist activities.

But things changed, the organization changed, society changed, and that sense of urgency seemed to be gone. I'm wondering, what's the correct response for youth of this generation in the organization now?

Mike: I would love to see the SGI youth be the driving force to unite this country, not to rally around retaliation, which is what seems to be happening, but to unite around Victory Over Violence, which is what we need. For lasting peace, people have to be convinced that, number one, life is precious above all else, above all the differences, and then, two, to spread that word throughout the country and the world.



Dave Baldschun



Matilda Buck



Mike Bynum



Greg Martin



Guy McCloskey



Alexis Trass

“The root cause has to be at the smallest increment in the heart of a human being, in the collective hearts of human beings, people who feel that there is no hope. When we talk about the Ten Worlds, one definition of Hell is that there is no way out. So, peace has to start in the hearts of people. When people are truly hopeless, they feel they have nothing to lose—including their lives or the lives of others. There may be injustice, but it isn’t just some giant social or economic injustice—their hearts have been closed off. The greatest thing is that the human hearts can be healed, can expand, can find the highest potential in life.”

Alexis: I know it sounds cliché, but the youth can make a difference in this. Given the times, I don’t think we’ll be doing the same things that were done in the ’60s and ’70s, but whatever we do will have a noticeable effect. I agree with Mike, and I hope we can unite around Victory Over Violence. This is, of course, a crucial time when VOV has to be real and not a just a slogan.

Dave: I look at SGI President Ikeda and have a sense that he never perceived the world as a safe place. He never felt he could relax in his efforts for kosen-rufu. I think the fundamental darkness—the evil in the hearts of people—is always evident. I think it was the same with second president Josei Toda. When he was released from prison, he saw two paths—one was the path to World War III and the other was the path to kosen-rufu. He said, “I reject World War III.” We have the same choices today.

This event can rekindle our commitment to kosen-rufu and our passion for what the SGI is doing. What happened to many Americans when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and the country became prosperous is that we began to take things for granted. How do we avoid falling back into complacency?

Guy: The only answer is to maintain our momentum. Whatever inertia faces us, we have to move beyond it, we have to keep moving. This is President Ikeda’s point: This is the time to make progress.

Matilda: It’s important that everybody take good care of their lives. When we talk about how pre-

cious lives are, and we hear the news, it’s important that people start realizing how precious their own lives are. For members who still don’t believe that they have the Buddha nature, for people who are chanting but anesthetize themselves with drugs or alcohol, for people who don’t believe humankind can change—it’s time for those people to value their lives, to nourish their lives. It all begins with each of us.

I want to mention how the SGI-USA organization in New York really came through in this crisis. I am not good at keeping statistics, of making lists, etc., but because New York was responsible in this regard, they determined very quickly where all the members were and checked on every single person. Members felt responsible to check in as well.

Dave: I think there are certain personal truths we learn over time, and even though it’s not always easy to live by them, it’s knowledge that once known we can’t forget. It’s like knowing the Gohonzon is true. This crisis is a time when each person in his or her own way will come to a personal truth, such as a deeper understanding of the need to accomplish kosen-rufu.

Matilda: I choose to view this in those terms, that millions of people around the world are chanting for world peace every day, and then actually putting their lives into action. I would like to live my life like that every day, in every effort that I make, to pray strongly about every fear, every apprehension, about every problem, about every complaint that I have, and then do my best. 🌀

A Collection of Wisdom

A Collection of Wisdom

A Collection of Wisdom

The following is a compilation of guidance by SGI President Ikeda that we hope will be a resource for comfort and understanding following the recent tragedies in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania.

The Power of Prayer

(*Learning from the Goshō*, pp. 90–93)

Daimoku is like light. As the Daishonin says, “A candle can light up a place that has been dark for billions of years.” Similarly, the moment we offer prayers based on daimoku, the darkness in our lives vanishes. This is the principle of the simultaneity of cause and effect. At that very instant, in the depths of our lives, our prayer has been answered.

The inherent cause (*nyo ze in*) of a deep prayer simultaneously produces a latent effect (*nyo ze ka*). While it takes time for this effect to become manifest, in the depths of our lives, our prayers are immediately realized. So at that moment light shines forth. The lotus flower (*renge*), in blooming and seeding at the same time, illustrates this principle of simultaneity of cause and effect.

Therefore, it is important that we offer prayers with great confidence. The powers of the Buddha and the Law are activated in direct proportion to the strength of our faith and practice.

Strong faith is like a high voltage — it turns on a brilliant light in our lives.

Prayers are invisible, but if we pray steadfastly they will definitely effect clear results in our lives and surroundings in time. This is the principle of the true entity of all phenomena. Faith means having confidence in this invisible realm. Those who impatiently pursue only visible gains, who put on airs, or who are caught up in vanity and formalism will definitely become deadlocked.

In the SGI organization, the success of our activities or meetings, for example, hinges on whether the leaders have prayed thoroughly to give each person hope and for each participant, without fail, to leave the activity with a sense of profound fulfillment. Those who are only concerned with what others think of them are not qualified to be SGI leaders.

People who base themselves on prayer are sincere. Prayer cleanses and expands the heart, and instills character.

Daimoku is also like fire.

When you burn the firewood of earthly desires, then the fire of happiness — that is, of enlightenment — burns brightly. Sufferings thus become the raw material for constructing happiness. For someone who does not have faith in the Mystic Law, sufferings may be only sufferings. But for a person with strong faith, sufferings function to enable him or her to become happier still.

Faith is inextinguishable hope. The practice of faith is a struggle to realize our desires. And the basis of this practice is prayer. Through prayer, hope turns into confidence. This spirit of confidence unfolds in three thousand ways, finally resulting in the attainment of our hopes. Therefore, we must never give up.

Even places that have been shrouded in darkness for billions of years can be illuminated. Even a stone from the bottom of a river can be used to produce fire. Our present sufferings, no matter how dark, have certainly not continued for billions of years — nor will they linger forever. The sun will definitely rise. In fact, its ascent

has already begun.

Those who over long periods grow accustomed to being miserable may acquire the tendency to give up. But with the Mystic Law we need never resign ourselves to defeat.

To put ourselves down is to denigrate the world of Buddhahood in our lives. It is tantamount to slandering the Gohonzon. The same is true of setting your mind that absolutely nothing can be done about some particular problem or suffering.

Also, we must not decide in advance that a particular person or a particular area is a lost cause. It is precisely when faced with challenging circumstances that we need to pray. The key is to offer concrete prayers and take action — until results are produced.

For instance, until a few years ago no one could even have imagined friends of the Mystic Law active in the former Soviet Union and other communist bloc countries. But the age has now changed. The long period of darkness has been broken. The starting point for this change lay in prayers for the people of those countries to definitely become happy and to shine with hope.

Prayers based on the Mystic Law are not abstract. They are a concrete reality in our lives. To offer prayers is to conduct a dialogue, an exchange, with the universe. When we pray, we embrace the universe with our lives, our determination. Prayer is a struggle to expand our lives.

So prayer is not a feeble consolation; it is a powerful, unyielding conviction. And prayer must become manifest in action. To put it another way, if our prayers are in earnest, they will definitely give rise to action.

Prayer becomes manifest in action, and action has to be backed up by prayer. Only then can we elicit a response from the Buddhist gods and all Buddhas. Those who pray and take action for kosen-rufu are the Buddha's emissaries. They cannot fail to realize lives in which all desires are fulfilled.



In Times of Grief

(*Learning from the Goshō*, p. 171)

On another occasion, Mr. Toda said: "It is not a given that you will be reunited as parent and child. It sometimes happens that the person is reborn as someone close by, though not in your immediate family."

We are connected by the invisible life-to-life bonds of the Mystic Law. We are the family of the original Buddha. We are eternal comrades.

Transcending life and death, time and again we will be reunited in the garden of our mission and renew our connection with each other. Life is hopeful and death is hopeful, too. Ours is a brilliant journey across eternity!

In any event, death is a certainty. No one can escape it. Therefore, it's not whether our

lives are long or short, but whether, while alive, we form a connection with the Mystic Law — the eternal elixir for all life's ills — that, in retrospect, determines whether we have led the best possible lives. By virtue of our having formed such a connection, we will again quickly return to the stage of kosen-rufu.

The important thing is that surviving family and friends live with dignity and realize great happiness based on this conviction. Their happiness shows that they have conquered the hindrance of death and eloquently attests to the deceased's attainment of Buddhahood.



(*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 3, pp. 53–55)

Shin'ichi Yamamoto continued: "Then, is there a way for us to change our karma and realize happiness? The answer is yes. Nichiren Daishonin revealed the means by which we who live in the Latter Day of the Law can change our karma. This means is none other than chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon and teaching others about the True Law. This way of life represents the greatest possible good and accords with the law of life itself; it is the only way to attain a state of eternal happiness and abiding joy.

"When I say this, some of you may think to yourselves: 'But didn't Mr. Makiguchi, our first president, die in prison? Isn't that a

wretched way to die?’ Most important, however, is the state of mind with which we face death. The question is this: With his last breath, was he filled with suffering, trembling with terror and fear, or did he, despite imprisonment, die peacefully with a sense of profound joy? In one letter from prison, Mr. Makiguchi wrote of his immense delight at having lived in exact accord with the Buddhist scriptures.

“Again, some of you may be thinking that Soka Gakkai members die from illness or accidents, too. But even here, Buddhism clearly teaches that those who uphold faith until the end will transform the negative effects of past causes, experiencing them in a lightened form. That is, we can completely change our negative karma from the past — karma that might ordinarily have taken many cycles of birth and death and long, excruciating eons of suffering to gradually eradicate — and attain Buddhahood in this lifetime....

“In any event, those who have continually taken action for kosen-rufu throughout their lives as emissaries of the Buddha definitely will never sink into the depths of fear and suffering and experience the agonies of hell — irrespective of the circumstances under which they die. In the Buddhist scriptures, it says that after death, a thousand Buddhas will extend their arms and enfold us in their embrace. Having deep faith on the level of our innermost

being at the moment of death in itself attests to our attainment of Buddhahood.

“Indeed, we are Buddhas in both life and death. Moreover, as proof of that, the surviving families and loved ones of members who have died will without exception become happy. So even if we encounter obstacles or persecution in the course of our practice — even when it seems that life is an endless succession of hardships — we must never abandon faith. Encountering difficulty is a chance to transform our karma.”



(*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 3, pp. 56–57)

S hin’ichi Yamamoto went on to discuss the offering of prayers for the deceased. “Now, what happens to our ancestors who have died in the grips of great suffering? Well, some will already have been reborn and are suffering from their karma in their new lives, while others have yet to be reborn. Even if they have been reborn, there is no guarantee that it will have been as a human being. Depending on their karma, they may be reborn as beasts, animals. This is clearly stated in the sutras. It is actually far more difficult to be born a human being.

“However, irrespective of the form, place or suffering into which our ancestors may have been reborn, if we, their living descendants, uphold correct faith and chant for them to attain

Buddhahood, our daimoku will affect their lives, removing their suffering and imparting joy. This is because Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental law of the universe that permeates the entire cosmos.

“Moreover, any ancestors reborn as beasts cannot chant daimoku themselves, so they depend solely on the daimoku we send them. At the same time, the daimoku we send our ancestors reborn as human beings will direct their lives to encounter and connect with the Daishonin’s Buddhism and eventually practice faith. Therefore, chanting earnest daimoku is the only way to lead our ancestors to happiness. Whether they attain Buddhahood does not depend on how many wood memorial tablets you buy for them [a common practice in Japanese Buddhism]. If that were the case, Buddhahood would be a purchasable commodity.

“On the other hand, those who have staunchly upheld faith in the Daishonin’s Buddhism and attained Buddhahood in this life will, after death, immediately be reborn as human beings in places near the Gohonzon and once again savor the great joy of devoting their lives to kosen-rufu. The key to determining whether our ancestors have attained Buddhahood is, as I mentioned earlier, whether, we, their descendants have become happy through faith. That in itself is proof of our ancestors’ attaining Buddhahood.” ❁

first in a series
RAISING BUDDHIST CHILDREN IN AMERICAN SOCIETY



Jean Pritchard

Larry Shaw, Ph.D., is the director of Psychological Services at the Hollywood YMCA Counseling Center and specializes in working with adults who were traumatized as children. Dr. Shaw was appointed by the governor of California to chair a task force on youth violence for the Los Angeles area. Larry lives with his wife, Susan (center), in Topanga Canyon, California, and has two daughters, Vinessa (left) and Natalie. He has practiced Nichiren Buddhism for thirty-seven years.

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE PARENT *Helping Children Cope With Tragedy*

BY LARRY SHAW, PH.D.

*Do not look back in anger,
or forward in fear,
but around in awareness.*

—James Thurber

The horror of September 11 has created an outpouring of patriotism juxtaposed with fear, anger and the need for revenge. At the same time, the potential for this to culminate in a teachable opportunity for the children of America is also present. This, in turn, can deter-

mine the very values our nation lives by for many generations to come.

In watching the nightly news it appears to me that a void has been carved in the hearts of young people. I see it in their bewildered faces and darting eyes. I've heard that the sound of thunder during a storm since the attack caused schoolchildren to panic in a New York classroom. I've seen teens leave class at Hollywood High, in an eerie quiet where before there would be banter and strutting. Some parents, with a cursory glance at the children, might proclaim, "They will be O.K." It's easy to think that children have very simple lives and that they would

not be affected by a single traumatic experience.

Countless psychological studies state the contrary. This recent traumatic incident is replayed hundreds of times on television and in the print media. The news is distorted even more by playmates that have their own fears and are trying to make sense of all the anxiety being displayed by adults in their environment. So there is really no single source triggering the effects of a traumatic event in our modern high-tech society. It is a long way from the days of the Second World War when the local theater ran the news on a black-and-white newsreel and you saw it one time — usually weeks after the event took place.

At all stages of development in children's lives, sets of emotional receptors are constantly tuning in to their environment. Small children are like blank slates that absorb, categorize and interpret what is happening. From this process the human psyche determines whether the world is a safe or hostile place. This information also helps create a hierarchy of what is "good" or "bad." This mechanism is fed from the day of birth, well into early adolescence. The primary input of information comes from one's parents.

There is a saying, "A child learns over the shoulder of the mother." This refers to how women strap their infants on their bodies when they go about their daily activities. When the mother comes across a threatening person or situation, she reacts: her voice changes, her body stiffens. All of this is transmitted to the child on a visual and physical level. What the mother fears, the child will learn to fear; when the mother is angry with someone, the child will learn to feel uneasy around that type of person. The human species is always in this scanning and interpreting mode, especially in the early stages of development.

Today, we are fed with a daily barrage of graphic, disturbing images, and the children are watching our reaction. What are we going to do? How are we going to react? Rage? Revenge? Fear? Bigotry? Hopelessness? America will survive and be greater, but what lessons will we learn about ourselves and what will we transmit to our children? When faced with adversity what do we do?

Children ask a lot of tough questions about life in general. They do not have a "politically correct" fil-

ter that screens out uncomfortable material.

Sometimes their questions are actually painfully blunt statements that cause us to think. The questions about terrorism and war are some of the most difficult to answer. Because of the graphic images in the media, parents are concerned about exposing their children to the details of this event. On this subject there is almost universal agreement amongst professionals: listen to your children, speak to your children. Listening is the first step to resolving conflict. By listening, parents are modeling behavior for their children that they can put into use for the rest of their lives. There is a difference between listening to what you want to hear from your children versus what they are actually saying; hearing is physiological while listening is psychological. Try to listen on many levels rather than just to the words.

Listening to your children at this uncertain time in America is crucial to their sense of self and emotional well being. This point in time will impact their view of the world and its people. And because our children are looking to us for cues, we must then speak to them, striving to reconcile the dilemma of first advocating the importance of nonviolence as Buddhists, while explaining terrorism, and why armies are maintained and the act of going to war. No small task, and especially difficult to translate to a young mind. But parents who try, even if they feel inadequate to the task, play a far more positive role than parents who avoid these difficult issues.

A young mother came up to me at a recent Victory Over Violence rehearsal in Los Angeles just five days after the terrorist attack. She was concerned that there were no apparent signs of trauma in her five-year-old child's behavior and wondered if there was something more serious brewing beneath the surface. The answer: maybe or maybe not.

Children will react to the recent events differently according to their age and their general personality. A four- or five-year-old will see the endless replay of the jet crashing into the World Trade Center and think it's a new event each time. Children can easily be over-stimulated. They may watch cartoons or play video games and also catch glimpses of the tragedy. They may merge this information and be

confused with what is real and what is not. Violent cartoons or video games may trigger fear, where before they were considered funny and enjoyable. Children also may feel extremely anxious just by watching their parents looking fearful at the TV. All of this merging together can be quite overwhelming to a preschooler's young mind. Regressive behaviors such as bed wetting, clinging to parents or withdrawn behavior may indicate some serious reactions to the recent events.

Primary school-age children can tell the difference between cartoons and news events but still might mix up a movie such as Independence Day with the recent terrorist event. Also the influence of peers and their fears is a strong factor.

Middle school youth want some action to take place to reduce the fear they are feeling, but they may feel powerless and look to adults to do something.

High school youth usually look at the big picture and its impact on them, and the possibility of being part of the armed services, derailing college plans. They might become more self-reflective about life itself with no reassuring clear-cut answers. The use of alcohol and drugs could become more prevalent.

Within each of these very broad categories are thousands of variations according to a child's temperament. Some children, regardless of age, tend to be more fearful or withdrawn. The national anxiety may intensify these traits.

With all of this information, where do we start as parents? First of all, know that communication is essential at this time. This does not mean to lecture or interrogate our children about what they are feeling. Let them know what you are feeling and what you are doing about it. Let them know you are chanting, doing volunteer work, giving blood, etc. Ask them if they can think of anything they might do at this time and help them accomplish it. Along with this, tune into their mood. Have there been any changes in behavior since the terrorist attack?

A behavior change is not necessarily a bad thing. We all have to grieve, be angry, cry, be fearful; but then we need to move on and rebuild our psyches and our country. With a traumatic event such as this it is somewhat normal for a person to experience

what is called acute stress disorder (see sidebar). It will be of more concern if after five weeks there are still signs of stress. This is called post-traumatic stress disorder (see sidebar). If these signs become present, it is important to seek professional help.

Now is also the time to talk to our children about the tenets of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and SGI President Ikeda's view for youth in the twenty-first century. President Ikeda states in his book *The Way of Youth*: "Those of you who live in the United States have a unique opportunity. America offers you freedom on a grand scale, but at the same time it has its dark clouds. With all its good points and bad points, in a way it reflects the state of our present world as a whole. So the problems you who live in America face are in that sense the problems of all people everywhere. And your success is the hope not only of America but also of the entire world.

"The problems you confront in your young years can hardly be solved in a day. But no matter how hopeless they seem, if you face up to them with courage, I am confident you can overcome them in time.

"Keep on learning, keep on trying, keep on till you have turned defeat into final victory — that is the true way of youth."

Positively speaking, we now have a historic window of opportunity to educate the next generation about the dignity of life. George Bernard Shaw once said, "Perhaps the greatest social service that can be rendered by anybody to the country and to humankind is to bring up a family." This is at the very core of our peace movement as SGI Buddhists. World peace begins with the parents who educate their child about the dignity of human life. However, at this time in our nation's history, it would be a mistake to parrot empty slogans or rhetoric. Guiding youth must manifest in the day-to-day actions and reactions to ever-changing world events. The best tool for peace-builders is dialogue — whether at the level of nations or families. As President Ikeda wrote in response to the recent terrorist attacks: "The importance of dialogue cannot be overestimated." The danger is obvious; the opportunity is subtle and fleeting. Our children are watching and listening. 🌀

CRITERIA FOR ACUTE STRESS DISORDER

- A.** The person was exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:
 - 1.** The person experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event(s) that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others; and
 - 2.** The person's response involved intense fear, helplessness or horror. [In children, this may be expressed as disorganized or agitated behavior.]
- B.** Either during or after the distressing event, the person has three or more of the following symptoms:
 - 1.** A subjective sense of numbing, detachment, or absence of emotional responsiveness;
 - 2.** Reduced awareness (e.g., "being in a daze");
 - 3.** Derealization;
 - 4.** Depersonalization;
 - 5.** Dissociative amnesia.
- C.** Traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in at least one of the following ways: (e.g., recurrent images, thoughts, dreams, flashbacks or distress on exposure to reminders of the traumatic event).
- D.** Marked avoidance of stimuli that arouse recollection of trauma (e.g., thoughts, feelings, conversations, activities).
- E.** Marked symptoms of anxiety (e.g., difficulty sleeping, irritability, poor concentration, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response).
- F.** Disturbance causes significant impairment of social, occupational or other important areas of functioning.
- G.** Disturbance lasts for a minimum of two days and a maximum of four weeks, and occurs within four weeks of the traumatic event.
- H.** Disturbance is not due to a substance (e.g., drug abuse, medication).

CRITERIA FOR POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

- A.** The person was exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:
 - 1.** The person experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event(s) that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others; and
 - 2.** The person's response involved intense fear, helplessness or horror. [In children this may be expressed as disorganized or agitated behavior.]
- B.** The traumatic event is re-experienced in one or more of the following ways:
 - 1.** Recurrent distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts or perceptions; [In young children, repetitive play expressing themes or aspects of the trauma.]
 - 2.** Recurrent distressing dreams; [In children, there may be frightening dreams without recognizable content.]
 - 3.** Acting/feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (e.g., a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, flashbacks). [In young children, trauma-specific reenactment may occur.]
 - 4.** Intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that resemble the trauma (e.g., violent video games or cartoons); or
 - 5.** Physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that resemble the trauma.
- C.** Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness, as indicated by 3 or more of the following:
 - 1.** Avoiding thought, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma;
 - 2.** Avoiding activities, places or people associated with the trauma;
 - 3.** Inability to recall important aspects of trauma;
 - 4.** Diminished interest in significant activities;
 - 5.** Feeling detached or estranged from others;
 - 6.** Restricted range of affect (e.g., unable to have loving feelings); or
 - 7.** Sense of foreshortened future (e.g., doesn't expect a career, marriage, children or normal life span).
- D.** Persistent symptoms of increased arousal as indicated by two or more of the following:
 - 1.** Difficulty falling or staying asleep;
 - 2.** Irritability or outbursts of anger;
 - 3.** Difficulty concentrating;
 - 4.** Hypervigilance; or
 - 5.** Exaggerated startle response.

**In certain cases there is a delayed onset where symptoms do not begin until 6 months after the trauma.*

— adapted from *DSM-IV*, American Psychiatric Association

For more information: www.mentalhealth.com or www.aboutourkids.org



President Ikeda greets Arun Gandhi and his grandson Amish at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall on July 14, 2000.

In this series, SGI President Ikeda has recorded his impressions of the many friends he has made in his travels for peace. In his New Year's poem in the January issue, he states: "I will continue to knock on the doors / Of diverse cultures and civilizations, / Seeking out the humanity that is vibrantly alive / At the heart of each, / Believing that sincere dialogue/In search of our shared humanity / Will build a rainbow bridge linking the world."

Unforgettable FRIENDS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BY SGI PRESIDENT DAISAKU IKEDA

Arun Gandhi — President of the M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence

“Anger is like electricity. If we abuse it, it can be destructive; if we use it intelligently, it can be a very good and powerful source of energy. Instead of being controlled by anger, we must learn to control it and use it in our efforts to benefit humanity.”

It is a story of more than a hundred years of struggle, a legacy that has been passed down for three generations, from grandfather to son to grandson.

I met Arun Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, and his wife Sunanda last November at the Eighteenth World Peace Youth Culture Festival. They came all the way to the Nagoya Dome, and they applauded the festival enthusiastically. “It’s unbelievable, incredible!” said Mr. Gandhi. “If my grandfather and father were alive to see this culture festival, I am certain they would be just as impressed as I am.”

“All of these young people you see here today,” I replied, “are studying your grandfather’s philosophy. Leaders all around the world should learn from his struggle.”

I don’t respect Mr. Gandhi because he is the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi. I respect him because he has inherited his grandfather’s struggle for human rights and devoted himself energetically to it. Mr. Gandhi was born, not in India, but in South Africa. His father was Mahatma Gandhi’s second son, Manilal Gandhi. Manilal remained in South Africa as his father’s successor after the latter returned to India.

At the time, Manilal was only twenty-three years old. He was alone in South Africa, a place where racism and violence raged. Mahatma Gandhi, who had formerly led the nonviolent movement to end discrimination, was no longer there. Manilal’s struggle in South Africa was unutterably difficult, and he spent a total of some sixteen years in prison.

In addition, the black Africans, who should have allied themselves with his cause, criticized nonviolence as too idealistic. But isolated and alone as he was, Manilal stayed true to his beliefs. For him, nonviolence was a way of life, not merely a strategy that could change with circumstances; the essence of non-

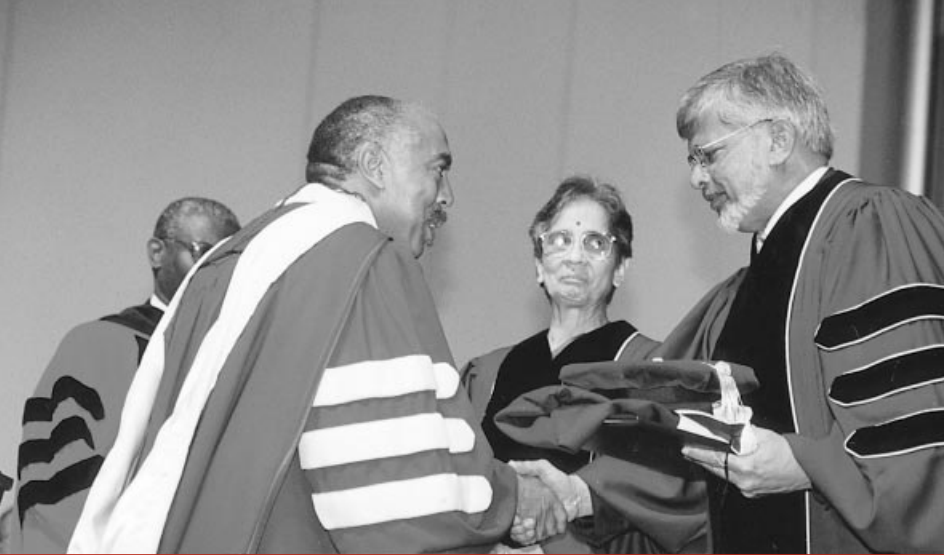
violence was that all change had to begin with oneself.

When Arun was sixteen, he drove his father to a town about eighteen miles away from home. His father was to attend a meeting, while Arun shopped and had some car repairs done. The youth finished his shopping quickly and then made arrangements to have the car serviced. There was still plenty of time before he had to pick up his father, so he slipped into a movie theater.

“I got so engrossed in the film,” Mr. Gandhi recalls, “that when I finally noticed the time, I was thirty minutes late to pick my father up. I ran to get the car and rushed to the place we had arranged to meet. He was waiting anxiously. I blithely told him that the repairs had taken longer than expected, and the garage had kept me waiting. But he had already contacted the garage, and he knew I was lying. He didn’t scold me. He said, ‘There’s something wrong in the way I brought you up that didn’t give you the confidence to tell me the truth, that you felt you had to lie to me.’ And he said that he would walk home, so that he could reflect upon where he had gone wrong in my upbringing.”

It was already dark, and there were no streetlights. Fields of sugarcane stretched out on both sides of the road, which was rough and unpaved. His father walked on silently, and there was nothing for the young Arun to do but follow him slowly in the car, the headlights lighting his steps. It took five-and-a-half hours to get home — hours that seemed like an eternity.

Arun Gandhi remarked that when he saw his father going through all that agony because of a lie that he had uttered, he decided he would never tell a lie again. He also commented that if his father had simply scolded him, he might just have shrugged his shoulders and done the same thing again. He said that his



Arun Gandhi, with his wife Sunanda in the background, greets Dr. Walter E. Massey, president of Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia.

World Tribune

was pitch black outside. Though Arun protested that it would be impossible to find the pencil, he was given a flashlight and told to look for it. It took two or three hours, but he finally found it.

He related that his grandfather said to him: “Even making a simple thing like a pencil takes a lot of the world’s natural resources. When we throw it away, we are throwing away the world’s natural resources, and that is violence against nature. In affluent societies, where things can be bought in bulk, we

father’s nonviolent punishment was so effective that whenever he talks or thinks about this incident even now, almost fifty years later, he still gets goose bumps.

Arun Gandhi also learned valuable lessons from his grandfather. When he was twelve years old, he was sent to India to live with him. This had been prompted by violent attacks that had been made on the young Arun in his hometown in South Africa. One day, he was beaten up by a group of white youths because they didn’t like the color of his skin; several months later, he was beaten up by a group of black youths for the same reason.

Wanting to exact “eye-for-an-eye” justice, he decided to make himself strong and take his revenge. He even started weight training. When his parents saw what was happening, they sent him to his grandfather in India, who said to him, “Anger is like electricity. If we abuse it, it can be destructive; if we use it intelligently, it can be a very good and powerful source of energy. Instead of being controlled by anger, we must learn to control it and use it in our efforts to benefit humanity.”

Nichiren Daishonin also said, “Anger can be both good and bad.” Mahatma Gandhi had his grandson keep an “anger journal,” not with the intention of keeping that anger alive, but with the intention of finding a solution to the problems that angered him.

On another occasion, Arun threw away a pencil that had grown short with use. That night he asked his grandfather for a new one, but his grandfather told him to bring him the one he had discarded. It

buy and use products indiscriminately. Therefore, we over-consume the natural resources of the world, denying them to people elsewhere who live in poverty. And that equates to violence against humanity.”

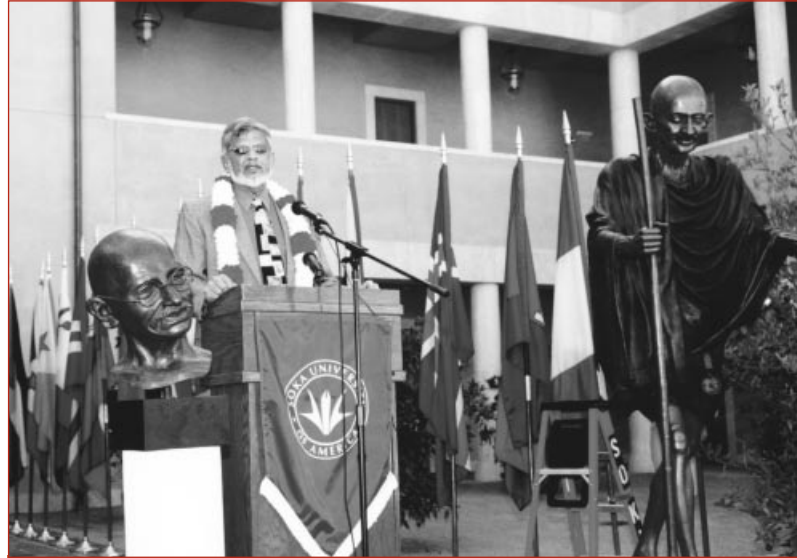
The inheritance of a spirit is more important than ties of blood. It is the true proof of our humanity. After the death of his father Manilal, Arun Gandhi and his wife Sunanda worked for three decades in India assisting members of the “untouchable” class and orphans. In 1987, they moved to the United States. On his visa application, in the box for “race,” Arun Gandhi wrote “human being.”

When people lose hope, they turn to violence. This is why Arun Gandhi has dedicated himself to bringing hope to young people in the United States and teaching the doctrine of nonviolence. He has faced obstructions and threats. Inheriting the legacy of great champions of justice means inheriting the persecutions they endured as well. But this does not stop Arun Gandhi; his efforts have been tireless.

His grandfather was felled by an assassin’s bullet; his father’s life was shortened by torture in prison. Says Mr. Gandhi: “My father could have lived a comfortable life if he had gone along with the government, but remaining silent in the face of injustice is lending support to that injustice. My father never compromised his beliefs to the very end, and he lives in my heart as an eternal victor. I am fighting, too. Though my own struggle may be as insignificant as a dewdrop, I am determined to give it my all and press forward, one step at a time!” ☸

Passive Violence Fuels the Fire of Physical Violence

The following excerpts are from the lecture by Dr. Arun Gandhi at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, California, on August 23. Earlier in the day, he also spoke at the dedication of the classroom building named in honor of his grandfather and grandmother, Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi. Arun Gandhi is President of the M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence based in Memphis.



Arun Gandhi speaks at the dedication of the Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi Hall classroom building at Soka University in Aliso Viejo.

World Tribune

BY ARUN GANDHI, PH.D

Whenever I speak on nonviolence, everybody wants to know: “What can I do in Ireland? What can I do in the Middle East to bring peace?” But nonviolence is not about one individual going to troubled spots to work for peace. Nonviolence is more about how we behave toward one another, and how we incorporate the philosophy of nonviolence in our own lives. Because all the violence that is taking place all over the world is an expression of the

violence that exists within ourselves, and unless we become the change we wish to see in the world there will not be peace anywhere. So, we have to begin with ourselves. I hope that tonight after my talk you will be convinced that nonviolence has to begin with you, and that you will make an effort to make this a part of your attitude and life.

I would like to invite you to participate in a little game with me. I would like each one of you to partner up with the person sitting next to you. Do you all have a partner?

I would like one member of the partnership to make a tight fist, and imagine that you have the most precious item in the world in your fist. I’d like the other member to open the fist. Tell me very honestly, how many of you asked the other person to open the fist? Now you see how violent we are. I simply asked you to open the fist, but instead of asking, everybody became physical and started using violence. That’s an indication that we need change in our attitudes and our hearts.



“Keep your thoughts positive, because your thoughts become your words. Keep your words positive, because your words become your behavior. Keep your behavior positive, because your behavior becomes your habits. Keep your habits positive, because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive, because your values become your destiny.”

If we analyze the violence today, we'll find that more than eighty percent of the violence that consumes our society is generated by anger. Something happens or doesn't happen and people get angry and do all kinds of crazy things. Once it is done there is nothing you can do to change it.

I've been in correspondence with some prisoners trying to teach them nonviolence. I got a letter from a drug dealer whose good friend was his partner. One day they had a heated argument and his partner reached under the seat of the car to get something and this person felt that his friend was going for a gun. So, he pulled out his gun and shot and killed him. Of course, he was arrested, tried and put in prison.

At the trial he realized the mistake that he had made and said that he tried to speak to the widow and children of his friend and apologize to them. But they didn't want to look at or speak to him. The gist of his letter was on nonviolence. He said, "I wanted to apologize and they wouldn't listen to me."

I thought it was a very arrogant statement. I wrote to him and explained that we are not talking

about slapping somebody and then apologizing. I said maybe they will never forgive you. But you will have to ask for forgiveness every day of your life, every moment of your life. Not only ask for it, you but will have to live it.

I think I touched a chord somewhere in him, and he has begun to correspond with me. We have become friends, and he has become a very transformed human being.

What I want to illustrate with the story is that one moment of madness transformed his life completely. How many such moments do we have in our own lives, when we do something crazy. Maybe not to the extent of killing somebody, but we destroy relationships, we destroy friendships. We don't speak to people because of one little thing. Anger causes a lot of violence. If we can only learn to transform that anger and use it positively, it will be a great help to bring peace in this world. Also we have to remember when we talk about violence, it's not just the physical violence that we see around us. There is much more to it than just physical violence.



Passive violence is all of these little things. All the waste, the precious things we throw away, the overconsumption, the oppression, the suppression, the hate, the prejudice, the teasing, the name-calling, and all the things that hurt somebody are passive violence. All of you, as I demonstrated a moment ago, commit passive violence all the time, consciously and unconsciously. All of that passive violence adds up so that the victims of that passive violence then explode into physical violence. So it is passive violence that fuels the fire of physical violence.

Logically, if we want to put out the fire of physical violence, we have to cut the fuel supply. The fuel supply comes from us, so unless we become the change we wish to see in the world, unless we acknowledge that we are violent people, we won't do anything about it. We will sit back and wait for somebody else to change and so nobody changes. If we become the change, we can bring about peace and understanding in the world.



How can we be non-violent at home with our children? How do we bring up children nonviolently? When I was six, living with [my grandfather in India] there was another family who had a six-year-old boy, and we became very good friends. This boy had a tremendous sweet tooth. He had to have sweets all the time, and if he couldn't get any desserts or candy he would eat spoonfuls of sugar. The result was a rash all over his body. His doctor said he was not to be given any candy or sweets until he was cured. Yet, his parents would have sweets on the table and they would eat them.

This young boy didn't obey his parents; when nobody was looking he would eat them. After a few days his mother realized that he wasn't obeying her, so she brought her son to my grandfather to speak to him and explain that he should not eat sweets. When grandfather said to come back after fifteen days, and "I'll speak to him," she went away quietly wondering why grandfather couldn't speak to the boy right then.

She came back after fifteen days. Grandfather took the boy aside, spoke to him for less than a minute, and the boy went home and gave up sweets; wouldn't touch sweets anymore. The parents came back and said: "What kind of miracle did you perform? We were trying to tell him the same thing and he

wouldn't listen to us. Yet, you were able to speak to him for less than a minute, and he obeys you instantly."

Grandfather said: "It wasn't a miracle. The reason I asked you to come back after fifteen days was that I had to give up sweets for fifteen days before I could ask him to give up sweets. So, all I told him was that I'd given up sweets and I wouldn't eat sweets until he was allowed to eat sweets, so will you please give them up?"

That is what parents don't do. As parents, we want to use our authority to make children do what we want; we are not willing to do it with them. It doesn't work. We have to live what we want our children to learn. It's only when we live by example that they will learn.

We think that justice means punishment, that justice means "an eye for an eye." We are constantly told this. The media and society drums this into us all the time — unless somebody pays for what has happened to us, we cannot be satisfied. That's not justice. That is revenge. Revenge is not going to help anybody. If we want justice then we have got to think about reformation. We have to recognize that the person has done something wrong, and has done it out of ignorance or lack of understanding. We need to

help that person understand, to educate and reform that person. I am a big advocate of prisons being places of reformation rather than punishment.



We have to get to the root of the whole problem. The root of the problem is all the passive violence that we practice in society, and all the disparities that generate out of this passive violence. As long as we have that kind of situation in society, we are going to have more violence. I hope that I have been able to share with you some of the things I learned from my grandparents and parents, which will help you become the change that we all have to be to make this world a peaceful place.

I want to share a few final words from my grandfather. These are some words of wisdom I found a few weeks ago when I was pouring through grandfather's writings, and I brought them along to share with you. I hope that they will help you benefit also.

He says: "Keep your thoughts positive, because your thoughts become your words. Keep your words positive, because your words become your behavior. Keep your behavior positive, because your behavior becomes your habits. Keep your habits positive, because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive, because your values become your destiny." Thank you. ☸

BECOME

A POWERFUL AGENT OF SOCIETAL CHANGE

An Invitation to Be Humane

BY DR. N. RADHAKRISHNAN, NEW DELHI, INDIA

Dr. N. Radhakrishnan heads the Gandhi Smriti and the International Centre of Gandhian Studies and Research and has authored and edited more than thirty books and three journals, including *Gandhi and the Global Village*; *Daisaku Ikeda: In Pursuit of a New Humanity*; *The Journal of Peace and Gandhian Studies*; *the Journal of Gandhi's Smriti*; and *Nonviolent Revolution*. He has lectured as a visiting professor and organized courses on Gandhi, the peace movement *Shanti Sana* and human rights at more than thirty universities around the world. He also led an Indian team of

scholars and artists at UNESCO during the 125th birthday anniversary of Mohandas K. Gandhi.

On August 7, 2001, Dr. Radhakrishnan was

honored at the Aliso Viejo campus in California as Soka University of America's first honorary ambassador. He spoke on August 8 at SGI-USA's Los Angeles Friendship Center on the latest release by Middleway Press, *For the Sake*



of Peace, a synthesis of all eighteen years of peace proposals that SGI President Daisaku Ikeda has made to the United Nations.

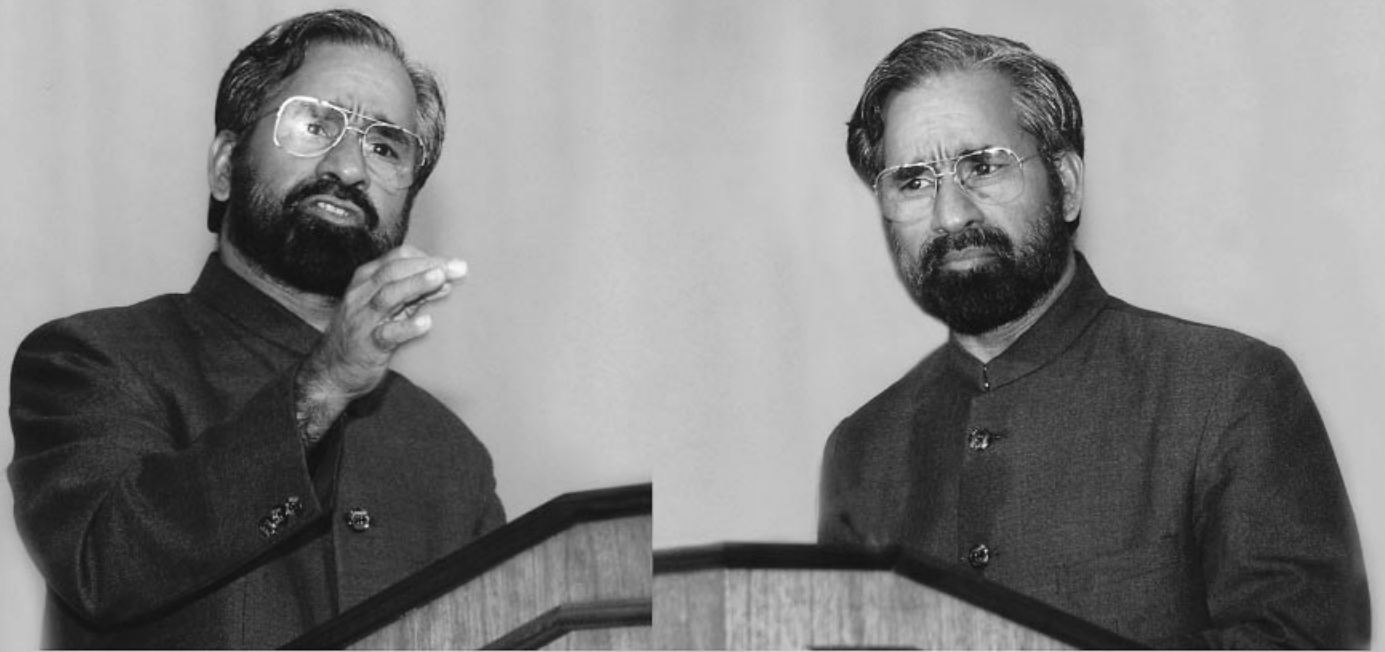
The following is an edited version of his comments.

Every time I meet people at an SGI function, I become more dedicated. I have a feeling on those occasions that I am meeting people who are differ-

ent from the rest of the crowd. To me, you are all very special. I say "very special" because you are all privileged to be members of a global movement, the Soka Gakkai International. I don't think

it is any longer an ordinary organization. It has become a global movement, a global movement for value creation.

Who creates values in the present mad rush for material



"[For the Sake of Peace] is a veritable history of the different aspects of Mahayana Buddhism and the role of religion in a cultural milieu where the worth of the human being is measured in terms of the money he or she possesses."

World Tribune

advancement? Values have become a rare commodity. Our pursuit of material comforts and physical pleasures and our courting of things beyond the reach of ordinary people has had too much emphasis placed upon it.

This being the situation, value creators that you are, you have a

special role to play in shaping not only your lives, but also shaping the destiny that we all share. The chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is not a mechanical process for SGI members. It is part of an earnest effort to discover oneself and relate one's inner self to external realities. It helps us real-

ize how interdependent we are. It helps people realize how interrelated we are.

When our educational systems, our philosophies, our religions don't give us these insights, when many of the mainstream religions have become irrelevant, you have, by conviction, chosen



World Tribune

SGI-USA members from all over Southern California went to the Los Angeles Friendship Center to hear Dr. Radhakrishnan's lecture on SGI President Ikeda's book *For the Sake of Peace*.

to be part of this great movement, the Soka Gakkai International. That's why I said you are very special and you are very unique.

You are more unique because you have the leadership of Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, whom I believe to be the greatest man living today. What is he, and who is he? I am coming from a different religious background. I am a Gandhian scholar, born into a Hindu family, but for me it is very easy to understand the profound significance of what Dr. Ikeda has been doing at the individual level, local level, national level, and at the international level. I know what it means to be a part of what he has been doing, in a world where consumerism, crass materialism, greed, jealousy, pettiness, violence and intolerance dominate our day-to-day lives.

You have an all-embracing practical vision of a new man and a new woman whose capacities are infinite. You and I are endowed with infinite capacities,

but do we get them in our day-to-day life from the schools, the workplace or the home? Do we find sufficient tools to discover our real self and experience the joy of being alive, and the joy of being human? I doubt it. The importance of what is being done under the leadership of Dr. Ikeda can be analyzed and understood in this context. As a Gandhian scholar and as an activist, I see in him the living Gandhi.

When I first met Dr. Ikeda in 1984 at a conference in Tokyo, I did not know him. I had read a few books thanks to Professor Glenn D. Paige of the University of Hawaii, who encouraged me to meet with Dr. Ikeda when I would be in Tokyo. To make a long story short, that acquaintance began in 1984 and grew in depth, in content, and we have now met eleven or twelve times. This book, *For the Sake of Peace*, came to me a couple of months ago. Initially, I thought it might be a compilation of the different

peace proposals the president has been making over the last eighteen years, copies of which I was also getting. But, when I started reading, I thought, "No! This is something different!"

What do we see in this book? It is a veritable history of the different aspects of Mahayana Buddhism and the role of religion in a cultural milieu where the worth of the human being is measured in terms of the money he or she possesses. In a cultural and political milieu where violence has become an all-pervading and controlling factor, in a social milieu where we are floating without much purpose, this book offers valuable guidance. The subtitle is *Seven Paths to Global Harmony*.



Dr. Ikeda is able to visualize what lies in the future. One need not be an astrologer

to see what lies beyond today, and this book speaks of some of those very important aspects of our social life, our ethical life, our spiritual life and our life as responsible fellow human beings. No one has an existence of only his or her own, we are all interrelated. We are all interdependent. We have to tolerate, we have to respect all forms of life in all their glory. How can that be possible? How can nations live together without hating? How will we conquer the three enemies of hatred, greed and ignorance? How can we convert poison into medicine? The Lotus Sutra describes the ways and means of how to do it. But here is a unique leader who gives concrete guidance as to how hatred can be converted into love. The biggest enemy of our life, of our being, of our existence, is hatred and intolerance. How can we convert hatred into love, the most powerful force that binds us together?

The Soka Renaissance has spread to more than 170 countries, with many millions of people who are chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. They don't chant for selfish reasons. When they chant, they are trying to relate to the cosmic reality of life. Are they not trying to see unity? Are they not trying to create a certain kind of world that transcends racial, linguistic and cultural barriers? That is why I said right at the beginning that the SGI has become a global movement, with the laudable objective of worldwide kosen-rufu.

Kosen-rufu is not conversion. Let it not be misunderstood. Kosen-rufu is an invitation to be humane. Kosen-rufu is a dedicated effort on the part of millions of people to work together to experience the joy of living together. In our day-to-day life, are we not losing the ability to work together? The reality of today and tomorrow is that we are going to be multilingual, we are going to be multiracial, and we are going to be multireligious. It's coexistence. How do you promote coexistence unless you respect your neighbor? And the essence of worldwide kosen-rufu is a new humanism that transcends narrow confines and narrow interpretations of religion.

So let us understand that kosen-rufu will not be effective unless it is propelled by the force of a new human revolution. And the new human revolution that Dr. Ikeda speaks about is based upon the infinite potential of every human being — the force of each person to be a powerful agent of transformation, of change with consent. Transform yourself, as Shakyamuni Buddha said long, long ago. How do we do that? This again necessitates the movement to be founded on values. What are the values that we are seeking? Are they going to be values devolved of ethics, morality and spirituality? The market decides your value, now, please understand. We are all commodities. We are not human beings.

It is here that Dr. Ikeda reminds us: "Look here! You are

all powerful, responsible human beings. You are not commodities." Now, the choice is yours. Do you want to be a mere commodity, or do you want to be a human being? What is it that makes us different from animals? Our pets? It is our morality. Our pets have greater morality than many moneymaking machines nowadays. Otherwise, we would not kill human beings the way we have been. We would not deny human beings basic facilities as we have been doing. So, the values that are fast eroding are to be brought into the center of human endeavor. That is why I support the SGI. That is why I admire the efforts of Dr. Ikeda. That is why I respect him as a great leader.



What especially attracted me to *For the Sake of Peace* are Dr.

Ikeda's comments on compassion, interconnectedness and absolute respect for all human beings. These are rooted in the life affirmation found in the value of dialogue. There is an absence of dialogue even at the individual level. In many families there is absolutely no dialogue. Everybody's busy. We come home and immediately head for that idiot box — the television. The child has no time to talk to each parent. The mother has no time to talk to the child. And the husband and wife are very busy. They have no time to talk to one another.

THE MEANS TO PEACE ARE:

- 1) *selfless service*; 2) *right and fair labor*;
- 3) *nonviolence*; 4) *conciliation*;
- 5) *share in government*; 6) *reeducation*;
- 7) *sharing of resources*.

THE BARRIERS TO PEACE:

- 1) *isolationism*; 2) *illusion of efficiency*;
- 3) *greed*; 4) *poverty*; 5) *environmental irresponsibility*; 6) *nuclear negativity*.

And most families are nuclear families, and the older parents become burden. We deposit them. We dump them. We remember them on Christmas day. We remember our wonderful parents on certain days, whenever they are convenient to us. Parents have become unnecessary irritants. If this is what is happening at the personal level, what is happening at a societal level? We are all busy at our workplace. Even when we are driving, we drive with one hand and with the other hand we are talking on the phone. I saw someone who was working on his laptop in the car. He was trying to send an email. I'm not undermining the importance of all these things. But let us ask for a moment, where will these things take us? It is important to stop a minute and ask ourselves, "What is it that ultimately I am gaining?" "What is it that is happening to me as a human being?" There's a difference between a machine and a human being.

Long ago, in 1904, Gandhi was asked a question: "Are you against science and technology? People say you are against science. People say you are against technology." His answer was: "I

am not against science and technology. Science and technology should not dictate and control your life. Science and technology should be in our hands." I am not belittling the importance of science and technology. It is here that the importance of dialogue at a personal level comes in.

But Dr. Ikeda is a visionary, one who is able to see what is lying ahead far beyond. He is talking about the dialogue of civilizations. Dialogue not even of nations, but dialogue of civilizations. I would like to assess this particular concept. This concept is a great one. Please understand that here is a philosopher, an educator, who believes that a multi-lingual spectrum, an inter-religious understanding, a multicultural diversity and coexistence have come to stay. There is no way war will change that. War has never solved any problem anywhere. War has created more problems. Violence begets violence, while nonviolence removes bitterness. And what is the way, other than encouraging the dialogue of civilizations?

So, friends, between yourselves, at your level, in your com-

munity, in your office, in your home, if you can understand the significance of dialogue as an inescapable and important matter, to relate yourself to fellow human beings, that is yet another aspect of human revolution. Human revolution is a very big frame. You can't point to a few things and say, "This is human revolution, this is human revolution and this is human revolution." It covers the whole gamut of your life and my life.

We are fast becoming a community of faithless people. To have deep faith is a virtue. Faith in religion is one of the greatest virtues, and the importance of religions cannot be slighted or dismissed. How did mankind reach the third millennium? Let us remember, from the cannibalistic beast that our forefathers once were, the long way that we have traveled was made possible by religion. Some religions have become violent, and I admit they have become instruments of conflict, but you might know Buddhism is the only religion that spread by the sheer content of its life-vision. It is the only religion in known history that never took up the sword to propagate its philosophy. And even in contemporary times, when other religions are becoming fast redundant, it is spreading. It is spreading because people see great promise in it. And Mahayana Buddhism as it is being understood today probably is the hope of the future.

Long ago, we had imprisoned

religion in textbooks, in holy books. But religion has to enter the very life of each one of us. It has to become a motivating force. It has to become the guiding principle in our life.

Another important aspect of this dialogue, the dialogue of civilizations, is helping people out of the mental wilderness. We are all prisoners in one sense. We are all people who are lost and have gotten ourselves into a certain kind of wilderness. We don't realize it. There is so much darkness inside. We do not know how much internal wilderness there is in each one of us. For the removal of that, you need conscious effort, through commitment, through dedication, through rededication and determination. And determined we are in the realization of the objective of worldwide kosen-rufu. It is becoming a reality. And in this, you and I should realize that all changes start at the individual level. We want others to change, always. The inspired human being, every individual, becomes an agent of change. I remember once Gandhi was asked about his philosophy of life. He said: "I have no philosophy as such. My life is my message."



And from this individual change, we move to another area of emancipation of the human spirit — relieving suffering. This is not unrelated to what we are trying to do at the



Dr. Radhakrishnan greets SGI-USA members and signs copies of *For the Sake of Peace*.

World Tribune

personal level. It is here that *For the Sake of Peace* offers us guidance on self-mastery, tolerance and dialogue, the role of community, the role of culture, the role of nations, the role of global awareness and the role of global disarmament.

These classifications and ideals are very close to what Gandhi himself said on a different occasion, that the means to peace are: 1) selfless service; 2) right and fair labor; 3) nonviolence; 4) conciliation; 5) share in government; 6) reeducation; 7) sharing of resources. But Dr. Ikeda here again invites our attention when he says there are several barriers to peace. What are those barriers to peace? They are: 1) isolationism, 2) illusion of efficiency, 3) greed, 4) poverty, 5) environmental irresponsibility and 6) nuclear negativity. This is how he looks at it. Please see how holistic he

is when he looks at the complexities of it.

I would like to close my observations by drawing your attention to two more aspects. As Dr. Ikeda himself points out in his book, there is a Latin expression that "if you want peace, prepare for war." But he says, "No, if you desire peace, prepare for peace!" And in that, unless we are able to change poison into medicine, and hatred into love, and the dialogue of civilizations becomes a reality, which is all controlled by a very finely developed worldwide kosen-rufu, the lives of our grandchildren will be in danger. The planet Earth will be in danger. The human species will be in danger. Friends, I profusely thank you for your immense patience. You have tolerated me — you have shown how tolerant you are! But then you are all disciples of Dr. Ikeda. You can't be otherwise. 🌀



Seikyo Press

SGI President Ikeda with South African President Nelson Mandela at their second meeting in Tokyo in July 1995.

SGI President Ikeda's Essay Series
A RECORD OF MY LIFE

Meeting With **NELSON MANDELA**— *Champion of Justice*

BY SGI PRESIDENT DAISAKU IKEDA

It was a scene that moved the soul. The mood was solemn, as it should be at the start of a new millennium. The stage was South Africa's Robben Island, a small barren out-

cropping of land nearly seven miles off the shore of Cape Town; a place once notorious as a prison island.

It was midnight on January 1, 2000.

In a dimly-lit room of earthen walls, a candle

sparked to life. Through the lattice of steel bars appeared the faint image of a person. That person was former South African president Nelson Mandela. A smile shone on his gentle face, and his hair was speckled with gray. This indomitable champion of justice in the twentieth century had spent nearly eighteen of his twenty-seven years in prison on this island.

Mr. Mandela chose this solitary cell where he had passed each unimaginably long day during his incarceration as the place where he would welcome in the new millennium. He lit a candle as he prayed for the protection of human rights in the twenty-first century, dubbing it the “freedom flame.”

Candle in hand, the towering figure slowly made its way out of the prison. Outside, on the grounds of the old prison, a smaller man stood waiting. His entire being exuded vitality. It was the new South African president Thabo Mbeki, Mr. Mandela’s successor. Handing the candle to President Mbeki, Mr. Mandela remarked, “Because there are good people in the world, this flame will not be extinguished.”

This scene filled me with deep emotion as I reflected on my meetings with each of these great men.

Greeted by 500 Youth

Let us now jump back in time to 1990. On February 11 of that year, Mr. Mandela was at long last released from captivity. This was also the ninetieth anniversary of the birth of my mentor and sec-



Nelson Mandela in the cell at Robben Island where he spent twenty-seven years for his opposition to apartheid.

David & Peter
Turnley/CORBIS

ond Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, invincible champion of Soka. As I reminisced about my mentor on that day, I thought about the future of Mr. Mandela, a mighty lion who had broken through the chains of oppression.

Later in the year, on October 31, I received Mr. Mandela at the Seikyo Shimbun building in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. He had come to Japan as vice president of the African National Congress (ANC). When his car pulled up, a shout of “Viva! Mandela!” arose like the roar of the sea from the 500 representative youth division members who had assembled to welcome him. Stepping from the vehicle, Mr. Mandela smiled broadly and waved at the crowd. It was a brilliant autumn day.

As he entered the building,

members of the Soka University Pan-African Friendship Society sang in English the beloved song of the South African people “Rolihlahla Mandela”:

*Rolihlahla Mandela
Free is in your hands
Show us the way to freedom,
In this land of Africa
Oh, Mandela, Mandela, Mandela,
Mandela’s Freedom now
Show us the way to Freedom
In this land of Africa.*

Welcoming a Hero of the People

I greeted him saying, “With my deepest respect, I sincerely welcome you, a hero of the people.”

Smiling brightly, he replied: “I



AFP/CORBIS

Nelson Mandela with his successor, current South African President Thabo Mbeki.

am very honored to meet you. I had been hoping to see you during my stay in Japan.”

“It is I who am honored by your visit, despite your busy schedule,” I rejoined. “You have proven that justice always wins! You have given courage to the entire world!”

Mr. Mandela is a true gentleman.

At the outset of our meeting, he said he had been paying close attention to the activities of the SGI, which he hailed as a body that is creating lasting value for humankind and thereby uniting the people of the world.

How did Mr. Mandela, who had just been released from prison after twenty-seven years, know so much about our move-

ment? The answer to this is somewhat detailed, but I would like to tell it just as it happened.

In 1985, the South African poet Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali,¹ whose poetry sings of the dawn of black liberation and is filled with a deep passion for human rights, wrote a series of essays for publication in the education journal *HIT* at the request of the magazine’s editor. They were to be serialized over four weeks. At the time, he was involved in scholastic education in Soweto, one of the townships in South Africa where black people were forced to live during apartheid. Incidentally, I met Mr. Mtshali for the first time in Tokyo six months after my meeting with Mr. Mandela.

Soweto was the epitome of the multitude of problems faced by South Africa at that time.

Confusion reigned among the youth living there. The struggle continued and many students were turning to drugs and delinquent behavior. It was amid such circumstances that Mr. Mtshali received a copy of a collection of my essays titled *Glass Children* from a friend who was a Japanese scholar of literature. It seems that my writings resonated profoundly with his own ideas.

We had never met. And he apparently was unaware that I was the leader of the SGI, or that the SGI was a body dedicated to promoting peace, culture and education based on the teachings

of Buddhism. Nevertheless, Mr. Mtshali introduced my message to youth as “the great words of a sage from the Orient.”

In his essays, the poet expressed his own sincere thoughts and expectations for youth, and quoted the following passages from my writings: “Youth is a time of hardships, but it is also a time when the light of hope streams in. The person who grows up with an ever constant hope for the future is the true singer of youth’s song.”² And “To do anything that would ... deprive [young people] of their vigor is equivalent to casting one’s treasures into the sea.”³

At a time when young people were giving in to despair and hopelessness, Mr. Mtshali’s works elicited a tremendous response from the journal’s audience. They even reached Mr. Mandela in prison.

Turning Prison Into a “Mandela University”

In a situation that to most would seem utterly hopeless, Mr. Mandela endured all with a tenacious spirit, using his time to reflect upon and ponder the history of South Africa from the time it was settled by the Dutch in the seventeenth century to the outbreak of the Anglo Boer War (1899–1902),⁴ and the path that the country had followed since its establishment. Through his meditations, Mr. Mandela no doubt developed a clear vision about what his coun-

try needed most for the future.

In the dim light of his prison cell, he read countless volumes, turning even those small confines into a “Mandela University.” He and his fellow inmates created a system whereby they would teach each other the specialized knowledge or skills in which they had expertise. In this way, they squarely challenged the attempts of the prison to break them spiritually and intellectually.

His contemplation must have naturally led him to think about the issue of educating and raising young people. It was in such circumstances that he happened upon my writings. That is to say, even before we met in person, we had a meeting of the minds; in particular, we shared a conviction in the importance of education for youth.

About six months before Mr. Mandela was to make his first trip to Japan, I was contacted by the ANC office in Tokyo to see if a meeting between us could be arranged. When we finally came face-to-face, Mr. Mandela remarked familiarly, “I have been looking forward to meeting you. I didn’t want to leave Japan until I did so.” I was moved by his humble and sincere desire to use his encounters with people as a source of inspiration, hope and strength.

I said to him: “Looking toward the future one or two hundred years hence, what is necessary now for the long-term growth of a nation? It is education. This is my unchanging belief and conviction. And this is

the focus of all my efforts.”

During the course of our discussion, I made five proposals: developing educational exchange; inviting artists from South Africa to perform in Japan; holding an exhibition on the theme of human rights; holding an anti-apartheid photo exhibition; and sponsoring public lectures on human rights. Mr. Mandela voiced his wholehearted support.

Each of these specific proposals was realized. In fact, one of them, the exhibition “Toward the Century of Humanity: Human Rights in Today’s World,” was shown globally in thirty cities of eight countries.

It is important that we fulfill our promises and live true to our beliefs no matter what. The SGI has gained the trust of people around the world precisely because we have upheld these principles.

Mr. Mandela is a humanistic educator in the broadest sense. Indeed, his life itself has imparted great hope and courage to people everywhere. On the day of our meeting, he warmly surveyed the Japanese youth who welcomed him, his face displaying the compassionate gaze of one devoted to education. What distinguishes a genuine leader from a mere power-monger is a love for young people and a dedication to fostering them.

Raising Successors

Mr. Mandela and I discussed the need for raising successors. Dispensing with formalities, I asked him can-



Charles O'Rear/CORBIS

A view of Table Mountain at sunset. Table Mountain is Cape Town, South Africa's most famous landmark and one of the city's greatest attractions.

didly: “Even though your country has in you an unprecedented and great leader, unless there are many excellent people behind you, your job will never be accomplished.”

He sat on the sofa listening intently. I continued: “One tall tree does not make a forest. Unless other trees grow to the same height, you cannot have a large grove.”

Mr. Mandela was 72 at the time. The more significant a movement is, the more its leader will be committed to thinking about its perpetuation. A leader who takes full responsibility for a move-

ment's success or failure is one who is truly devoted to raising capable people to whom the future can be entrusted. As I spoke, Mr. Mandela nodded deeply, showing complete understanding. I also presented this great senior in life with a poem, “Banner of Humanism, Path of Justice.”

On the night of our meeting, a farewell reception sponsored by the ambassadors of various African countries was held in Mr. Mandela's honor. Nigerian Ambassador to Japan Mai-Bukar Garba Dogon-Yaro later related to me Mr. Mandela's remarks that evening. Asked about his impres-

sions of his visit to Japan, Mr. Mandela stated: “The part of my visit that made me happiest was my meeting with SGI President Ikeda. When I arrived for the meeting, I was warmly welcomed by young students, who even sang for me.

“I struggled in prison for twenty-seven years, but at that moment I thought to myself, ‘All of my efforts have now been rewarded.’ I was also moved by the sincere support that President Ikeda and the SGI members have extended to us.”

His words about me aside, I wish to leave a record of this won-

derful history as praise for the youth who helped me create it.

At Tokyo Narita International Airport the following day, as he prepared to end his brief trip to Japan, Mr. Mandela again said to the ambassadors surrounding him that our meeting was the most memorable part of his stay.

Five years later, in July 1995, Mr. Mandela visited Japan again — this time as a state guest. He had been elected president of South Africa [in May 1994] through free and democratic elections, heralding the dawn of freedom in his country. I paid a courtesy call on him at the Akasaka State Guesthouse in central Tokyo.

Two years prior to that, in December 1993, Mr. Mandela was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with then South African president Frederik W. de Klerk,⁵ whom I also had the occasion to meet in June 1992.

The Mission of Religion Is to Serve People

Knowing that he had been working tirelessly without a moment's rest, I told this indomitable champion of justice that I was praying wholeheartedly for his health.

With great feeling, President Mandela said: "I have been looking forward to seeing you again. I vividly recall our meeting five years ago. I will never forget the warm reception I received from you and the Soka University students. I was particularly moved

by the female students. That's because the Western media gives one the impression that universities in Asia cater chiefly to men."

The South African president also commented on the role played by religion in his country, saying: "It was religious institutions, not the government, that provided black people with opportunities for education. Also, many religious people fought in the forefront of the anti-apartheid movement and struggled to elevate the status of blacks in South African society." For an instant a look of nostalgia flashed across his face and he gazed into the distance.

"During our incarceration, it was these religious figures who supported us in forming a prison choir, holding study groups and putting on Christmas shows, and who otherwise worked to make our lives more enjoyable." His words were few, but I could sense in them the weight of the 10,000 days he had spent behind bars.

The mission of religion is to serve people. It makes absolutely no sense for people to be forced to kowtow to religious authority. Religious figures should be willing to give their very lives for the sake of human rights. When I voiced such sentiments, Mr. Mandela smiled in agreement.

I praised his great struggle as bearing out the truth of the South African proverb, "He who perseveres has no misfortune," and expressed my gratitude for the honorary doctorate in education I had been informed would be

bestowed upon me by the University of the North, of which Mr. Mandela was chancellor.

As our discussion drew to a close, President Mandela thanked me for the warm welcome and conveyed his sincere wish that I would further work to promote the welfare of all people.

In the course of our dialogue on this occasion, I once again inquired about Mr. Mandela's plans for a successor, as I had done during our meeting five years earlier. I did this out of concern for South Africa's ongoing development. "Everything is fine now while your country enjoys the guidance of such an outstanding leader," I said, "but the problem is the future. The world is also wondering what you will do."

With his charming smile, President Mandela noted that I had brought this question up during our first encounter. He must have given this issue serious thought. He responded definitively: "A successor — yes, I have one." He already had a successor in mind. That person was Thabo Mbeki.

Meeting With Mr. Mbeki

In April 1998, I met with Mr. Mbeki at the Seikyo Shimbun building. He was visiting Japan as South Africa's deputy president. We spoke in the same room where Mr. Mandela and I had our first meeting eight years earlier. He struck me as a tried and tested champion of human rights.

Mr. Mbeki's father had been a

comrade of Mr. Mandela, struggling together with him in prison for twenty-three years. Having inherited his father's fighting spirit, Mr. Mbeki himself had endured twenty-eight years in exile.

He is quick-witted. When I praised his wife for her vigorous social activism, saying, "They say that behind every great man there is sure to be a great woman," he immediately retorted, "There's no 'behind' about it — she's out in front!"

I also commented on the high regard Mr. Mandela held for him, citing the South African president as saying: "Mbeki is the actual president of the country. I am leaving everything up to him. He is a person of exceptional ability. He has a deep spirit of respect for others, is extremely warm and acutely sensitive to the sufferings of the people."

Listening to these words, I could feel the deep love and respect Mr. Mandela had for his chosen successor. No sooner had I relayed this to Mr. Mbeki than he replied: "No, no. There is actually an explanation for why the president praises me so. The truth is that he owes me some money, but since he doesn't want to pay it back, he keeps trying to butter me up!"

The room erupted with laughter. His humor was premised on their absolute trust in one another. I was reminded once again of the certainty with which Mr. Mandela had responded to my inquiry, saying, "A successor — yes, I have one."

Mutual Understanding Gives Rise to Trust

Sure enough, about a year after our meeting, Mr. Mbeki was elected president of South Africa.

Mr. Mbeki advocates an African Renaissance. With firm resolve, he said to me when we met: "The people of Africa are faced with many problems. We must challenge and overcome them. We had felt that perhaps Japan and the Japanese people were our allies in this; and my current trip here has confirmed that. In particular, our meeting today has given my colleagues and me utmost confidence that this is indeed the case!"

I replied: "Those who have suffered the harshest oppression have the right to achieve the greatest victory and unsurpassed happiness. On the other hand, those who have perpetrated oppression will sink into nothingness like the setting sun. This is an unchanging rule of history."

Japan needs first to understand Africa. It must learn from Africa. Mutual understanding gives rise to trust. Forty years ago, I proclaimed that the twenty-first century would be the century of Africa. And I have since worked to develop exchange between Japan and many African countries.

Africa is indeed grappling with a host of problems — ranging from civil war and refugee crises, to hunger and epidemics — which could collectively be termed the "negative legacy" of the twentieth

century. But against this backdrop, President Mbeki's message at the start of this year shone like a brilliant ray of light: "The twenty-first century will be the century of Africa. We must promote the African Renaissance and turn the new century into a century of hope.... Precisely because we have experienced all the tragedies of the past century and the past millennium, we now direct our gaze toward the shimmering stars."

In a spirit of solidarity, I applauded his words wholeheartedly.

"I Want to Live to 125"

Mr. Mandela also began the new year in good health, throwing himself into his activities from the outset and delivering a speech at the UN Security Council. In introducing Mr. Mandela to the Security Council, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke said in his praise that history would rank Mr. Mandela with Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King.⁶

Speaking of Gandhi, while he was still alive, someone asked him how long he wanted to live. With a warm smile, Gandhi replied: "I want to live to 125! Because it will take me that long to accomplish everything I want to do!"⁷ His grandson, Arun Gandhi (president of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence), whom I have met, speaks often of this episode.

The year 1994 marked the

125th anniversary of Gandhi's birth. A commemorative issue of the scholarly journal *Indian Horizons* (published by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations) included articles submitted by both Mr. Mandela and myself. At the time of our second meeting, this came up, and I fondly remember that we spoke of Gandhi's life and achievements. It is my fervent prayer that Mr. Mandela, a great treasure of humankind, will live long and continue to build a Century of Africa.

The Flame of Freedom Will Never Die

An Eastern classic describes the infiniteness of spiritual succession as “a flame that is passed on, never knowing extinction.” Mr. Mandela endured 10,000 days in prison, and the flame of freedom that he has entrusted to the twenty-first century will never die.

Likewise, the “flame of human revolution” that Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda caused to burn even brighter in prison will continue to shine with increasing brilliance in the new century through the magnificent drama of spiritual transmission from mentor to disciple. 🌀

1. Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali: His first book of poetry, *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* (1971), is considered a seminal work in the movement for the Black Consciousness. He met with SGI President Ikeda in Tokyo in May 1991.
2. Daisaku Ikeda, *Glass Children and Other*



Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and Table Mountain.

Wolfgang
Koehler/CORBIS

- Essays*, trans. Burton Watson (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1979), p. 62.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.
 4. Anglo Boer War: War between Great Britain and the two Boer republics of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Transvaal). It resulted in the dissolution of the two republics.
 5. Frederik W. de Klerk: President of South

Africa from 1989 to 1994; his administration began dismantling the system of apartheid.

6. UN press release SC/6787, January 19, 2000.

7. This episode is introduced as Arun Gandhi's favorite quote from his grandfather in *Jun Shioda's Ganji wo Tsuide* (The Portrait of a Family series: The Gandhi Family) (Tokyo: Nippon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai, 1998), p. 212.

Praying for the Peace of Liberia

*Augustine Blango,
Willingboro,
New Jersey*



Augustine Blango makes visiting SGI members and teaching them the sutra a priority in his Buddhist practice in Liberia and everywhere he goes.

BY ALISON HIRSCH, FREEBERG, PENNSYLVANIA

In December 1989, civil war broke out in Liberia. Over the next seven years, hundreds of thousands died from wounds and disease, and millions of people were forced to leave their homes. Among the refugees were Augustine Blango and his family.

“My wife and I left our home to try to find a place safe from the fighting. With us were our two children and seven other family members. We had no place to go. The rebels were shooting at people in the streets so I decided to take everyone to the army barracks for safety. My wife asked me what I was going to do with the Gohonzon. Since the rebels were shooting at people who were carrying anything in their hands, I told her that the Buddhist gods would protect us, and put the Gohonzon inside my sock. We saw many people in front of us, but we passed through the rebel checkpoint without incident and were able to reach the barracks safely.”

Augustine had joined the Soka Gakkai International in 1982, when his older brother Sam came back to Liberia for a visit. Sam had become a Buddhist in 1974 in the United States while he was a student in Philadelphia. He had married an American woman,

Judy Tomsy, and had become an American citizen, but he still felt close ties to Liberia, where he had left many family members including two small sons.

“Sam told me that if I chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, I would get whatever I needed in my life. He took me to a Buddhist meeting in Liberia and connected me with Harry Cooper, the leader of the Liberian members. I was twenty-one at the time and living temporarily with my other brother, Washington. I didn’t have a Gohonzon, so I chanted at our meeting place or at my leader’s house. At that time, it took three or four years to receive a Gohonzon.”

Augustine soon received an invitation from Sam and Judy to visit them in the United States. He went to the U.S. Embassy to apply for a visitor’s visa, but the consul refused to issue one because he did not believe that the young man would return to Africa.

“I was so disappointed and went right away to my Buddhist leader. He told me to chant to try to understand. He said that this must not be the right time for me to leave Liberia for the United States. I told him that I had to go to the United States, no matter how long it took. That was my determination.”

During the next couple of years, Augustine had trouble practicing because he had no permanent place to live; he was sleeping at the homes of various relatives and friends. In 1985, he finally received the Gohonzon, but he still did not have a place of his own where he could enshrine it.

“I was encouraged by a senior in faith to chant two hours a day to find a home of my own, and I put this guidance into practice for six months. In February 1986, I met a young woman whom I married, and in December that year we had our daughter, the first of our four children. Of course, I told her that I was a Buddhist and chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. She accepted my religion, even though she didn’t chant herself. I was doing construction work at the time, but the pay was not very good, and we could not afford a home. My wife said that this was no problem; she would ask her father to give us a house to live in. Finally, in 1987, I had a house of my own and was able to enshrine the Gohonzon. I began to chant more, one hour a day for the next seven months.”

Sam and Judy Blango again asked Augustine to visit them in the U. S. Augustine went back to the American Embassy, where the consul asked him how much money he had in the bank for his trip. Augustine told him that he would be staying with American relatives, but the consul again refused him a visa. Again he was advised to continue chanting no matter what happened.

Then in 1989 war broke out.

The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), a dissident group led by Charles Taylor, had an army of ten thousand, mostly new recruits with little training. They soon controlled the countryside and then took over the capital, Monrovia, which was named for James Monroe, the U.S. president in 1816 when the American Colonization Society established Liberia as a place for freed African-American slaves to be “resettled.” Most of these freed slaves had some white ancestry and were therefore lighter-skinned than the native people of the region, who belonged to sixteen different tribes, including the Krahn ancestors of Augustine and Sam Blango.

Like much of Africa, Liberia is still in the process of recovering from centuries of war, slavery, conquest and colonization. Liberia’s historic conflicts have been between the descendants of the American “settlers” and the indige-



Enduring a refugee camp in the Ivory Coast with members of his family, Augustine Blango (back row, far left) doesn’t give up on his dream to come to the United States.

nous people who were treated like second-class citizens and even used for forced labor until well into the twentieth century. Even after racial discrimination was outlawed in 1958, conflict and an impoverished economy troubled the nation, and in 1980 the army staged a bloody coup and set up Samuel K. Doe as president. Doe suspended the constitution, destroyed the economy, and ruled as a dictator. The 1989 rebellion aimed at his overthrow.

After fleeing their home, Augustine and his family lived in the army barracks for the next six months.

“When we came to the barracks, we had no food or water with us. We had to drink dirty water from the swamp and eat plant leaves and green grass. There were nearly 30,000 people seeking protection there without food or fresh water. The rebels continued shooting; every day fifty or sixty people died from gunshot wounds or disease. One time, I was standing outside when a soldier ran up to me out of the blue and warned me to leave the area because the rebels were firing in our direction. I had just moved one step to the side when a bullet whizzed past my ear and killed the man standing directly in back of me. The soldier who had warned me and saved my life told me that I must

have a long life to live. I chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times in my heart with ever-deepening appreciation before leaving the area.

“When I returned to my family, I found that my nephew and my son were near death from cholera, caused by polluted water and lack of food. There was no medicine available so I chanted in my heart and went out in search of some. Fortunately, I came across a doctor who treated the two boys, saving them. We were finally able to leave the barracks safely when ECOMOG [the West African Peacekeeping Force] stepped in to halt the fighting.”

ECOMOG was a monitoring group set up by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Kenya. The peace it brought was short-lived. In September 1990 a splinter group of the NPFL captured and executed Samuel Doe, just as he had executed his predecessor. The splinter groups multiplied on all sides, and fighting intensified, making life even more treacherous for the civilian population. The insurgents often executed civilians who refused to join them and recruited boys as young as eight to join their ranks. Transportation and communication became increasingly difficult even in the capital city.

In 1991, Augustine decided to leave Monrovia for Sierra Leone so that he could communicate with Sam and once again try to find a way to the U.S. He found a small boat owner who was offering to carry refugees out of the city. By the time the boat sailed, there were nearly 200 people on board, with no room for food or supplies and no radio. As they sailed out of the harbor the rebels started to shoot at them, and the boat sailed further and further out to sea, where it became lost. For three days the refugees saw no one, but finally a Guinean Coast Guard ship appeared, with two ECOMOG representatives on board. They had been searching for the lost boat, but when they radioed their headquarters in Guinea the government refused to allow them to bring the refugees ashore. In despair, they set sail early in the morning of their fourth day and that evening landed in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, where they were taken to a refugee camp.

“When I arrived in Sierra Leone, I had no idea where to find the Buddhist members, but I was at least

able to talk to my brother Sam on the telephone. One day, a friend of mine suggested we walk around Freetown, and just by coincidence we ran into a Buddhist friend from Liberia. He directed me to the Buddhist leader’s house, and I started attending meetings. I introduced my friend to chanting and together we did Buddhist activities in Freetown for eight months. During that time, I introduced three more people to Buddhism and encouraged five former members to return to their Buddhist practice.”

In late 1991, the Liberian rebels came to Sierra Leone and civil war broke out there as well. Augustine returned to Liberia. Later on, he went to Ghana to try to reestablish communications with Sam. Again, he lived in a refugee camp.

“During the three weeks that I spent there, I found some Liberian members who were no longer practicing. I chanted with them for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening, and some of them decided to return to the practice. I also introduced some new people to Buddhism. I got hold of some new study material from the Ghana Community Center before returning to my family in Liberia.”

In 1994, Sam and Judy found out that Liberian refugees were being resettled from the Ivory Coast to the United States under the United Nations Refugee Resettlement program. Augustine decided to take his family to the Ivory Coast, but when they arrived, the UN representative told them that there would be a two-year wait because there were so many refugees ahead of them. Even though there were about five hundred SGI members in the Ivory Coast, their meetings were all in French, and Augustine didn’t know the language.

“Things weren’t going well at all. I became discouraged and started to slack off in my practice. Eventually, though, I did start to do Buddhist activities with the Ivory Coast members, and I learned to speak a little French. I began to visit members at home to tell them about the benefits of the Buddhist practice, and some of the members who had stopped practicing began chanting again. My district in Abidjan had twenty members when I arrived, but by the time I left there were thirty. The leaders there put me in charge of teaching the members the Buddhist prayers, which I did every Friday night.”



After an eighteen-year struggle, Augustine is finally reunited with his brother Sam. Together they renew their faith and enjoy a bike ride at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

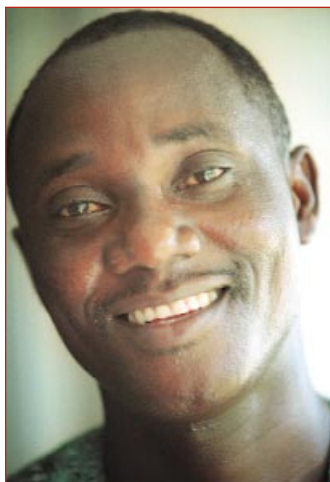
“In 1998, my brother asked me and his son to go back to Liberia to get our passports and apply again for U.S. visas. Although we got our passports successfully, war broke out again immediately afterward, and we had to flee back to the Ivory Coast without the visas. In the spring of 2000, I went back to Liberia and visited the consul, who asked me the reason for my trip and how long I would be in the U.S. I told her that I had been invited to my niece’s wedding and would only be staying for three weeks.

“She looked into my eyes and said: ‘Blango, come tomorrow to get your visa. You will be able to leave for the United States.’ Thanks to the Gohonzon and this Buddhist practice, my dream has come true after eighteen years of difficult struggle. I am now happy to be reunited with my brother in the United States of America.”

Augustine remains in this country because it is unsafe for him to return to Liberia, where Charles Taylor, who led the rebellion that began the civil war, is now president, after an election that

international observers agreed was free and fair. His wife and four children — now 15, 12, 10, and 4 — remain in a Liberian refugee camp, along with his brother Alex and his sister Mary. Another sister, Frances, died during the war. Augustine recently received his work authorization from the Immigration and Naturalization Service and is learning to drive a car and studying to take the G.E.D. exam. He recently passed the SGI-USA entrance exam and teaches the sutra to new members once a week in Burlington District in South Jersey, just east of Philadelphia.

“I know the power of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, and I am chanting day and night to fulfill my mission in life. I am determined to work for world peace here in the United States, in my homeland of Liberia, and in all of Africa.” ☸



Jonathan Wilson

Historical information from this article is from these sources:

Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).
 “Liberia,” CIA World Factbook 2000, www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/li.html, accessed February 1, 2001.

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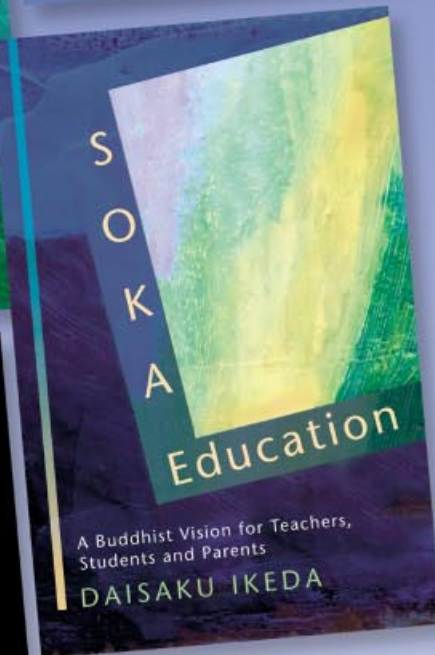
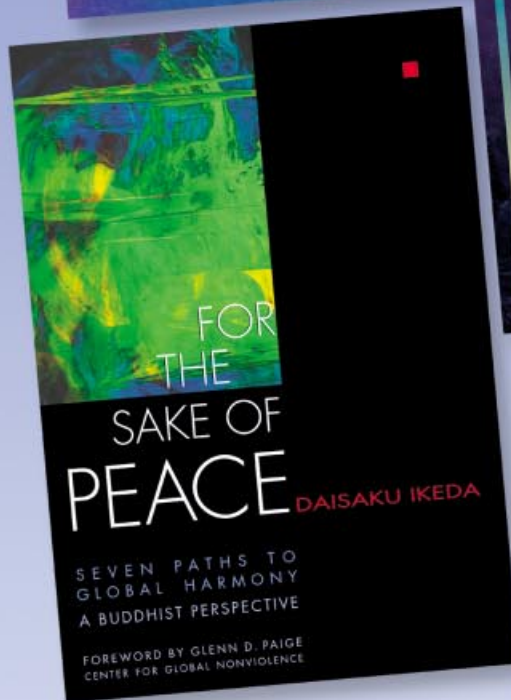
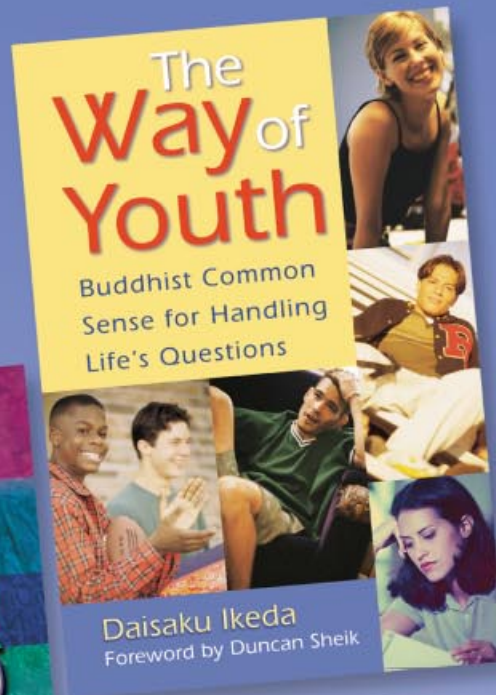
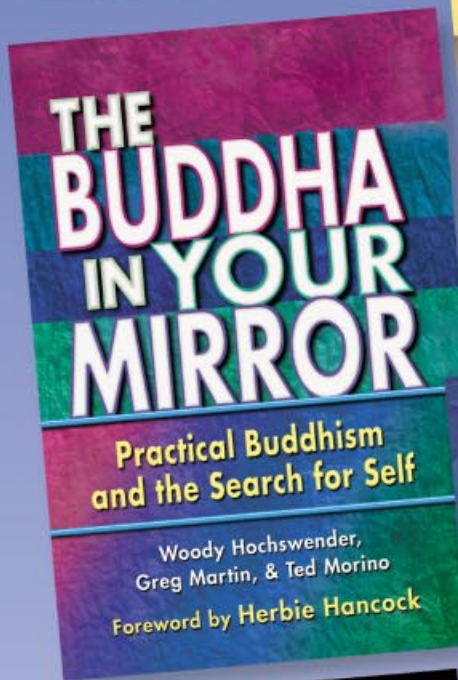
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What are the SGI & Living Buddhism Magazine?

Living Buddhism is the study journal for Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA), an American Buddhist movement that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the philosophy and practice of the Nichiren school of Mahayana Buddhism. SGI-USA works in association with seventy-five other SGI organizations comprising members in more than half the world's countries. SGI-USA activities are driven by our understanding of the inseparable link between individual happiness and the peace and prosperity of our diverse communities. Our religious teachings place the highest emphasis on the sanctity of life.

Through their Buddhist faith and practice, our members aim to improve their lives by taking up the challenge to create value, to live without fear, to take responsibility for their circumstances, to care for their families and to live with compassion for others.

What we believe...

Our core philosophy is expressed in the concept of human revolution, a process of inner transformation that centers on the idea that the causes we make through our thoughts, words and actions have influence that extends beyond their immediate context to affect the vast and complex web of life. Through undergoing our individual human revolution, we awaken to the responsibility we each have for our own circumstances and for our environment. Our inner transformation will lead us to take the actions that bring about personal fulfillment and help us contribute to the harmony and healthy development of society. These ideals are based on the Buddhist worldview of dependent origination, a concept of interrelation where all things in the realms of humanity and nature are dependent upon each other for their existence and nothing can exist in isolation.

The Buddhist tradition...

The roots of the SGI-USA worldview can be traced to the teachings of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, who lived some 2,500 years ago in what is modern-day Nepal. His enlightenment to eternal, universal reality was

most succinctly articulated in the Lotus Sutra. Following Shakyamuni's death, the Lotus Sutra spread through Central Asia into China and Japan.

In the thirteenth century, Nichiren Daishonin revealed the truth hidden in the Lotus Sutra. According to Nichiren Buddhism, the workings of the universe are an expression of a single principle or Law — Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the title and essence of the Lotus Sutra. By putting their lives in rhythm with this Law, individuals can unlock their hidden potential — the Buddha nature — and achieve creative harmony with the environment. Nichiren Buddhism is a vehicle of individual empowerment — that is, individuals have within themselves, the power to transform the inevitable sufferings of life into happiness and to be a positive influence in the community.

The SGI Heritage...

The SGI organization has its origin in the educational theory of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, whose quest to understand the deepest meaning of life eventually led to his encounter with Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Here, he discovered a philosophy that recognized and sought to develop the wisdom inherent in all human beings. The term *soka gakkai* (value-creation society) was first used by Makiguchi in 1930 when he founded the lay organization. During World War II, Makiguchi and his disciple Josei Toda were imprisoned for their opposition to the war. Makiguchi died in prison within eighteen months at the age of seventy-three. After the war, Toda rebuilt the organization and it achieved remarkable growth until his death in 1958. On May 3, 1960, Daisaku Ikeda became the third president. Under his leadership, the organization has grown to its present membership of twelve million in 177 countries and territories.

Based on the humanistic principles of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, SGI President Ikeda has founded the Soka School System which includes universities in Japan and the United States. He is also the founder of the Toda Peace Institute, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, and more. He is the author of numerous books that have been translated into many languages and has received worldwide recognition for his peace efforts.

*Founders Hall at Soka University of America,
Aliso Viejo, California*

