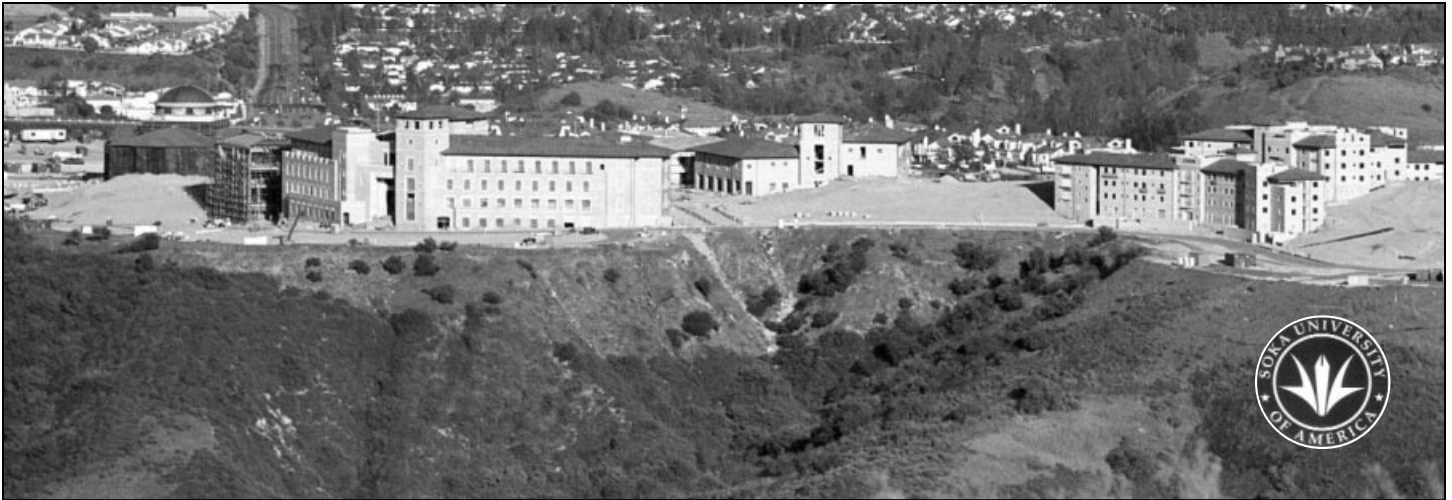


**SPECIAL YOUTH
PULLOUT SECTION**

SEIZE the Day

PERSPECTIVE ON ADMISSION TO SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA, ALISO VIEJO



**Jomo Thorne, SGI-USA
High School Division Leader**

This past March 15, all students who applied to Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo were sent admission response letters. A total of 120 students will take their place in the first class of SUA, AV.

On behalf of the SGI-USA Jr. High and High School Divisions, I'd like to wholeheartedly congratulate all of you.

But for every student who received an admission letter in March, there were a number of others who were not admitted. Many of you are undoubtedly disappointed. You may be questioning the value of having applied to SUA, or whether being rejected somehow indicates there's something wrong with your faith.

The great dream of kosen-rufu can only be achieved when each of us creates value as we live our lives.

SGI President Ikeda constantly reminds us that there is a purpose in all of us being born. He says: "In this universe filled with countless stars and planets, you were born here, on this earth, at this time. That is definitely not an accident. There is a meaning to your having been born. You were born because it was a good thing for you to be born. You have a mission that only you can fulfill" (Nov. 10, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 7).

We create value by finding and fulfilling our own missions. A strong determination and the

willingness to take action are all that is required to fulfill our dreams. Fulfilling our mission does not require that one necessarily attend SUA.

The roles that learning and education play in changing the course of humanity are more profound than many of us realize.

I recently read a speech President Ikeda gave back in 1973 that really opened my eyes to SUA's profound mission. President Ikeda discussed the Great Renaissance (a period during the 14th and 15th centuries in Europe that saw a great revival in the arts, music, philosophy, literature and science).

President Ikeda traced the roots of the Renaissance to a revival in learning that took place centuries earlier, in the Middle Ages. He said: "Learning, when deepened and developed at its most profound level, will eventually become the great source of culture.... Further, learning must have humanity as its basis from beginning to end" (*Proposals for the 21st Century*, p. 8).

I believe that in establishing SUA, President

Ikeda is making a cause for the flowering of a new worldwide Human Renaissance. We are at the pioneering stages of this process. I believe that this is the reason why it is important for each of us to support SUA at this crucial time.

By making the effort to apply, those students who weren't admitted by SUA this year made causes to support this new Human Renaissance. No matter what happens, please continue to devote yourselves to humanistic learning.

President Ikeda puts it best when he writes: "Not attending the college of your choice is certainly disappointing. But, in the long run, graduating from a particular school matters little.

"Academic background isn't everything; those who start out under difficult circumstances and go on to become people of character can be sources of hope and inspiration to many. The essential point is that you continue to study...the purpose of study is not which university you attend but to master something that contributes to your self-enrichment" (*The Way of Youth*, pp. 67-68). ●

Making a Difference By Joshua Krawitz, Los Angeles

I recently attended a planning meeting at the SGI-USA Los Angeles Friendship Center. A young woman offered the opinion that regardless of how we commemorate May 3, 2001, we will all eventually face the same old challenge—how to inspire youth and give them hope. A switch flipped in my soul. I looked at my friend Daisaku Leslie and said to myself: "No! Things must change."

While attending a meeting at Daisaku's house, I noticed he was counting the days until May 3, 2001. At that time, it was around 594 days. Recently, I visited a young men's chapter leader. He had a countdown calendar, inspired by Daisaku. "We all influence one another," I thought. I am going to make sure this young woman feels that we, the SGI-USA, have changed. Something must change

("Making..." continued on Page C)

The Relationship That Enhances Our Character

Commentary on "CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON"



Alexis Trass, Santa Monica, Calif.



I recently saw the movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* for the second time. Though it was visually stimulating and dramatically pleasing both times, I felt compelled to see it again. When I sat down to watch the movie, I was not expecting to learn anything—I just wanted to be entertained. Nevertheless, I could see elements of the mentor-disciple relationship threading its way through the movie. I was glad to have the opportunity to re-examine how I feel about this relationship and why it is important to my life.

I want to share three of the many thoughts I had on the mentor-disciple relationship based on *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. I do not want to ruin the movie for anyone who has not seen it (and I do recommend it), so this is not a movie review, but a commentary.

Everyone needs a mentor. Of course, we can all get by in life if we do not have a mentor or someone who can guide us along the right path, but at what cost to our development? It is important to have someone in our lives that we can follow. Naturally, our dependence on that person should not be blind. Rather, we should dedicate ourselves to fulfilling our missions under the watchful eye of someone who is fully aware of our struggles because they have been there. Their tutelage serves as a springboard for living a valuable life.

SGI President Ikeda often talks about the mentor-disciple relationship. It is evident he holds this relationship in high regard. He says: "Those who have a mentor in life are truly fortunate. The path of mentor and disciple is one that leads to personal development and growth. Those without a mentor may appear free and un beholden to anyone, but without a solid standard or model on which to base themselves, their lives become aimless and wandering" (*Faith Into Action*, p. 234).

We should choose our mentor carefully. There are many people who work hard, but not necessarily for the betterment of society. With so many people in the world and so many ways to interact with them, it's no wonder that some of us fall into the wrong crowd. If it is our desire to create value and help others become happy, we should cautiously evaluate the people with whom we come in contact and choose a mentor whose views already match our own philosophy. Once we have that mentor, it is equally important that we do not lose sight of why that person is in our lives.

We should not forget our mentor. Watching *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* helped me realize that if one forgets the mentor and the principles he or she stands for, then the disciple quickly loses their way in the world. One of the most striking examples of the necessity of remembering the mentor occurred when one of the main characters took a path of arrogance and destruction, completely eschewing her mentor. Although both of these characters were on the wrong path anyway, the girl who forgot her mentor went further along it. She was arrogant and was convinced there was nothing more she could learn from her mentor. Her attitude led to life-altering events for some other people she met.

That character's actions really made me consider the following quote from "The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood": "To forget the original teacher who had brought one the water of wisdom from the great ocean of the Lotus Sutra and instead follow another would surely cause one to sink into the endless sufferings of birth and death" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 747).

Having a bond with a mentor is the relationship that enables us to build our life-condition and character. Once each of us recognizes this, there will be no boundaries to the great actions we can take for ourselves and others.

Pictures courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics

(“...Difference” continued from Page A)

History repeats itself when people do not learn and change themselves first. After the meeting, I told Daisaku we had to change something, make a difference. He told me there were exactly 100 days left until May 3. We agreed to begin a M.A.D. Daimoku (“Make A Difference” daimoku) campaign. Each Wednesday night until May 3, we made the determination to chant one hour of M.A.D. daimoku. Our idea is simple: those who win in life fight the hardest. We will meet the next Wednesday after our youth activities. We will make a difference.

The next day, I chanted and realized we needed to begin right away. I called Daisaku and we agreed to meet at the LAFC. By evening, my life condition was in the gutter. While on my way there, I remembered again how much we all need SGI activities. Without the motivation to respond to SGI President Ikeda’s example and hear that young woman’s call for change, would I have gotten myself out of my funk? I doubt it.

After five minutes of chanting, my life condition improved and I thought of many things. One of my leaders encouraged me by saying that chanting for victory in the Soka Spirit issue is about forging one’s own fighting spirit. I thought of my mentor who has helped me in my career—he has produced over 1,000 episodes of television,

directed 15 feature films and raised more successful stars, writers and producers than almost anyone in history. He is a grandfather and at the age of 65, he still works 7 days a week, and works harder than almost anyone I have ever met. How dare I let my life-condition and determination falter? My



Joshua together with his dog Duane.

life has barely begun!

My life-condition improves and my perspective evolves. Instead of dwelling on where I am not, I appreciate that which I have accomplished.

I remember that those who fail the most win the most in the end. Ted Williams, the greatest hitter ever, failed six out of ten times in his greatest season. However, every time he stepped up to the plate, he believed that he

would succeed.

I started to chant for the members in my area—that they have courage, make good causes, study, win in their lives and that they are happy. I want President Ikeda to go to sleep at night confident that there is a planet full of enthusiastic, confident, young global citizens.

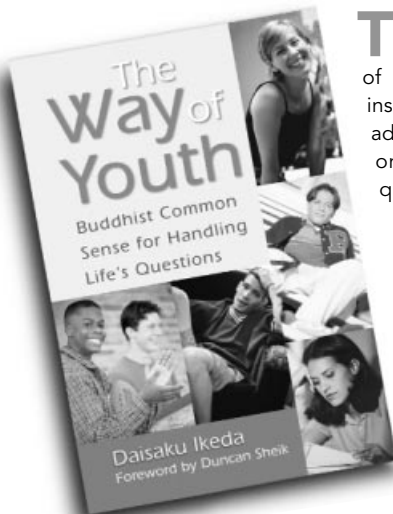
The Gohonzon is a mirror for seeing one’s mind clearly. I chant and I think about where does the negativity in my life dwell? In my heart and mind? How are negative forces a manifestation of me?”

In his poem, “Sun of Jiyu Over a New Land,” President Ikeda stated that in order to win, “first we must break the hard shell of the lesser self.” How do I do that? Who cares! I must do it! I will do it. I am doing it with daimoku!

Daisaku and I finished chanting and agreed to meet the next Wednesday. We adopted a motto for our M.A.D. Daimoku campaign based on a recent installment of President Ikeda’s “Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra”:

“Without putting our lives into creating something from nothing, we cannot know genuine faith. The intense challenge to create value—to change loss into gain, bad into good, and baseness into beauty; this is the spirit of Soka. This is faith” (December 2000 *Living Buddhism*, p. 33). ☉

The Way of Youth



The following is an excerpt from the hit book *The Way of Youth*, a universally appealing collection of some of SGI President Ikeda’s words to young people. His insight reaches beyond all barriers of race, creed, culture and gender and gets to the heart of youth issues. Each one of over eighty topics is covered in a questions/answer format.

Never Giving Up, p. 107

What is defeat in life? It is not merely making a mistake; defeat means giving up on yourself in the midst of difficulty. What is true success in life? True success means winning in your battle with yourself. Those who persist in the pursuit of their dreams, no matter what the hurdles, are winners in life, for they have won over their weaknesses....

To read more or to find words of wisdom to other questions you may have asked yourself, *The Way of Youth* can be purchased from your favorite online or neighborhood bookstore.

PEER PRESSURE FINDING YOUR MISSION CHOOSING GOOD FRIENDS

MATERIAL REQUEST!

SEND IN YOUR STUFF

Our youth publication is only as strong as what you bring us. Poems, Articles, Pictures, Stories, Commentaries, Pulitzer Prize insights ...whatever you got, get it to us.

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By **Bobbie Stemple**,
SGI-USA Jr. High School Leader

The Time Is Now

“You’ve done well. You were able to plant the seed of Buddhahood in your friend’s heart. That’s a splendid thing.” So saying, you should praise and encourage one another, sharing one another’s joy as brothers and sisters. Touched by such a family-like atmosphere, more and more people will begin to take faith in true Buddhism. Love and peace are the lifeblood of a true home (SGI President Ikeda, *Faith Into Action*, p. 157).

A few weeks ago, we experienced another shooting tragedy in a high school. Once again, America watched the news in horror and fear. The question is what can we do to prevent this. Some say it is because of the availability of guns or drugs. This was the debate when I was in high school. And instead of getting any better, it’s actually worse.

But this isn’t about guns—it’s about people, people who don’t value human life. The only way we can change this is by changing ourselves and those around us.

I attended a performance group meeting the weekend after the shooting in Santee, Calif. In my discussion group, one student talked about a shooting and a suicide at her school. The students said that one reason why they didn’t end up attempting suicide or other violence is because they had friends with whom they were able to talk.

We are so fortunate to have the SGI where we have many friends who support us. I have been an SGI-USA member all of my life. I grew up in a city of 50,000 where there were two junior high schools and two high schools. All of my teachers and classmates knew that I was a Buddhist. I was told that being Buddhist was normal just because my mom was Japanese. But I was also teased at times.

When my classmates would come over for group projects, they would ring the bell and say, “Oommm.” Some people asked why I didn’t wear an orange robe and shave my head.

Because of this I was reluctant to tell other people that I was Buddhist. This hesitation continued well past high school.

In a recent article in the *World Tribune*, SGI-USA Women’s Leader Matilda Buck shared about being introduced to the SGI. I thought about the people I’ve met, but didn’t tell about Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. I can think of some of the cashiers at the stores I have shopped at or classmates in college who looked unhappy.

I chanted for them, but I didn’t have the courage to tell them about the Gohonzon. I felt that I didn’t know enough or didn’t have the perfect life to show them actual proof. There are many excuses I thought of, but looking back, maybe they were just waiting like Matilda, or my grandmother or the other millions of members around the world.

This is a perfect opportunity to share our organization and this practice. Victory Over Violence has never been so needed. This is an opportunity for me to grow and become a person who values life enough to share with other people our practice and our organization. This is my chance to make a difference.

SGI President Ikeda says, “We must never lose sight of the fact that a third millennium imbued with respect for the sanctity of life, free from nuclear arms and war and rich with the rainbow hues of diversity, will come into being only through the efforts of empowered and responsible citizens who don’t wait for someone else to take the initiative” (*Faith Into Action*, p. 287). ☉

It Is Up To Me

By **Irene Ishii, Seattle**

*My heart sheds tears
But not those of pain or anger
It sheds light, joyfully dancing petals
Like those of a cherry blossom tree*

*In Japan, the scattering of cherry blossom
petals is symbolized
As a deep sadness or loss
But when I see them scatter
I see the spring snow glistening in the sun’s
warm rays
They seem to waltz in the wind, floating
through the air*

*I see nothing sad about their dance
The scattering petals are like my hearts tears
of joy
The cherry blossom tree is living, still growing
As it sheds its petals,
It is welcoming a new season
Like confetti at a New Year’s celebration*

*My last memory of the Soka University cherry
blossoms*

*Will be the cherry blossom buds in late March
These buds represent my life
Cared for throughout the years
Watered and pruned by others
The cherry blossom tree
Finds strength to spread its branches
Finally!*

*It expresses itself through the emergence of its
precious buds*

*Leaving Japan, this bud is bursting to blossom
To show its beauty and inspire others
To lighten people’s hearts*

*When I set foot in Seattle
The cherry blossoms will already be in bloom
They are telling me it’s time
To open my life for kosen-rufu
It is time for me to be
“A single ever fresh flower
Dressing up our dreary world”
 (“Angels of Peace,” Daisaku Ikeda)*

*It is time for me to
“Walk the path of happy smiles*

*True to myself
Undefeated by anything
Striving in my own way!
For this path
I regard as my greatest treasure!”
 (“May the Fragrant Laurels of Happiness
Adorn Your Life,” Daisaku Ikeda)*

*Everything I have learned in Japan
Is contained in these buds
And as these buds come to life in Seattle
They awaken people’s spirit to the
mentor-disciple relationship
To the mission of kosen-rufu
This will be me in Seattle*

Who will bring hope in this new century?!
*I have been inspired by my mentor
I know now, with confidence
It is up to me!
I believe now, with strength
In my own capabilities*

*And I share now, deeply in my heart
The dream of my mentor
And I can now
Protect my mentor in America
And make kosen-rufu a reality*