

SEIZE *the Day*

SPECIAL YOUTH PULLOUT SECTION

Newly Appointed Youth District Leaders

In support of the SGI-USA's goal to appoint young men's and young women's leaders in every district, Seize the Day will be publishing the names of newly appointed district leaders as well as the names of their districts. This is a partial list and we apologize if we have missed anyone. If we missed you or someone you know, please contact your region youth leader. Listed below is the first round of district leaders. Look for other new appointments in future issues of Seize the Day.

Central Zone

Great America District	YMD	Alfred Garza
Waukegan District	YWD	Danielle Marshall

Pacific Northwest Zone

Diamond District	YMD	Atsushi Chiba
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Southern California Zone

Canyon District	Vice YWD	Vinessa Shaw
Century City District	YWD	Jill Myers
Evergreen District	YMD	Paul Niihara
Friendship Center District	YMD	George Artope
Laurel Canyon District	YWD	Kim Goff
Lotus District	YMD	Brian Mack
Magnolia District	YMD	Andrew Henderson

Marina District	YMD	Gary Deverya
Mar Vista District	YMD	Ryan Nilsson
Mt Wilson District	YMD	Yoshi Tanaka
Oxnard District	YMD	Arthur Harris
Rainbow District	YMD	Phillip Lopez
Renaissance District	YWD	Catherine Kozlowski
Renaissance District	Vice YWD	Lisa Humphrey
Silverbeach District	YMD	Shane Alexander
S. Redondo District	YMD	Joe Manitkajornkit
Spaulding District	YMD	Miguel Atwood-Ferguson
Spectrum District	Vice YWD	Heather Muir
Studio City District	YWD	Deborah Russell
Studio City District	Vice YWD	Ami Evans
Sunland District	YWD	Kelly Tucker
Sunrise District	YMD	Daniel Zaitso
Toluca Lake District	YWD	Tomoko Morgan
Toluca Lake District	YMD	Jimmy Morgan
Vista District	YMD	Kozo Akino
Vista District	YWD	Simbiat Hall
Young Lions District	YMD	Cory Joseph

THE GREENSBORO SIT-INS: How Four Young Men Decided To Make a Difference



Willie Mack, Los Angeles

The following is part two of a two-part essay. In part one, which appeared in the July 13 issue of Seize the Day, we learned how four students at North Carolina A&T State University banded together to protest Woolworth's policy of not serving black customers in their restaurant, instead directing them to the basement for service.

Great individuals fight abuses of authority. The truly strong do not lord it over the weak. People of genuine strength and courage battle against the powerful, the arrogant, the authoritarian, the evil and corrupt—all who look down on the people with contempt (SGI President Ikeda, *Faith Into Action*, p. 106).

By the end of the first day, the students had many supporters from all over North Carolina. Not only black, but white as well. The next day they went back to the Woolworth's counter, this time with enough people to shut the store down. These sit-ins, as they became known, grew throughout the city. Eventually every segregated

business in Greensboro was filled with protestors, both black and white. "It spread to places like the shopping centers, the drugstores in the shopping centers, the drive-ins...No place was going to be left untouched. The only criteria was that if it did not serve blacks, it was certainly going to be hit" (*My Soul is Rested*, by Howell Raines, p. 81).

Within the year, the students had desegregated every theatre and restaurant in Greensboro. What had started as a small group of four students had grown into a full-fledged movement for peace. These students were no different from any one else. In fact, after these sit-ins were over, they graduated and moved on to other pursuits. But for that one year, they had seen something they felt needed to be changed and acted to change it. They never lost sight of the fact that they were just people who wanted to make a difference. There was nothing for them to gain but justice and equal rights. Their youthful energy and enthusiasm made them feel responsible for society. It was a vision for a better future—not fame or fortune—that encouraged them to make a change.

As youth within the SGI, we too have a noble mission that we can only accomplish with courage and conviction. President Ikeda appeals to youth, "To realize this long-cherished dream of your esteemed predecessors, to establish a utopian world for all of humanity...that is your life-long mission" (July 9, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 1).

You're Never Too Young (or Experienced) To Learn



By Wendy DeSouza
SGI-USA Young Women's Leader

Recently, my sister showed me a pledge I wrote when I was 12 years old. I remember sitting down in front of my mom's blue typewriter to compose it. This is what I wrote:

I love the SGI because it's the greatest thing in the entire world. I think young women have a strong mission for kosen-rufu. We are going to win, win, win, win, win in daily life every single moment...I will strive for every goal and achieve it. Every step I take will be making an abundant cause for the future. I will never ever, ever, ever, ever neglect the practice. I will always study and remember that study is a part of the practice of true Buddhism. I will be a leader of the future and be very responsible.

How refreshing it was to read these words! Around that time I had been appointed a junior group leader, assigned to take care of more than 20 members. I didn't know what I was doing, nor did I feel qualified to encourage young women more than twice my age. I dropped the ball more than once. My men's and women's leaders in Santa Rosa, Calif., however, always wholeheartedly supported me and encouraged me to reach beyond my limitations.

While we were a bit bold in the 80s, what still holds true is the importance of giving opportunities for growth to young people in the district. Not every youth looks ready or able at first glance. Some youth members may not be very active, yet with the right encouragement and support, they would be inspired to challenge themselves. Of course, we have to also resist holding youth to our own standards or being critical of their mistakes. Sure, it's hard to move forward in appointing a youth leader sometimes based on their performance at this moment. Yet it is our challenge to see beyond the present and entrust youth with a mission as young disciples.

The greatest training I received as a youth leader was the encouragement to introduce my friends to Buddhism, teach them gongyo and care for them. Doing *shakubuku* was the greatest joy, and I remember it being the focus of every activity. It made me nervous, yet determined and excited. Of course, I also reminisce about the *shakubuku* cheers and songs—sometimes referred affectionately as “old school”—that I used to hear:

I've been doing shakubuuuuuu, all the live long day/I've been chanting daimokuuu just to get me on my way....

*Pardon me folks, but would you like to chant daimoku/
I've got my beads, and my butaicho can lead/This is the way, to change our heavy-duty karma/Overcome all our strife/And lead a happier life*

Shakubuku early in the morning, shakubuku late at night

AAO! (What does that mean, anyway?)

While we have changed our approach in accord with the times and our organization's evolution, I appreciate the joy and confidence that comes from introducing others to Buddhism that my leaders instilled in me from an early age.

A few months ago, I talked with a high school division member in Chicago who introduced his friend to the practice. When I saw them, they had just finished their Gajokai shift at the culture center. They both looked sharp in their neatly pressed shirts and ties. I was inspired how this youth member, Stanley Henderson, had not only introduced his friend to the practice, but had helped him take responsibility and develop as a leader.

Of course, junior high and high school students need support in making their studies a priority. But for their future growth and development, which affects their relationships, studies, extracurricular activities, etc., SGI leadership training in the district is the key. Appointing young men's and young women's district leaders, even with older, more experienced youth, requires sensitivity and care. In any case, entrusting youth in the district with responsibility—coupled with warm support and training—is a goal all of us can work toward as we prepare for the culture festival activities this year.

MATERIAL! REQUEST!

SEND
IN
YOUR
STUFF

HOW?

Our youth publication is only as strong as what you bring us. Poems, articles, pictures, stories, commentaries, ...whatever you got, get it to us.

Postal Mail:
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YOUTH *Study* AUGUST 2001

Securing a New Century



By Ken Saragosa
SGI-USA Vice Youth Leader

The following is the conclusion of a two-part essay about Nichiren Daishonin's "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land," which is written in a Q-and-A format. In it, a "traveler" seeks to understand from the "host" why his country was suffering so much.

Once there was a traveler who spoke these words in sorrow to his host...Famine and epidemics rage more fiercely than ever, beggars are everywhere in sight, and scenes of death fill our eyes. Corpses pile up in mounds like observation platforms, and dead bodies lie side by side like planks on a bridge...[W]hy is it that the world has already fallen into decline and that the laws of the state have come to an end? What is wrong? What error has been committed?

The host then spoke: I have been brooding alone upon this matter, indignant in my heart, but now that you have come, we can lament together. Let us discuss this question at length...

I have pondered the matter carefully with what limited resources I possess, and have looked a little at the scriptures for an answer. The people of today all turn their backs upon what is right; to a person, they give their allegiance to evil. This is the reason that the benevolent deities have abandoned the nation and departed together, that sages leave and do not return. And in their stead devils and demons come, and disasters and calamities occur. I cannot keep silent upon this matter. I cannot suppress my fears (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 6-7).

In the Japanese title of this writing, "Rissho Ankoku Ron," the characters for *rissho* literally mean to "establish true." If we think about "what error has been committed," it is—according to the host—that "the people of today all turn their backs upon what is right," and that the truth is not firmly established within society. But the place where Buddhism is to be established, is within the lives of individual people. *Rissho* means to establish the truth within our own life.

Therefore, *rissho* also includes the idea of propagation—of helping individual people establish the truth within their own lives. People may ask why we emphasize propagation so much, but it's because this is exactly what Nichiren Daishonin taught. This is based on his conviction that true improvement in society—real peace and security in the land—can only happen based on the inner transformation of the people.

Ankoku means "secure land." The land means the nation and the natural world. Through establishing the truth within our own lives, we impact both the social world—the world of human relationships and politics (friendships, family, community, government)—and also the natural world, the physical environment where we live.

You can see also how it relates to the concept of human revolution.

In the foreword to his novel *The Human Revolution*, SGI President Ikeda writes: "A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation, and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humanity."

The basis of every meaningful social change is human revolution, and when a single individual transforms his or her own life for the better, a step

is taken to improving a society, a nation, and all humanity.

If people are cynical and feel that how they live their lives doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things, or that there's nothing anyone can do to stop violence or war around the world, that view is directly opposite the perspective of Buddhism. The Daishonin's Buddhism teaches the fundamental relationship between how an individual lives life and how a society functions. Many of us have heard that "faith equals daily life." What this means is that efforts to change society are firmly based in efforts to develop ourselves from within—to do our own human revolution.

In the host's answer to the guest's first question, he says that he, too, has been thinking about why there is so much suffering. He concludes by saying, "I cannot keep silent on the matter. I cannot suppress my fears."

This is a powerful statement of the Daishonin's conviction, but it also expresses his sense of responsibility. It's not enough to believe something yourself; if you think it will help others or help society, then you ought to share it. This sense of mission he expresses here is one of the primary reasons why this writing is so important.

This essay, though written in 13th century Japan, is still meaningful in 21st century America. Though the age and culture is radically different, the relationship between misleading beliefs and problems in society are still relevant. In a way, this is not a particularly radical argument. It just means that we have created the world we live in. If the culture is shallow; if politics are corrupt; if there is no meaningful opportunity for people; and if the environment is being destroyed, we could just chalk it up to some kind of inevitable destiny, or we could say that the situation is what people have made it. We could also say that the situation in the world is one which each one of us can potentially change.

As we seek to apply Buddhist insight and wisdom in our own lives, our society and our communities, it is in accord with the same spirit of the essay "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land." Our efforts to promote education and cultural exchange, or to establish a culture of peace and non-violence—all of this is based on the conviction and passion the Daishonin expresses in this writing.

QUESTIONS for DISCUSSION

1. Can you think of examples or situations where how an individual lives his or her life might affect a community or a society?
2. When you hear phrases like "turn their back upon what is right," does this seem too exclusive to you? Why or why not?



Trailblazers!



By Keiko Ishii
Southern California
Zone Student
Division Leader

My Year of Total Victory

I was recently appointed the Southern California Zone Student Division leader. I hesitated to accept the opportunity because of my lack of confidence. Despite the wonderful support and encouragement my leaders offered me, I found myself recoiling. As I chanted about this matter, I recalled the amazing experience of a women's division member that would help me make the decision to accept this responsibility.

This woman was very poor and had three children, all of whom were disabled. Despite her struggles, she devoted her life to establish the foundation of the Soka Gakkai. She had no desire for status or praise. She fought day and night for kosen-rufu in order to reply to her mentor, SGI President Ikeda. People insulted her and called her a religious fanatic, but she never slackened in her resolve.

When I first read her experience, my heart was deeply moved by her sincerity, her seeking spirit and her selfless devotion to kosen-rufu. I felt immense appreciation for her experience and I chanted sincerely to become

a person who can protect the members who devote their lives to kosen-rufu. I determined that I would dedicate my life for the sake of the Law.

Although three years have passed since I first heard this experience, the memory of it constantly encourages me. Her story inspires me to expand my capacity to serve the members of the SGI. After deep reflection, I determined to accept the position and fully exert myself to learn from everyone and every opportunity. My hope is to grow with other student division members and become a capable individual who will be able to protect the members of the SGI.

How do I plan to realize these determinations? First, I will visit 150 student division members in Southern California this summer. I want to establish friendships with each student based on faith. Second, I will introduce one person to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism by the end of this year. Third, I will deepen my faith and engrave a better understanding of the mentor-disciple relationship based on these activities.

In his speech on May 21, SGI President Ikeda said: "The soul of the student division is initiative. The future lies in the student division" (June 15 *World Tribune*, p. 4). If that is so, I want to be the one who will take the initiative to reach out to student division members. He goes on to say, "We need to foster capable individuals—capable leaders, in particular, in order to protect the people from the

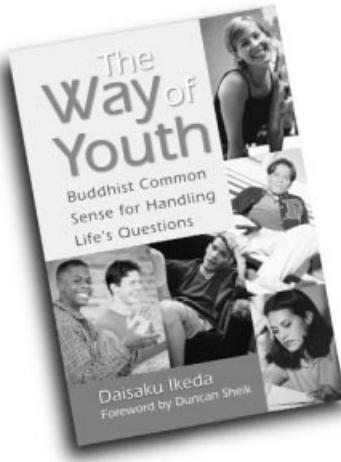
corrupt, cruel nature of authority" (June 15 *World Tribune*, p. 4).

Colleges and universities provide great educational opportunities, but where can we have opportunities to train and deepen our faith? The answer lies in SGI activities such as the Student Division Conference to be held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center from August 2–5. This FNCC conference will give us a chance to deepen our faith, develop our character and become even more capable individuals. Many students who went to this conference last year have established strong ties with new students from all over the nation and have empowered themselves to become the core of the student division in their respective areas.

I know that some of us have financial problems, some may have schedule conflicts and some of us just hesitate to immerse ourselves in a new environment. But I really don't want anyone, including myself, to miss this opportunity. Let's challenge ourselves to participate so that we can develop together, grow together and create a wave of fortune together.

Let's go back to the Gohonzon and start with deep prayers while always reminding ourselves of the Daishonin's words: "Spur yourself to muster the power of faith.... Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1001).

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 80 topics is covered in a question and answer format.

Understanding Equality, page 157

Unless we build a society that regards human beings not as means to a goal but as the goal itself, we will remain forever deadlocked in inequality, unhappiness and violence—what Buddhism terms a world of animality, where the strong prey upon the weak. We will simply repeat the same patterns.

It is vital that we teach the citizens of all nations to see themselves and others first and foremost as human beings. We have to raise people's awareness of human rights through education. Our schools must teach human rights, our religions must teach human rights and our governments must respect human rights.

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.