

**SPECIAL YOUTH
PULLOUT SECTION**

SEIZE The Day

The 50th Anniversary of the Young Men's and Young Women's Divisions



Steve Mortan
SGI-USA Young Men's Leader

Congratulations on the 50th anniversary of the young men's division! It is amazing to be celebrating the establishment of the YMD at the beginning of the second set of seven bells and it is a great benefit to be able to fight for kosen-rufu with SGI President Ikeda. A friend of mine pointed out that if we

were born 20 years later or 20 years earlier, we would

not have the opportunity to be a young man at this important time.

Earlier this year, SGI General Director Eiichi Wada talked extensively about young women. He shared President Ikeda's vision that this is the Century of Women. Mr. Wada did not talk much about young men. I felt frustrated about this and after chanting, I came to the conclusion that this was a clear message that it's time for young men to create a new history.

I began to hold dialogues with young men all over the country and learned how they were seeking to develop their lives. Inspired by these young men, I made a determination to become a disciple in training. I began to look at every aspect of my life and push myself. I went back to the bread and butter of the YMD—the Gajokai and the Soka Group. With a new resolve to live with the true spirit of these training groups, I felt reinvigorated.

When I opened my heart to receiving training, I noticed that my life began to grow. At this point, it became clear that President Ikeda is not only my mentor, but also the greatest example of a YMD member. As I tried to follow his example, many of my shortcomings started to appear. I determined more than ever to develop myself. When I advanced with this spirit, I was able to accomplish more. The mentor-disciple relationship came alive in my life, and it was a joyful experience.

When President Ikeda was in his 20s, he visited 8,000 members in one year, exerting himself to reach out to each person. He was determined to help those who were suffering the most. Inspired by this, I made a determination to visit 500 young men by July 11. I met with 215 young men by that date, but I did not give up. I renewed my determination to keep advancing toward my goal and accomplish it no matter what.

As I met these wonderful young men from all over the country, I prayed with one thought in my mind: what can I do to encourage President Ikeda's sons in America? But actually, it was me who gained something from those 215 young men. Each one taught me something unique and helped me understand and change my own life.

What is the mission of the YMD in the 21st century? What is our expectation for the future? I firmly believe that it is all found in the President Ikeda's latest poem: "O the Joyous Dance of Youth!"

*Nichiren Daishonin tells us:
"At first only Nichiren
Chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo,
But then two, three, and a
hundred followed,*

("YMD..." continued on Page B)



Wendy DeSouza
SGI-USA Young Women's Leader

Congratulations on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the young women's division! I would like to offer the following poem to all of you in recognition of your sincere efforts, as well as the efforts of the generations that came before us. Please accept it as a small token of my deepest appreciation.

Young Women

Hearts fully opened

No need for pomp or glory that fades with time

No need for envy, rather students of uncovering the beauty

That is jiyu

The only comparison is how we were yesterday—

*"When you look at those of superior capacity,
do not disparage yourself. . .*

*Conversely, when you compare
yourself with persons of inferior capacity,
do not be arrogant and overproud"*

(The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 62).

Our vows may seem

Like an angry sea of unfulfilled promises

Yet they are the placid waves

Keeping us afloat till the sun breaks

Let's be stubborn about being victorious!

Celebrate your own beauty, your profound mission

And the universe laughs with you, cries with you

The path of mentor and disciple is sometimes a lonely road

With scorching desert suns

Parched and prickly cactuses

Or maybe torrential rains

Drowning in today's defeat

There may be derelicts that try and divert us

Posing as the real thing

But we are not fooled

We already possess a connection to the mentor

We already possess a profound understanding

We already have the heart to lead others to happiness

"Single-mindedly chant

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

And urge others to do the same;

That will remain as the only memory of your present life

In this human world" (WND, 64).

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

Young Men's Conference 2001



Everything Starts With You!
Our Mission as Young Men in the 21st Century

By Ian Taylor and Jimmy Morgan, Los Angeles

Renewed spirit of training: What does this mean? This was the question on the minds of the 121 young men who attended the first Young Men's Conference of the new millennium, held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center July 5-8. With the idea, "Everything starts with you! Our Mission as Young Men in the 21st Century," these young men were greeted by the bright Florida sun with smiles on their faces and determination in their hearts. Many of them met with tremendous difficulty and a myriad of obstacles before leaving for the FNCC.

mentor, the Gohonzon and sincerity. He also said that the three qualities of a leader are a sense of taking full responsibility, a sense of mission and a sense of challenge. He challenged the young men to not only take full responsibility for their lives and kosen-rufu, but also to find other young men to foster and train.

"Soka Spirit: Standing Up Against Injustice" was presented by the young men of Central Zone. It started out with a skit based on *The Late Show With David Letterman*, and broke into small discussion groups. The responses from these groups were then compiled and
(*"YMD Conference..." continued on Page D*)

(*"YMD ..." continued from Page A*)

*Chanting and teaching others.
Propagation will unfold this way
In the future as well.
Does this not signify
'Emerging from the earth'?"*
(The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 385)

*Now, in this intense struggle
Of the new century,
The next generation
Of the young men's division
Has "emerged from the earth"
And begun to shine.
O the fresh energy
Of this great multitude!
O their joyous dance,
Which we have eagerly anticipated!*
(July 20 World Tribune, p. 7)

It is clear that our mission as young men is to spearhead propagation as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Just as President Ikeda led each campaign, we must take the lead in propagation. Let's seek even more training and become the most dependable young men. ☉

Declaration of the SGI-USA Young Men's Division for the 21st Century

By Eddie Chacon, San Diego

The following poem was written in commemoration of the 2001 Florida Nature and Culture Center Young Men's Conference.

*We are the strength of the pride
Young Lions whose roars are cries for justice
We are an army of generals
Ferocious guardians of the Mystic Law
Protectors of the voice-bearers that have emerged from
the earth
Giving our very lives to protect the children of the
Buddha
We wage battle against our own fundamental
darkness.
Employing no strategy other than the Lotus Sutra
We are arrows shot straight and true by the archer
that is our mentor
Guided by the light of the Lotus Sutra
Arrows that pierce the very hearts of the devils that
dwell in their temples of suffering and pain
Devils who lie to the world of their benevolence and
truth
Masters of deception lead by the shadow housed in the
heart of Mount Fuji
Thieves of life who live in temples that were once the
battlegrounds for the fight for kosen-rufu
Temples that are now nothing more than graveyards*

*haunted by wraiths that know neither what they are,
nor what they once were
Shadows who mock the men of true faith that have
come before us*

*We are a nation of young kings
Benevolent and just, with the truest sense of mission
and purpose
We will grind ourselves to dust, to fulfill that which is
our mentor's dream
Burning like a white hot flame, consumed by the fire
that is the mark of a life lived with purpose
Even as we burn down to the very core of our beings,
until nothing remains but white hot ash, we shall rise
like the phoenix
Burning so brilliant and wondrous that we blind
the sun
We will walk into hell itself and make it the Buddha
land
We abide neither fear in our hearts nor doubt in our
minds, because these are the currencies of the coward
We refuse to wear the cloak of hate or tread the path of
ignorance
We will illuminate the way before us with the bril-
liance of our own enlightenment
We will smash the temples of pain and deception that
seek to suffocate the hearts and spirits of our brothers
and sisters*

(*"Poem..." continued on Page D*)



Impressions From the Young Women's Conference



Taeko Kato, Reno, Nev.

I went to the FNCC because I was looking for encouragement or something that would make me happy. I have been feeling down for awhile and I was frustrated because I didn't know why. Through this conference, I learned that it was my lack of compassion that made me arrogant, selfish and unhappy. From now on, I am determined to change my perspective 180 degrees to be able to have unconditional compassion for everyone I meet, because this is the only way to be truly happy. ☀

Mlene K. Gabouty, Seattle

This was my very first time attending a young women's conference at the FNCC, and my experience helped me realize how global Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is. I had the benefit of being a facilitator for one of the small group discussions. Not only were there young women from across the nation in the group, but also from Venezuela and Panama. It really touched my heart to meet members from all around the world practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism, and that we are all on the same path fighting with SGI President Ikeda's spirit for kosen-rufu. I had one of the greatest experiences at the FNCC and I look forward to next year's conference. ☀

Chelsea Parkhurst, Santa Rosa, Calif.

The young women at the conference encouraged me so much. There were many talented, amazing women who have overcome great obstacles with honesty and courage. They shared their stories of pain, depression, low self-esteem and suffering, and how, through this practice, they have grown into beautiful flowers of wisdom. SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck encouraged me with her personal experiences and openness. Being at the FNCC with my sisters in faith has touched me so deeply. I can't wait to come back! ☀

("YWD ..." continued from Page A)

*Uncompromised prayer, uncompromised dream
Unquenchable seeking spirit for training
A growing compassion for others, learning from the members
A desire to unite even strange bedfellows*

*A woman poet once said,
"Poetry is not a luxury"
Our daily life must be lived with passion and strenuous effort
Taking care of our health is not a luxury*

*If violent winds have swept through you
If you have been robbed of your life
Take back your life with determined prayer
Sensei states:
"If you were a victim of violence, please remember that
no matter what, your value as an individual will never change."
"... those who have suffered the most
or who have been saddened the most can become the happiest."
"Never let your suffering cause you to desert your true self"
(The Way of Youth, pp. 152-153).*

*No matter your past
No matter your race, nationality, your personal economy
Your sexual orientation
What you think you can or cannot do
You are a Buddha, a disciple*

I humbly salute you for your courage. ☀

(“YMD Conference...” continued from Page B)

the following determinations resulted: 1) We will protect our mentor in life, President Ikeda, no matter what. 2) We will protect our organization and fellow members. 3) We will do whatever we can to assure victory in the Soka Spirit movement.

“Leadership: Seeking Spirit and Unity,” was presented by Southern California Zone. Even though it was late at night, everyone left with an energized life-condition. There was a definite feeling of unity and a mutual spirit to seek training.

Later, there was a special training meeting held with SGI-USA Gajokai Leader Eric Freedman, Steve Mortan and James Herrmann. Over half of the participants joined, even though it was voluntary. It was a Q-and-A session relating to the true spirit of working behind-the-scenes. In this meeting, the “bar was raised” for the participants, who left with fresh determinations and an understanding of the real aspect of participating in Soka Group and Gajokai.

The final session, “*Shakubuku*: A Way of Life” presented by Northern California Zone, started off with experiences about propagating Buddhism. James Herrmann encouraged everyone to introduce one person to Buddhism by the end of the year. This session ended with

each participant having a new realization of what it means to propagate this Buddhism as a young man in America.

The preliminaries for the National YMD Basketball Competition were held as well. The basketball competition was a success. At the end, it boiled down to the Florida Region team and Atlanta Region team. Florida stole the show and the trophy, winning by two points. Phillip Davis, Norb Logsdon and Louis Logsdon of the Florida Region team are the national three on three basketball champions for 2001. Congratulations, guys!

The evening closed with a talent show, which included original music, a rhythmic rapper, a body builder and a live dance performance of “Vogue,” among other performances.

Sunday was the end of the conference, and with the impressions that were shared, it was clear that everyone had a tremendous breakthrough and a renewed spirit to seek training. Paul Shaffer walked the grounds sharing everything he could with everyone, even the birds and fish saying that he was sure that even those animals would be reborn as human beings fighting for kosen-rufu. Mike Fujie feels that not only was this the most incredible conference he has been to, but that “this is about a new chapter in the kosen-rufu movement.”



2001 Basketball Champions (in white Jax T-shirts) together with friends.

(“Poem...” continued from Page B)

*Even as we free our brothers and sisters from the shackles of despair, we will burn away the shadows of darkness that seek to take root in our own souls
We will consume suffering even as it seeks to consume the world and it will be extinguished like a candle's flame before the hurricane that is the roar of our prayers
Struggles are fuel for the flame of our passion
The obstacle before us and the sufferings we endure on the path of Buddhahood are offerings from the King Devil himself to our enlightenment*

*The fortress of our ichinen is impenetrable
Even the fiercest tempest cannot force us from our course of navigation
The raging winds that call themselves destiny seek to toss and buffet us about to no avail
We Young Lions shall stand fast against any storm
Even in those moments when we cannot see the path before us, the Lotus Sutra and our mentor's heart show us the way
We will never become lost because the vision of who we are and who we will become is grounded in the core of our being from time without beginning
We will never lose hope nor courage because every breath is victory itself
We are Young Lions whose hearts burn with the desire to see all those manifest their true greatness
We are as the thunder that rolls across the mountains and echoes in the valleys and into the hearts and minds of all who crave justice and peace*

*Revolution is our name
Hot blooded and full of rage, we stand defiant of injustice and oppression
But we fight not with fists of violence nor stones of hate*

*Our weapon is the razor sharp sword of truth, our shield is indestructible compassion, our power is in our prayer
We are the vanguard of the warriors of peace
Shock troops of a new age where compassion replaces anger and despair gives way to hope
We are unbothered and unfazed by the venomous fangs of critics that talk but do not act
Like warriors that live and fight on the frontlines, we confront evil without fear and without hesitation, in the very heart of darkness itself
Our mission and our voices reach those who have lost their way in this saha world
We honor our mothers and fathers in faith not with material gifts but with the brilliant jewels our lives have become*

*Precious mentor, please never fear!
We will never forsake you!
We will never abandon you!
Your wait is over
The Lions you seek are here and we raise our voices in unity
You ask who will protect the children of the Buddha?
We roar, “we will!” And pledge our very lives
Every demon that seeks to prey upon the children of the Buddha will not find helpless lambs
No! They will face fierce Young Lions that will stand fast and unshaken
Precious mentor!
If we had been there that day, when the enemies of the Buddha through deception and guile corrupted the minds of the voice-bearers
We would have deafened you with our praise
You would have seen a hall full of Lions
We scream our rage at the injustice done to you*

*Never will you have to fear
Your sons will rise to protect you
As you have protected us*

*So long as our hearts pump our life's blood
So long as breath passes our lips, we shall never stop
We shall be as relentless and awesome as the waves that crash upon the shore
Never stopping in our cadence toward making our Mentor's dream a reality
We are as the drops of water that compose the wave, countless and unstoppable when so united
We will never retreat
We will never give ground
We will die before we are defeated
We will live free from the yoke of suffering and injustice or not at all
We are sons guided by a father who has given blood, sweat and tears only to see us grow strong in spirit, bold in action, steadfast in faith and vigilant in heart
We will be the first to seek hardship and struggle for they are the fire by which we will purify our lives
Even the smallest among us can crush the darkness that dwells within us all
Not one of us will fail because we vow to be brothers who shall always know each other's hearts and minds, never allowing suffering to defeat any of us
Our lives will shine like beacons to those who are lost*

*Even when it appears that the battle is at an end
We will never stop fighting
Because the true revolution occurs in our own hearts and minds from moment to moment
We promise to always advance from this lifetime to the infinite future united.*