

SPECIAL YOUTH
PULLOUT SECTION

SEIZE the Day

The Entire World Is Moving Forward

By Patricia Lomden, 16 years old,
Philadelphia

The following essay was written by Patricia Lomden as a personal response to the tragedies of Sept. 11. Her article does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Seize the Day or the SGI-USA.



If I had to write about anything, I guess it should be about Sept. 11, 2001.

It's time to write this date in every textbook because this is history.

No doubt many people are having nightmares about Sept. 11. No doubt there are those who will not be able to sleep because of that day. They fear for their lives. Who can blame them?

It seems that every generation has a special event that is burned in their minds forever. My parents had the Kennedy assassination. My grandparents had Pearl Harbor. They can probably remember where they were, what they were doing and how they felt at the time they found out about it.

How did I feel when I saw the World Trade Center towers looking like smoke stacks while attending my English class? I feel as if my mission has been laid out in front of me. I know that I can use my Buddhist practice to change this horrible situation. I chant for the perfect opportunity to reach out to others. When I chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, I feel hopeful and courageous. My deep potential comes out and I feel confident of the humanity in other people.

What happened to the World Trade Center and the Pentagon was the result of hate in someone's heart. I have spent my whole life fighting to stop this hate because I am angered at how people disrespect one another. I try to encourage others to apply alternative means of taking action. Peace! Peace! Always peace! When people choose to ignore violence or think it is impossible to end, then it gets bigger. There is pain in my heart for those families who lost loved ones on the planes and in the buildings. The sadness is like a sickness.

When I chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, I feel hopeful and courageous. My deep potential comes out and I feel confident of the humanity in other people.

I can feel it eating away at my heart and trying to nibble at my hope. But we should not feel there's nothing we can do. It's time to stop fooling ourselves. We must stop contradicting our potential. There is so much each of us can do.

We can change how we live our lives. Change begins at home, in our communities, our schools. We can have a meaningful dialogue with someone we do not know well. We can try to understand how that person thinks and what they feel. Think how wonderful it is if each of us can open our minds to another point of view. All human beings are connected.

SGI President Ikeda writes about the merits of inter-faith dialogue in *The New Human Revolution*: "When conflicting political and social interests compound religious differences, the problem only gets more complicated. I think dialogue is essential, but I am talking about dialogue among human beings, dialogue that transcends religious distinctions.

"In other words, I think the most important thing is, as fellow citizens, as fellow human beings, to first of all frankly discuss issues of common interest. And from there to build a base of shared empathy" (Feb. 4, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 11).

Are our eyes and ears open? Has this event beaten us enough to let us rise and be willing to listen to someone else? Let's make things better! As recent events have shown, it's easier to declare war than it is to say "Good morning" with a smile to someone we don't like. Why not make that little effort? Is it really so hard now that we

realize life is a bit more precious than we thought?

When I heard people talk of America retaliating, I made a commitment that we will retaliate. We will have a major retaliation where others will jump for joy that innocent human beings didn't just die for nothing. This retaliation will put some substance behind all the American flags I have been seeing. This retaliation will not be one of guns and bombs and death. It will be one of life. It will be one of peace and dialogue. Think of it: a retaliation of peace!

I have studied America's history from the the Bill of

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Together, We Will Win

By Chelsea Parkhurst, Santa Rosa, Calif.

Dedicated to the members of the young women's division.

Together, with our heads held high and our hearts open

We will lead the way into the age of humanity.

Sisters of faith, have courage!

We are strong and proud.

We will overcome all our sufferings

This is our mission.

United, with our eyes shining

Teaching others

Sharing our lives

Deepening our bonds of friendship

We spread our wings.

Angels of peace soaring into the clear blue skies

Standing up, struggling to overcome our fundamental darkness

Uncovering the diamond within

We can do it!

We will win!

Newly Appointed Youth District Leaders

In an ongoing effort to support the SGI-USA's goal to appoint young men's and young women's leaders in every district, *Seize the Day* will continue publishing the names of newly appointed district leaders and their districts.

As SGI President Ikeda states: "Let us care for and nurture the members of the youth and future divisions. My prayer is that each of you will foster your juniors to become

even more capable than yourself, while striving ceaselessly for your own self-improvement so that you may bring your life to a wonderful completion" (*Faith Into Action*, p. 192).

Below 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. Look for other new appointments in future issues of *Seize the Day*. ●

Central Zone

Arlington Heights District	YMD	Andrew Sawada
Battle Creek District	YMD	Masashi Kawakami
Blossom District	YMD	Kian-Song Lim
City Front District	YWD	Ashley Stone
E. Grand Rapids District	YWD	Ritu Bajaj
East Lansing District	Vice YWD	Erica Manning
Elk Grove District	YMD	Dean Su
Forest Glen District	YWD	Tukta Olarnvoraruth
Goshen District	YMD	Damu Ledbetter
Humboldt Park District	YWD	Ana Arevalo
Lincoln Square District	YWD	Pam Saul
Lincoln Square District	YMD	Ivan Brunetti
Lion King District	YMD	Hyunsik Cho
Lion King District	Vice YMD	Yoshinori Fujimoto
Museum District	YWD	Cynthia Simms
Oak Park District	YWD	Michelle Burns
River District	YWD	Karla Meier
Rogers Park District	YWD	Nadia Oussenko
Rogers Park District	YMD	Tomoki Janssen
Rogers Park District	Vice YMD	Masao Kitsuya
Royal Oak District	YMD	Nori Shirakabe
Royal Oak District	Vice YMD	Ravi Kumar
University-B District	YMD	Zane Spriggs
West Oakland District	YWD	Noriko Itano
Wheaton District	YWD	Aya Sato

Northeastern Zone

Academy District	YWD	Nicolette Sweeney
Bretton Hall District	YMD	Julian Kurita
Brooklyn Heights South	YMD	Vincent McCloskey
Brooklyn Waterfront District	YMD	Brian McCloskey
Carnegie Hall District	YMD	Kiyoshi Sasaki
Carnegie Hall District	YWD	Miyuki Tajonera
City College District	YWD	Ebony Roundtree
Forest Hills District	YWD	Hanako Nishioka
Fresh Meadows District	YWD	Yin Tin Low
Friendship District	YWD	Dahlia Ross-Kupiz
Fulton West District	YMD	John Fredericks
Gramercy Park District	YMD	Robert Russell
Kew Gardens District	YWD	Sureeporn Sangvanpetch
Montclair District	YMD	Leonard Gaiter
Northshore District	YMD	Kevin Maher
Park Avenue South District	YWD	Siri Kitcharayoshin
Park Slope North District	YWD	Mizue Kaneko
Pleasant Valley District	YMD	Jamie Manerichio
Prospect Heights District	YWD	Flur Clackson
Radio City District	YWD	Anne McKay
Rego Park District	YWD	Julia Kozlayunsky
South Bergen District	YWD	Afreeka Phillips
Strivers Row District	YMD	Delano Davidson
Sutton/Beekman District	YWD	Yunee Han
Tri County District	YMD	Nobu Hirano

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Rights to the Civil Rights Movement. I have studied its birth. On Sept. 11, America seemed to die, to collapse in agony, for one morning. And then it was born again in people's hearts. It was born again in people's songs, in their tears.

This cycle of birth, death and renewal is not uncommon in the world. A flower is born from a seed.

This flower grows, smelling ever so sweet. Then one day it withers and dies. Its leaves crumble and it folds into itself.

As we know, this is not the end of this flower.

Its seeds, which were always waiting to fall among its petals, drop to the ground and wait for rain. Among the dust and decay of their mother, the seeds come to life and grow ten more flowers, even more beautiful than the one before.

Can we renew ourselves amidst the dust and decay of the World Trade Center? Can we build up from the rubble and even the fear that others have caused? Just like a person, a country must face and change its problems from within. External forces are not the only problems we have. Inside, America needs a human revolution, a renewal, a rebirth, unlike any other before!

War is savage.

But the truth is that there are people who dream of revenge. How can we win over these terrorists without grinding our teeth and fighting, killing them?

We first must listen to them. Yes.

We then must understand them. Yes.

We then must speak to them. Yes.

We then must let them understand us.

Yes.

We all must have a goal, a common one, the whole time. Yes.

We must achieve it. Yes.

Peace.

Doesn't war cause terror? Most human beings are afraid of death when they are faced with it. Aren't all people who kill, terrorists?

I am very afraid of what war will do, what war is doing. War is a sign of weakness. It is a weakness of someone who gives up when they are not able to make

someone else listen and understand.

Yes, working for peace takes effort.

How much effort did it take for me to write this article? How much effort did it take for you to read my words? How much effort will it take for each of us to change someone's life just by saying, "Don't worry, I can help you make things better"?

We are living out a drama. But the thing is, we don't know we hold the pen. No one above or below us has the power over our destiny. Nothing outside of myself tells me I cannot change a nation with the growth of my own life. Do you see me? I am the epitome of youth and justice! I am the symbol of youthful passion and ideas! I am the embodiment of respect and humility to the older generation! Look at the big picture because it is getting awfully smaller each day.

I absolutely need to win in making people understand each other. This should be everybody's job. No excuses. I'll do anything. I'll write poems, speeches and songs and walk with the lonely crowd. I will change people's lives.

They say America, possibly the world, will never be the same after Sept. 11. That's right! A door has opened for things to get better. Things will change! Everything will be different! It might not seem like things are changing right away, but I can feel myself moving forward. When I know I am improving my own life, I know, somehow, that the entire world is moving forward.

After that day, my will and courage have become stronger. My hope has grown. My compassion for others

is flourishing. My dreams are soaring higher than any skyscraper there ever was. My focus is my mission. My eyes see

more. Oh, yes! Things will change! Where buildings have collapsed and bodies have breathed their last breath, new pillars of wisdom and peace will be built on the foundation. Those people have not died in vain. Look at the cause they made just by being regular people who were victims.

These are the times when artists are born. These are the times when human revolution springs forth from every individual like a fountain!

Believe me, Sept. 11, 2001, will never be forgotten. But neither will the days thereafter. ●

I know I can use my Buddhist practice to change this horrible situation. I chant for the perfect opportunity to reach out to others.

Inside, America needs a human revolution, a renewal, a rebirth, unlike any other before!

Trailblazers!



By **Maggie Eisenberg**
San Francisco

Making an Impact Through Listening

The morning of Sept. 11, I awoke to the shocking sounds of live radio coverage in New York after the second tower of the World Trade Center was hit. I went to an early morning constitutional law class right before the school was shut down. My professor arrived a few minutes late, thanked us for showing up, said that what just happened would change our lives forever, and that he thought we should all go home and be with our friends and families as he did not feel a lecture on the Constitution was relevant under the circumstances. I spent the next few hours with a classmate, watching television and trying to digest what I was seeing. We talked at length about how deeply upsetting it all was, and when she left I sat down to chant. A couple of days later, when I saw my friend again, she told me how glad she had been to spend those few hours with me because she

respected my opinions and appreciated my ability to listen.

Listening is one of the most important, yet often overlooked elements of dialogue. Without listening, there can be no true exchange. Some time ago, I noticed that sometimes when I talked to people, I listened passively. I heard what they were saying to me, but I did not really take it in and think about it. My responses at those times were mechanical and shallow, or sometimes I did not even know what to say because I was not truly listening. Sometimes it was that I was preoccupied with other things. But I think I was actually so self-conscious and worried about what I should say, that I was unable to take in other people's lives and what they were saying to me.

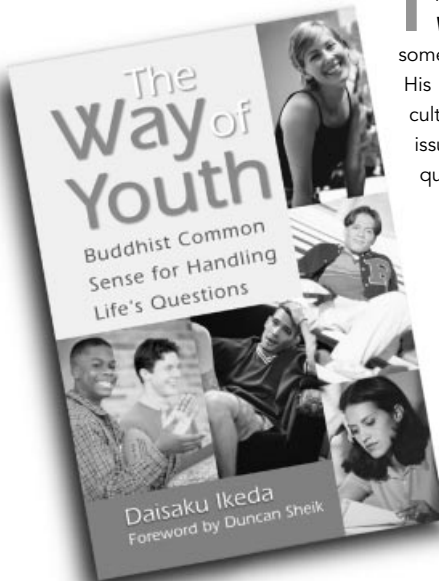
When we were preparing for the Northern California Zone Family Youth Festival, one young women's division activity group leader made a simple yet profound observation. She expressed her concern that several of us were getting so caught up in the logistics of the festi-

val that we were forgetting to really talk to each other. She noticed that she had been saying to people, "How are you?" and not really listening or even waiting for a response. Or if the person's response was, "Fine," she would just leave it at that instead of making sure that person really was fine.

"What is the most important point in conducting dialogue? It is to be a good listener. Though seemingly simple, listening well is actually quite difficult. The ancient Greek philosopher Zeno said, 'Two ears to one tongue, therefore hear twice as much as you speak'" (SGI President Ikeda, *Faith Into Action*, p. 184). Listening is the only real way to share this Buddhism with others. No matter how profound one's words are, or how eloquently she can explain the amazing philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, people will not want to listen to her if she does not listen to them. The only way to touch a person's life, and to make an impact, is first to listen to that person.

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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 questions and answer format.

Seeing Beyond Faults, p. 128

People who are critical of themselves often worry about this [their faults]—it's a sign of a sincere, praiseworthy character.

It's difficult to see ourselves objectively. But, remember, no one has only faults or only merits. We all have a mixture of both. Therefore, we should strive to develop and polish our positive attributes. As we do, our shortcomings will fade until they are no longer apparent.

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.

MATERIAL REQUEST!

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