



EXPERIENCE

Through his Buddhist practice, Shaye Elliot turns his back on drugs.

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SGI-USA Women Sponsor Historic Peace Conference

In this issue, we have full coverage of the groundbreaking 'Imagine Peace' Conference sponsored by SGI-USA women in the Mid-Atlantic Zone. More than 2,500 people gathered at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., for lectures and workshops on women initiating peace.



Photo by PHIL ROSENBERG

By CAROL CHASTANG

WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENT

More than 2,500 women of varying races, religious backgrounds, nationalities and political perspectives gathered on Feb. 25 at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., to exchange ideas and develop relationships aimed at rebuilding societies, resolving conflicts and making peace.

Growing out of an idea to create a vehicle for women to take action for peace, the "Imagine Peace" Conference was presented by SGI-USA and sponsored by three departments of the World Bank, two departments of The American University, the Center for Visionary Leadership and the United Nations Association, National Capital Area. It brought together community activists, academics and women from diverse backgrounds who want to find ways to create a more peaceful society.

The conference was originally conceived and planned through grassroots participation by women members of SGI-USA who wanted to find a way to communicate their desire for peace. Jean Rosenberg, one of the conference organizers, commented, "This conference was an opportunity for women to realize the tremendous potential they possess as agents of change."

The diversity of the attendees added to the richness of the discussion, said Nat Coletta of the World Bank Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit. "When you

bring people together to share experiences, you learn from each other and realize we're all the same and want the same things for our children," Coletta said. "There's a lot more that bonds us than divides us, and that's a really important part of a meeting like this."

Workshops covering topics like "Peace Perspectives — Views from Diverse Faith Traditions," "Building Global Economic Justice" and "Resolving Conflict: Communication as a First Step" were among 41 sessions presented by experts in their respective fields, held simultaneously throughout the day.

Four "Collaborative Dialogues for Change" were also held using the Earth Charter as a framework, on topics ranging from women's efforts to build peace in the Middle East to building a safe environment for women.

Dr. Hazel Henderson, environmental economist, futurist and author, called for a change in the "military industrial complex. Instead of wasting re-



Women celebrate the opening of the 'Imagine Peace' Conference, held Feb. 25 at the World Bank in Washington, D.C.

sources, that [institution] could be directed towards human development. People do not want more weapons. We want education, clean water, healthcare, adequate food and shelter."

Other keynote speakers included Ivonne A-Baki, Ecuadorian Ambassador to the United States, and Dr. Corann Okorodudu, president of the Division of Peace Psychology for the American Psychological Association and the APA's representative to the United Nations.

A "Peace Performance Extravaganza" was held in the World Bank's atrium during a two-hour break. Performances

included an opera aria, Native American dance, Korean and African drummers and a song titled "Imagine Peace," written especially for the conference and performed by a 60-voice chorus of men and women. Displays of sculpture, photographs and paintings, and a film festival rounded out the artists' contribution.

Because women are deeply aware of the work involved in creating and nurturing life, said Jane Hurst, women will become the best peacemakers. "This conference is not just for the self, and it's not just coalition building," added Hurst, a professor of philosophy and re-

ligion at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. "Here we have this group of women working with a vision. They are just doing it — taking steps to create peace — and like ripples in the water, this vision will spread out to the rest of society."

The "Imagine Peace" dialogue has begun and continues. For comments or ideas for future events, go to <http://peace-conference.homestead.com>.

Please see pages 6, 7 and 12 for more on the conference.

Robin Meader, Washington, D.C., bureau chief, contributed to this article.

What's Happiness Got To Do With It?

WORDS To WIN By

By KATHLEEN OLESKY
NORTHEASTERN ZONE
VICE WOMEN'S LEADER

From 'Happiness in This World,'
The Writings of Nichiren Dai-
shonin, pp. 681-82.

There is no true happiness for human beings other than chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. The sutra reads, "...where living beings enjoy themselves at ease." How could this passage mean anything but the boundless joy of the Law? Surely you are included among the "living beings." "Where" means Jambudvipa, and Japan lies within Jambudvipa. Could "enjoy themselves at ease" mean anything but that both our bodies and minds, lives and environments, are entities of three thousand realms in a single moment of life and Buddhas of limitless joy? There is no true happiness other than upholding faith in the Lotus Sutra. This is what is meant by "peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in



future existences." Though worldly troubles may arise, never let them disturb you. No one can avoid problems, not even sages or worthies. (WND, 681)

There is no true happiness for human beings other than chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo" corresponds to one of the Soka Gakkai's eternal guidelines that second president Josei Toda established: "faith to enable each person to become happy." In this guideline and the above letter, we see a central principle of Nichiren Daishonin's philosophy — Buddhism exists solely for the people's happiness.

Our society tends to associate the word *happiness* with pleasurable activities, recreation, living a trouble-free existence, etc. While Buddhism does not negate the pursuit of pleasure or tranquility, it cautions us that they are fundamentally fleeting. They constitute nothing more than relative, temporary happiness.

When the Daishonin says that "there is no true happiness for human beings other than chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo," he is pointing to absolute, lasting happiness — a state of life in which we can always enjoy ourselves and feel at ease under the most adverse conditions.

"Worldly troubles" arise precisely when we strive to improve our lives in pursuit of a great goal. Whenever we truly advance — in any arena of life — we meet with resistance. The more we accelerate, the more resistance we naturally generate.

Achieving our goals and aspirations thus requires strong effort to change our circumstances. It requires endurance, consistent prayer and a positive attitude about the challenges we face.

True happiness actually has nothing to do with leading a problem-free life. "No one can avoid problems, not even sages or worthies," as the Daishonin points out. True happiness lies instead in developing an unshakable life-condition that can overcome any and all obstacles. Another of the Soka Gakkai's eternal guidelines is thus "Faith to surmount obstacles."

Rather than escaping from problems or seeking an easy life, we are encouraged by the Daishonin to maintain a steady, consistent practice, no matter what. When we experience sufferings, we can see them as opportunities to expand our capacity by chanting daimoku in earnest. When we enjoy success or prosperity, we can express our appreciation by exerting ourselves for the happiness of others all the more.

Either way, our tenacity to transform every obstacle into an opportunity for growth is the surest means to achieve lasting, indestructible "happiness in this world."

The Soka Gakkai's eternal guidelines of faith established by President Toda are 1) "faith for a harmonious family," 2) "faith to enable each person to become happy," and 3) "faith to surmount obstacles."



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COMING IN THE APRIL ISSUE OF LIVING BUDDHISM!



• Commentary on 'For the Sake of Peace'

For the Sake of Peace is a new collection of writings from the peace proposals of Daisaku Ikeda. Alfred Balitzer, professor at Claremont McKenna College, writes an insightful commentary of these works by the SGI President:

"In one of the most brilliant chapters of the book, Ikeda explains how peace begins with 'self-mastery.' It is difficult to read his discussion of self-mastery without thinking of that noble phrase that rolls off the American tongue from centuries of usage—self-government. Ikeda's discussion of self-mastery is about self-government at its best, drawing the conclusion that a nation cannot be truly self-governing if the individuals that compose it are not self-governing."

• Activity report 2000 from around the world

The SGI is a perfect example of engaged Buddhism. A review of the accomplishments made around the globe in 2000 proves the point. For example, SGI Italy participated in a conference organized by the Italian Senate to promote the abolition of the death penalty.

• My Story — Niike

"A discreet but firm knock on the gate comes, and one of the servants brings the messenger to me. It is a young priest, Nikko, obviously weary from his travels. He has a letter addressed to me from the priest Nichiren."

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CORRECTED SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR ENTRANCE EXAM

Sample questions for the SGI-USA Study Department's Entrance-level Examination to be held April 22 were published in the Feb. 16 *World Tribune*. Some incorrect page numbers referencing answers were listed for the *SGI-USA Study Department Entrance Exam Study Material* booklet. We sincerely apologize for any confusion these errors many have caused. All the corrected Entrance-level Examination sample questions can be

found on the SGI-USA Web site at http://www.sgi-usa.org/thesgiusa/activities/study_exams/index.html.

- Q5: p. 35
- Q7: p. 34
- Q8: p. 35
- Q9: p. 37
- Q14: p. 47
- Q15: p. 47
- Q21: p. 6-7
- Q22: p. 6
- Q31: p. 4
- Q37: delete
- Q41: p. 12
- Q63: pp. 57-58

CORRECTED ON CD-ROM

EXPERIENCE—STEPHEN SHAYE ELLIOT, LAS VEGAS

A Change in His Future Began With a Change Within

The prospect of years behind bars led Shaye Elliot to begin his Buddhist practice and see things around him differently.

California has a “three strikes law,” which makes someone with two previous serious felony convictions subject to life in prison for any new felony conviction. Simple possession of illicit narcotics is a felony punishable up to three years in a state penitentiary. The battle I have faced with substance abuse, which began with IV drug use at the age of 14, has withstood long stays in prison and the destruction of every relationship I have ever had. Until June 2000, I had skirted the laws against illegal drug use and possession and managed to incur only parole violations after serving a five-year sentence.

Last year, the law finally caught up with me. It could not have been a worse time. My girlfriend, Julie, my 1-month old son, Ryan, and I were living in a hotel room, really a studio apartment. We were trying to start life afresh in our new “home.” One Friday night around 11:30, we were caught in a raid. The Parole Enforcement Team found seven pills and a small amount of methamphetamines. Julie and I were arrested and Ryan was shuttled off to family members. I was told at my first court date that I would be facing a life sentence in prison. Julie, also with prior convictions, now faced seven years. Our son had lost both of his parents in the course of an hour.

At 30, my life seemed to be ending with several appearances in front of the judge. I had always thought that my drug addiction was not anyone’s problem but my own. I resented the implication by others that when I chose to use drugs I was victimizing those closest to me. I now saw the truth of this. Julie was in jail, my son was gone, and my parents and family could only watch as I was locked away. Maybe forever. All because I had abused drugs.

The pain was indescribable. Suicide, depression and self-



Shaye Elliot with his girlfriend, Julie, and their son, Ryan.

loathing are the only words I can think of to give a glimpse into my life-condition in the first few days of my arrest. The worst part of the whole ordeal were the thoughts of never being able to hold my beautiful son again, and that I had ruined Julie’s life.

The first week of my incarceration, my father came down to the jail to visit. He has been practicing Buddhism for 30 years — as long as I have been alive — and he has always shared his feelings about the power of Buddhist practice with me. But I had always declined to practice. Through the course of our hour-long visit, my father let me know in no uncertain terms that if I started chanting, I would not get life in prison. “Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is not an intellectual exercise,” he said. “Just chant and you will receive results.”

I followed my father’s suggestion, and with the encouragement of my mother and others, I started practicing. I chanted, studied and even shared the practice with some of the other inmates.

The machinations of the criminal justice system were not foreign to me. I knew I needed adequate representation and a sense of calm. These were the first things I chanted for and received: the best criminal defense lawyer in the courthouse — free of charge — and I was able to keep my head relatively straight. Three months

into the labyrinth of court appearances and county jail, my lawyer managed to convince the district attorney that a probation report was in order. This report would be my one (and probably my only) chance to avoid a 25-year sentence. An officer of the court would review my life and an interview would be conducted.

As I prayed about this situation, I noticed a change. My concern was not only for a successful interview, but for Julie and my son, who was not even a year old. All of our futures were intertwined and I knew that my less-than-compassionate attitude of before would not serve me now. The only way that I could change this situation was through sincere and genuine prayer.

There is a section of the 4th prayer of gongyo that addresses expiating negative karma. I had hurt others in the past and knew there was a lot of negative causes I had to make amends with. Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is the only philosophy I have found that lets one overcome obstacles — past, present and future. With this practice, one has the power to begin anew. It is a power, undeniable, and I had the fortune to tap it.

In preparation for the interview, I found out that the court officer would basically be working on my behalf and for the state. My attorney told me that during the interview I should be completely

open and honest. Being up front with authority figures in the system was not something I was used to doing, but I trusted my attorney, and I decided to give it a shot. All of my trust and arrogance issues had gotten me nowhere thus far, so I chanted to do what I had to do.

The interview could not have gone better. I was open and honest, and the court officer

was interested in what I had to say. Afterwards, another court date was scheduled for two weeks later, and I would then know my fate. I had become so fatalistic after nine or 10 dealings with the courts that I was actually chanting for an eight-year sentence — which was as lenient a sentence as I realistically expected to receive. The outcome was more than I could have imagined: I was given time served and released. No parole, no probation. Julie was sentenced to a rehabilitation facility with my son. For the first time in a long time, a positive future was unfolding in front of me.

I found out later that my mother would stay home all day, for days on end, chanting for her grandson, her future daughter-in-law, and me. She would chant incessantly that we would be reunited. And we were.

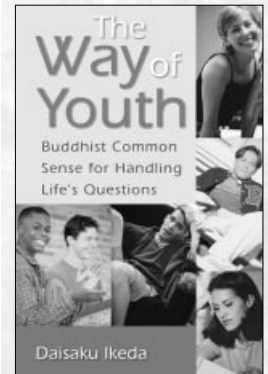
I am now living in Las Vegas, clean and sober and with a steady job. Julie is living with Ryan in California in a rehabilitation center and we’re working on repairing our relationship.

I believe my victory was in large part due to a change within, something that only this practice could allow me to do. Every day I confront this realization and my future in front of the Gohonzon.

I have no deep philosophical understanding of how or why Nam-myoho-renge-kyo helped me to reclaim my life. I simply know that it did. **WT**

The Way of Youth

Buddhist Common Sense for Handling Life’s Questions
Daisaku Ikeda



Based on the popular “Discussions on Youth” series in the *World Tribune*, *The Way of Youth* brings together President Ikeda’s responses to the questions of today’s young people. Edited for a general audience, the book offers insights into a variety of issues of concern to today’s young people, including how to build confidence and character, learning to live with and respect both yourself and others, finding true happiness, dealing with peer pressure and how to contribute to a positive, free and peaceful society. The book is sure to appeal to teens and their parents of all faiths. 0-9674697-0-8, Paperback, \$14.95

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APPLYING BUDDHISM
TO DAILY LIFE

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Use Your Worries As a Springboard

Photos courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

‘Your worries about your inferiority complex, your experiences of being picked on by others — all these things enable you to become a deeper, more sensitive person,’ says SGI President Ikeda. ‘Mr. Toda said, “Far stronger are those with a sense of inferiority! They are determined to win.”’

A discussion on inferiority complexes among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai junior high school division leaders Kenji Shiratsuchi (young men’s leader) and Keiko Maekawa (young women’s leader).

DIALOGUE OF HOPE

Kenji Shiratsuchi: We have had a tremendous response to this series. Not only junior high school students but their parents as well have flooded us with requests to discuss various topics.

I: Many students are reading the series with their parents.

SGI President Ikeda: That’s wonderful. But I hope our readers will remember that we can’t fully answer their questions and concerns without actually meeting and talking to them. In a dialogue featured as a newspaper article, we can only give the most general advice. There are also space limitations. So I’m sure there will be readers who won’t agree with everything we say, or who’ll have a different take on the topics we’re discussing. The best way for our readers to use this series, therefore, is as a point of reference for overcoming their own individual problems.

I will be happy if our discussions serve to stimulate thought, so that our readers might say to themselves: “Well that’s a new way of looking at it.” “That’s the advice for that person’s problem; I wonder what it would be for mine?”

I also hope that parents won’t push their children to read the series! This is a “Dialogue of Hope” to help our young readers deal with their problems. If parents try to force their children to read it, I’m afraid it will just become another one of their problems! We certainly don’t want that, do we?

Shiratsuchi: It is true that no

matter how good a book is, if you feel you have to read it for some reason, suddenly it’s a chore and it’s not fun anymore.

Ikeda: Students don’t have to read the whole article, or to understand it all. They have their studying for school to do first, anyway.

Nevertheless, I intend to do everything I can to help our young people, our treasures of the future.

Shiratsuchi and Maekawa: Thank you so much.

The people you least expect often have a complex of some kind.

Shiratsuchi: Today’s question is from a student in his second year of junior high. His problem is that he’s short. He says, “I am the shortest boy in class, and the other kids call me ‘shorty’ and ‘shrimp’ and tease me.” When he told me about this, I must have smiled, because he said: “Don’t laugh! This is really serious to me. Try to understand how I feel.”

Ikeda: Maybe adults don’t think it is a serious problem, but he’s right: for the person involved it is a very big thing. It really bothers him, and that’s what’s important here.

People’s problems and anxieties — and not just those of junior high school students — often seem trivial to others. And in fact they may actually be trivial. But you’ll find that, on the whole, people rarely worry or agonize over grand or lofty problems.

Therefore, it’s not the content of the problem that matters, but the fact that a person is suffering over it. When we see a person in such a situation, it is important that we empathize with them and try to help them find a way to overcome their problem.

Complexes about physical appearance — thinking you’re



SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda visit the Soka Schools on Jan. 18 to talk with the students.

too short or too fat or have a terrible complexion or are unattractive — cause the most intense suffering and are the hardest to talk to others about.

So we have to commend the student you just mentioned for having the courage to confide in you and tell you what’s bothering him!

How tall is he, by the way?

Shiratsuchi: He’s 5 feet tall. Many of his family members and relatives are also short. He asked his mother why he was short, and she said that it ran in the family. “Everyone is unique and special,” she said, “like the teaching of cherry, plum, peach and damson. Just be yourself.” While he understands what she’s saying intellectually, he still finds it hard to accept. [“Cherry, plum, peach, and damson” refers to the Buddhist principle that likens each individual to a beautiful flower that has its own mission and unique potential.]

Maekawa: I think I know how he feels. You know in your head that you can’t do anything about it, but you still want things to be different.

In elementary school, I had really bad eyesight and had to wear glasses with thick corrective lenses. I loathed wearing them. They made me look hideous and I worried about what others thought when they saw me. In fact, I was teased a lot about wearing glasses. I didn’t want to wear them, but the doctor insisted that I had to.

Now I’m glad I did: Today I have 20/20 vision.

Shiratsuchi: When I was in junior high, I had the reverse

problem of the student who felt self-conscious about being short. I had a complex because I thought I was too tall. I felt really conspicuous and I hated it.

Ikeda: From the viewpoint of a person who is worried about being too short, that would seem like a great problem to have!

The point is, even the people you envy have something they feel inferior about. The people you least expect often have a complex of some kind. That’s just the way it is. It’s a fact of life.

When you succumb to a complex, you are likely to see everything about yourself in a negative light. When something doesn’t work out for you, you tend to blame it on those things which make you feel inferior: “It’s because I’m short” and so forth. When you adopt this negative attitude, you close your heart to the wonderful potential you possess and negate your good points as well, which only insures that things keep going from bad to worse in your life.

Shiratsuchi: It’s a vicious circle, isn’t it?

Ikeda: When your feelings of inferiority are really strong, you think everyone is laughing at you. The truth is that people are not nearly as interested in you as you imagine.

Maekawa: Often it’s a case of us being overly self-conscious, right?

Ikeda: Self-consciousness is so much a part of being young that it probably doesn’t do any good to say, “Don’t be self-conscious.” The important thing is

to accept the fact that you are self-conscious, that you have a complex, but not let those feelings of inferiority beat you. You can use those feelings as a springboard to maximize your strong points.

If you feel self-conscious about being short, then just go ahead and feel as self-conscious as you want! But it’s silly to think that being short means you’re worthless or no good. You can say to yourself: “I may be short, but I’m going to have the biggest heart possible!” “I may be short, but I am going to be the best student in my school!” “I know how it feels to be teased, so I will never tease anyone!” “I’m going to be a person who is kind and considerate!”

These are some of the ways you can use your complex as a spur to growth and self-improvement. You mustn’t let it defeat you. That’s the key.

Put your most cherished wishes and desires into your daimoku — without pretense.

Ikeda: This way you can change something negative into something positive. This is what *Soka* stands for — value creation. It may be a little difficult to understand, but this is what it’s all about.

It is such a waste to let yourself be defeated by your complex, to let it cause you to hate yourself and envy others and to lead a glum, downcast existence. Being jealous of others doesn’t get you anywhere. It just makes you feel bad about yourself.

After all, we can count other people’s money forever, but it won’t increase our own bank account, will it? For that rea-

son, you mustn't let feelings of inferiority and jealousy defeat you or limit you.

Many of those who make fun of others or lord it over others have actually been defeated by their own feelings of inferiority. They lack self-confidence, so they look down on others in order to feel some small sense of superiority. It's really pitiful when you think about it.

Shiratsuchi: The student with the complex about his height said to me that he chants to the Gohonzon every day to keep growing. He wants to know if his prayers are selfish.

Ikeda: Most prayers are selfish! You can chant for whatever you like. You can put your most cherished wishes and desires into your daimoku, free of any pretense, in a way that is true to your own heart. Though you may not get results immediately, your daimoku will steadily move you in the right direction, and a horizon of boundless hope will open up for you without fail. You also have to make efforts, be resourceful and take practical measures to make your prayers come true.

Come to think of it, Napoleon used to be called "shorty," too.

Maekawa: Napoleon, the great general and leader?!

Ikeda: The young Napoleon was on his way to Italy as commander in chief of the French forces. The previous commanders in chief had always been tall men of imposing stature and appearance, but Napoleon was short, thin, and pale. Napoleon's four divisional commanders looked down on him, calling him "the Corsican midget" behind his back, and they were very unhappy about serving under him.

Napoleon summoned his four commanders. They arrived in his chamber, but they refused to remove their hats in his presence, a customary sign of respect. They were showing their scorn for him.

But when they saw the look in Napoleon's eye, none of them could move. It was as if his sharp gaze pierced them.

When Napoleon was satisfied that he had put his generals in their place, he removed his hat. The four generals rushed to remove theirs as quickly as they could.

Then Napoleon put on his hat again. But the four commanders didn't have the nerve to put theirs on again.

Napoleon then told his gen-

erals his brilliant battle plan, and they were very impressed.

"The midget trampled all over us!" they said as they left Napoleon's chamber.

Maekawa: Their attitude had completely changed!

Ikeda: Great individuals appear taller than they are.

Napoleon was short for a general, it's true. Everyone around him was tall and imposing. But he used his complex as a driving force to live with strength and fortitude. "I won't let those tall guys beat me!" he said to himself.

Please don't become the kind of weak, easily influenced person who gets upset or depressed every time someone makes fun of him or her.

Shiratsuchi: I guess the message is, don't let your complex be the winner.

Ikeda: That's right. A complex, if you win over it, can become a means for forging strength and confidence. It can become a plus for

you. Your worries about your complex, your experiences of being picked on by others—all these things enable you to become a deeper, more sensitive person; they help you understand others' feelings. Those who've never had a complex can't appreciate the sensitivity of people's hearts. Mr. Toda said, "Far stronger are those with a sense of inferiority! They are determined to win."

You might know the Japanese children's story of *The One-inch Boy*. He wanted to be big. He wanted to be strong.

He wanted to impress the princess.

When the demon attacked the princess, the one-inch boy fought with all his might, holding off the demon with his sword made from a needle and protecting the princess. He was ready to defend her to the death.

Shiratsuchi: But the demon just picked him up and swallowed him.

Ikeda: But still the one-inch boy didn't give up. He ran around the demon's stomach, sticking him with his needle.

Shiratsuchi: The demon started screaming in pain, spat the one-inch boy out, and ran away in terror.

Ikeda: And the demon left behind his famous "magic mallet." The mallet made wishes come true. The princess asked the one-inch boy what his wish was and swung the mallet for him. Having wished to be big, the one-inch boy immediately grew to full size.

He and the princess later married.

Now let's ask ourselves a few questions. What does the demon symbolize? How about the magic mallet? And who is the one-inch boy?

Maekawa: Well, he's certainly not just a short person.

Ikeda: That's right. I think he stands for a person bothered by a sense of inferiority, a person who doesn't think very highly of himself. The demon represents the harsh reality bearing down on the person, or perhaps the person's feeling of inferiority itself.

Maekawa: That means that the one-inch boy's battle against the demon is his conquest of his own feeling of inferiority!

Ikeda: Some psychologists have suggested as much.

The one-inch boy didn't just sit there wallowing in self-pity, he fought the demon with all his might—and as soon as he did that, the demon ran away, and the one-inch boy's wish to be big came true.

The magic mallet is representative of one's own strength of will, the determination not to give up, to go on fighting. If you use that force of will, you can achieve anything. You can become a big, big person.

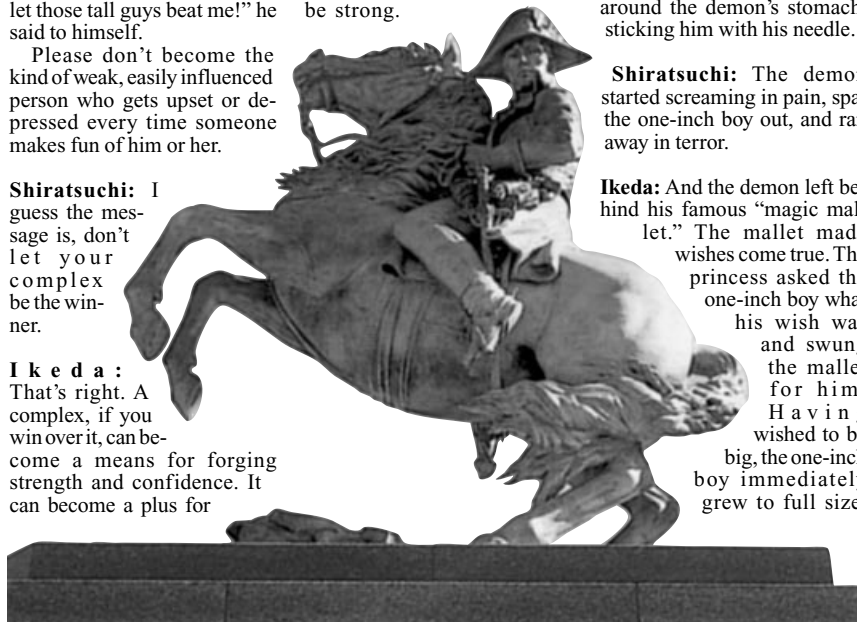
To tell the truth, it's actually quite a luxury to have time to compare yourself to others and suffer feelings of inferiority or superiority. In a life and death situation, you don't have time for any of that. You just have to put all of your energy into surviving. At such times, a person's spirit, a person's life, brings forth incredible power.

Shiratsuchi: Life force is the magic mallet, then.

Ikeda: You all have your own magic mallet. You're the one who decides if you're going to use it or not.

If you have the time and energy to sit around fretting and worrying about your supposed faults, it would be far better to spend that time and energy doing things you can do or are good at—in other words, working on realizing your full potential.

Those who can do that are the true victors. They won't have feelings of inferiority or superiority. They won't envy others or look down on them. They will be warm and friendly to everyone they come into contact with. They are able to live a life as clear and bright as the blue skies. **WT**



Napoleon used his inferiority complex as a driving force to win, telling himself, "I won't let those tall guys beat me!" The statue 'Bonaparte Crossing the Great St. Bernard' in the SGI's Napoleon Plaza next to the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall.

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HISTORY OF THE 'IMAGINE PEACE' WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Shaping a Happy Future in the Present

The concept for the 'Imagine Peace' Conference was born six months ago. Several women wanted to do 'something different' for their women's commemorative meetings this year.

By ANN MARCHANT, JUDITH MESSER AND DIANE YARBRO SWIFT
WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENTS

SGI-USA members know that causes made in the past result in the present, and causes made now determine the future. The "Imagine Peace" women's conference in Washington, D.C., was a cause consciously shaping the future. The desire of Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia SGI-USA women to explore relationships between peace and Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism through workshops, seminars and performances became reality on Feb. 25, emerging from a concept born just six months earlier.

This idea of "Imagine Peace" began to take shape when several women wondered how to respond to SGI members' desire to do "something different" for the annual women's commemorative meetings in February. The idea of a conference followed from SGI President Ikeda's assertion that the SGI is a great women's peace movement.

To see if others wanted to hold a large event with the theme "Imagine Peace," a kick-off was held on Sept. 10, 2000. More than 400 women filled the main hall of the community center, spilling into the lobby. To focus the event closely on the grass roots, questionnaires were distributed to find out what interested people and how they could contribute. By the end of that meeting, all agreed to hold a women's peace conference and call it "Imagine Peace."

Seven planning committees formed immediately. The logistics committee imagined 2,000 participants, then searched for a facility to house them. They found the World Bank building, where a hand-

ful of SGI-USA members work. These members have met at the World Bank every Thursday on their lunch hour for the past three years to chant, reserving the Bank's meditation room. They place a sign on the door that says, "Buddhist Prayers in Session." As the group continued, they developed many warm friendships with other employees, and so several Bank groups readily co-sponsored the conference.

The week before the conference, SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck offered a spirited message by conference call to about 300 Washington, D.C., women. "It's ordinary women empowering other ordinary women who will make peace a reality," she said. "We have prepared for the last 10 years for this meeting, and the effects will be felt 20 years from now."

On the day of the conference, more than 2,500 people attended. In opening remarks Tina Smith, Washington, D.C., Region Vice Women's Leader, quoted her grandmother, "When history is happening — pay attention!" At that moment — created from arduous past efforts, carried forward by present joy and fulfillment, and holding bright hope for the future — "Imagine Peace" was surely "history happening," and rousing applause as the meeting opened proved that everyone was paying attention.

SGI President Ikeda has said, "My sole desire for the members of the women's division is that they become the happiest people in the world" (*Buddhism Is The Clear Mirror That Reflects Our Lives*, p. 5). The joy of success that glowed in the faces of the women who had worked so hard to create this conference was evidence that his wish has come true. **WT**

Participating in the Clothesline Project as part of Linda Smith's workshop titled 'Freedom from Violence and The Clothesline Project.'



At the end of the day, Barbara Palincz and Hope Bliss admire the sculpture created by participants out of recycled materials. Photo: KATHRYN AIROB, HENRI PHIL ROSENBERG



Jane Hurst (left), professor of philosophy and religion at Gallaudet University, and SGI-USA member Helena Goodlette.



Hope Bliss, Ph.D., speaks as a member of the panel 'Building Global Economic Justice.'



More than 2,500 people attend the 'Imagine Peace' Conference.

WORKSHOP AND LECTURE SESSIONS AT THE 'IMAGINE PEACE' WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Active Dialogues For Peace

By **LESLIE ANDERSON MORALES**
AND **LORILYN SIMKINS**
WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENTS

The video, *Imagine Peace*, by SGI-USA member Lynn Collins, records SGI-USA member Stephanie Tansey saying, "Buddhism is happiness with a social conscience." "Imagine Peace" participants, though not all Buddhist, all exhibited the deep happiness that making a positive difference in society brings out. In 41 workshops and lectures, they explored the many facets of social conscience needed to imagine peace.

Michele Chargois, opening the morning general session, described peace from a Buddhist perspective not as a state but a process, achieved not passively but actively, by being not other-focused but me-focused — not reactive but proactive.

Hazel Henderson, Ph.D., keynote morning session speaker, encouraged her 400-person audience to exercise strategic visioning to remedy dangerous and unsustainable consumption patterns. Dr. Henderson just completed her second dialogue with SGI President Ikeda.

"All great religions have some core, wonderful insights," she remarked. "We need now to come together... to work toward propagating visions of how cultures of peace and sustainable development will work." She encouraged her audience to identify the deeply held values that unite all people, to continue dialogues in local communities and to commit to solving the current crisis by providing solutions to their political leaders. "We need politicians who are visionaries, who are poets," she said. "Most of all, we need a lot more politicians who are women."

Ivonne A-Baki, ambassador from Ecuador to the United States and also a successful painter, joined politics to be taken more seriously. "Art is pure feelings," she said. "Pol-

tics is making it all happen."

During the afternoon general session, the ambassador talked about her experience as a peacemaker in South America. "Wherever we imagine peace, it is treasured," she said. "We can make a change — not just from the president's podium or the senator's office, but as advocates, artists, professionals, sisters and mothers."

Also in the afternoon general session were Professor Corann Okorodudu of Rowan University, Liberia, president of the American Psychological Association's Division of Peace Psychology, who noted that "even in a very oppressive environment, there are allies — you will find spaces to do the work for peace." And Dr. Ellen H. Taliaferro, president of Physicians for a Violence-Free Society, commented that "endurance means remaining a victim; transformation means becoming a winner."

Meeting simultaneously with the general sessions were intimate workshops elsewhere in the World Bank.

Gail C. Christopher, D.N., Licensed Holistic Health Practitioner and executive director of Innovation in American Government, Harvard University JFK School of Government, said in one of the most heavily attended workshops, "Peace Begins with Me: The Mind and Body Connection": "Take your power back! You must change your mind before you can change your body." This dynamic speaker urged that "peace is consistent with the natural order of things" and "we can be healthy with a little effort and time" by re-orienting ourselves from within.

"Resolving Conflict: Communication as a First Step" taught participants to change negative communication patterns to create harmonious relationships. Corrine McLaughlin, executive director of the Center for Visionary Leadership, led two sessions, and Tina Smith, behavioral management consultant and SGI-USA member, led two. Ms. Smith proposed "creating peace from the inside out," explaining: "If

you want to influence your future, create it in your head and in your heart. If you can conceive it, then it can happen."

The six speakers in four sessions of "Joining With Youth to Create a Culture of Peace" utilized peer mediation, mentoring and music to help young people express their creativity and divert their attention from destructive acts.

T-shirts designed by family, friends and victims of violence hung from clotheslines in "Freedom from Violence and The Clothesline Project." The project's purposes are to bear witness; to heal; to educate, document and raise awareness; and to support, encourage and inform.

Women attending "Celebrating the Power of Women as Peacemakers" shared ways to take control when personally challenged and invent new approaches to peacemaking.

Three workshops focused on the Earth Charter. "Building a Global Family," "Building Economic Justice," and "Building a Safe Environment for Women" sought solutions to the problems of poverty, over-consumption of the earth's resources, violence against women and the deterioration of communities. Dr. Richard Clugston of the Secretariat for the Earth Charter USA Campaign described the Earth Charter as a "soft power" peace proclamation. Dr. Hope Bliss, SGI-USA member and educator, advocated adoption of Earth Charter principles by youth to ensure a sustainable future based on justice, equity, peace and ecological security.

Closing the conference, Carmela Menchaca, SGI-USA Mid-Atlantic Zone women's leader, asked each participant to awaken to her own unique mission as a protagonist in the transformation of history. "In imagining peace," she said, "each of us will gain the courage and determination to make that vision a reality and make a difference."

Adenike Adeleke, Yvonne Mapily, Sandra Scott and Rosalye Settles contributed to this article.



ar (left) and Maia by the conference als.



Ivonne A-Baki, ambassador from Ecuador to the United States, speaks about her effort to help bring an end to the Ecuador-Peru border conflict.

by: JIKEN NDJRY 3ERG



Keynote speaker Hazel Henderson (left), environmental economist, futurist and author, with old friend and workshop presenter Linda Smith, director of The Clothesline Project.



(L-r) Ariana Bock, Maria Wilder, Cristina McMahon and Anyhalee Suderman prepare an exhibit of a youth art and writing contest held in conjunction with the 'Imagine Peace' Conference.

VICTORY OVER VIOLENCE 2001

The Next Step for Victory Over Violence

By DARIN NELLIS

SGI-USA YOUTH
PEACE COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR

Darin Nellis shares his ideas on 'how to take our amazing Victory Over Violence campaign to a whole new level by focusing on the heart of the mentor.'

Victory Over Violence — a fresh breeze in our organization's efforts to reach out into our communities to spread the humanistic values of Buddhism!

Starting in August 1999, the SGI-USA officially kicked off its Victory Over Violence campaign with 1,600 districts across the nation sponsoring VOV meetings spearheaded by the youth. Since then, thousands of members have taken the initiative to sponsor their own VOV activities including VOV workshops, concerts, youth summits and other VOV-centered events. It has been, without a doubt, the most successful youth-led social engagement campaign that we have ever undertaken in the SGI-USA and hopefully a model for many others in the future.

Despite our tremendous success, some feel that we have only scratched the surface of what we can accomplish through VOV. So what is the next step? This has been a subject of extensive dialogue between the SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee representatives and other members around the nation.

Victory Over Violence is deeply related to the mentor-disciple relationship.

Recently, I attended an SGI training course in Japan. During my stay a young man who was a reporter for the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, contacted me. He heard that I was a leader in the United States for the YPC and asked me if I would do an interview about



Photo by JULIETTE TOM

VOV, which has become very well known in the SGI around the world. Feeling confident about my work on the VOV campaign, I quickly agreed to meet him the next morning over breakfast. When we met the next morning, he clarified his interests for the interview and said what he really wanted was to do an interview on "Victory Over Violence and the Mentor-Disciple Relationship." I was taken off guard by his statement and quickly lost whatever confidence I previously had. I never thought of the relationship between VOV and mentor-disciple in such a direct way.

I felt uncomfortable not having thought of this myself in the past. Despite my inability to give him a really good answer (I didn't have one), I did my best to respond. In our dialogue, he shared his own passion for the mentor-disciple relationship. Whether he is writing an article or interviewing someone, he said, he makes sure that the mentor-disciple relationship comes first. I was deeply moved by his sincerity. He seemed to exude a strong sense of love and genuine affection toward his mentor, SGI President Ikeda, and talked about him as if he were his father.

Later, after chanting and reflecting on what the reporter had said, I had a powerful but simple realization. During the training course, I was trying to connect with President Ikeda's life directly but never felt like I had captured what I was looking for. All the while, I had been surrounded by people that President Ikeda had encouraged consistently for many years and some whom he had personally

raised. Some were SGI staff and others were members we visited while in Japan. I was genuinely inspired by their behavior. They all conveyed a very natural kindness and respect toward the other guests and me. I thought maybe it was an act, or that they were really trying hard to look sincere and friendly. But after a few days and then after a week of closely watching them in action, I realized that their behavior didn't change. No matter how late they had to stay up to prepare for the details of the next day or how many times they had to wait for members who were late, their sincerity and warmth remained the same.

I realized that this love that I had been treated with by the SGI staff and members in Japan was exactly what I was seeking from President Ikeda. This natural affection and respect for people was also what the reporter was speaking of when he shared with me that the mentor-disciple relationship was front and center at every moment for him. My realization helped me to understand how to take our amazing VOV campaign to a whole new level by focusing on the heart of the mentor.

Many people are asking themselves, 'What is the cause of youth violence?'

VOV was created by the SGI-

USA youth to address violence in society and in particular the escalation of youth-on-youth violence in schools across America. The dramatic school shootings and other youth-on-youth violence widely publicized over the past five years have been a very tragic but necessary wake-up call to our nation. When I was in high school, just 13 years ago, a student carrying a gun on campus was unthinkable. Today, even our youngest school-aged children face the very real fear of random school shootings, of even getting shot themselves. And this is not to mention the peer pressure and schoolyard bullying children face today.

Even Japan, where crime and violence are much lower than America, has seen an alarming increase in youth violence. President Ikeda mentions in his latest education proposal (February *Living Buddhism*) that "in Japan, there has been a terrible series of school suicides and other tragedies resulting from bullying, and the crisis is escalating, while the worldwide problem of drug abuse is gradually spreading to Japan as well. In addition, there has been a succession of juvenile crimes in recent years: a series of murders by 14- and 15-year-olds, and, in just the last year, crimes

that have shocked the Japanese public such as the motiveless hijacking of an expressway bus by a 17-year-old, killing one and causing severe trauma for all the other passengers, and a boy who brutally clubbed his mother to death with a baseball bat; crimes that would have been practically unthinkable in Japan just a few years ago."

Many people around the world are asking themselves, "What is the cause of this youth violence?" After the recent Santana High School shooting in Santee, Calif., where two students were killed and 13 injured, a front-page headline in the *Los Angeles Times* read, "Santee Searches for Answers as Motive Remains a Mystery." In the article, the writer asks, "How did a boy with so many friends, described by teachers as a pleasure in class, an honors student three years running, grow so terribly angry?"

After the Columbine High School shooting, two high school principals quit their jobs and traveled across America to interview school-aged youth about the cause of this violence. After talking to hundreds of young people, they found that an overwhelming amount of them felt that the cause was not too much violence in movies, too many guns on the streets, violent video games or negative music. Instead, a large majority of the youth felt that no one was listening to their concerns and sufferings, and that their parents and other caretakers (including older youth) could do a lot more to listen and reach out to them.

In other words, by cherishing young people, no matter what faults they may have, adults and other caregivers can show young people through their own example how precious life is. This is also, I believe, what President Ikeda has been trying to teach us and what the mentor-disciple relationship is all about.

But reaching out to youth, especially those who are troubled or unwilling to listen can seem almost impossible at times. What is the most effective way to go about connecting with and raising young people? This will be the subject of the next article in this series. Also, stay tuned for other upcoming VOV articles brought to you by the SGI-USA YPC on mastering the art of dialogue, the VOV philosophy and reaching out beyond our familiar surroundings into the greater community.



Youth promote the objectives of Victory Over Violence in a community event.

One in a series

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

'SECURING THE FOUNDATION'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 1, PARTS 33-34

The turning point in Haru Fujisawa's practice comes when she decides to take the Study Department Entrance Examination. Haru is deeply moved by the commitment of a leader who travels some 20 hours by ship at her own expense to help the members study.

While traveling late one night, the chapter leader of Amami Oshima Chapter, Takashi Nogawa, was suddenly overcome with fatigue. He stopped his bike and lay down by the roadside. He awoke to the feel of something on his stomach. When he became aware it was a poisonous snake native to the southern Japanese islands crawling across his stomach, he froze in terror. He knew that if he shouted or moved, he was likely to get bitten; so he held his breath and lay as still as he could, chanting furiously in his mind.

The snake slowly made its way across Nogawa's abdomen and slithered away. The whole incident had lasted only about 10 seconds, but it seemed like hours.

There was always a risk of encountering these snakes, called *habu*, on the islands of Amami Oshima and Tokunoshima. They are nocturnal, so night travel was especially dangerous—but since Nogawa needed to travel at night, he often chanted as he went. He was constantly praying under his breath, whether on his bike or on foot.

When traveling by ship, he

would voraciously read Soka Gakkai publications and Nichiren Daishonin's writings. He would express his attitude toward study as follows: "I only attended elementary school, and I'm not very smart, so unless I study very hard I can't keep up with other people. When you're working to propagate Buddhism, you need to have the ability to convince others. To get that ability, I have to study twice as much as anyone else."

The more he traveled from island to island and the harder he exerted himself, the more strain it put on his family budget. His wife Yoshimi scrimped and scrimped, barely making ends meet. But when her husband would ask her if she could afford to give him some money, she would always smile reassuringly and say, "Yes," and hand him what he needed, even if it left her without enough to buy food.

She knew that her husband was working for the happiness of the people of the Amami Islands, and she was determined to at least take care of the household in his absence. That was her personal vow. They both felt it was their mission and a great honor



to dedicate their lives to the lofty goal of helping others become happy and realizing peace based on the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Haru Fujisawa, who was to be appointed Amami Oshima General Chapter women's division leader, was a wise, kindhearted woman in her 50s. Her husband Keisuke was a high school teacher and a scholar of local history. They both were born in the Amami Islands, but they married in Tokyo. Later they went to Manchuria, and there saw the end of World War II. After the war, they returned to Amami.

Haru had always been physically weak, which kept her in bed sick for the good part of each month. Her greatest wish was to be healthy. She'd had several miscarriages and stillbirths and three of her children had died early, leaving her with one surviving daughter.

Haru joined the Soka Gakkai in December 1956. Her daughter Chizuko was accepted to a high school in Kagoshima City in southern Kyushu, and Haru went to live there with her while her husband remained on Amami. In Kagoshima City, Haru's nephew Saburo Shigehara came for a visit and began to talk to Chizuko about Buddhism. Shigehara had once had tuberculosis, in those days considered an incurable disease,

and had overcome it through the power of faith.

At first, Chizuko wasn't interested in what her cousin had to say about Buddhism, but eventually she was struck by his complete conviction that through Buddhist faith and practice all of her prayers would be answered, and she decided to join. She wrote a letter to her father asking his permission, and he wrote back saying that if she thought she was doing the right thing, he had no objections.

Haru, however, was skeptical about religion in general, and didn't want her daughter to get caught up in something strange. So she decided to join the Soka Gakkai herself in order to keep a close eye on her daughter and protect her.

Chizuko graduated from high school and entered a pharmaceutical college in Shizuoka Prefecture, and Haru returned to Amami. Though she was now a member of the Soka Gakkai, Haru was not particularly active or involved.

The turning point came when, at the strong encouragement of another member, she decided to take the study department entrance examination. A leader would come all the way from the Kagoshima mainland every week to help the members study for the exam. Haru was deeply moved by the commitment of this

leader, who would voluntarily travel some 20 hours by ship at her own expense to come and teach them.

Furthermore, as she studied Buddhism and read the Daishonin's writings, Haru's impression that all religions were merely superstitions and not to be trusted was overturned. She realized that among religious teachings there were right and wrong and profound and shallow, and that the Daishonin's Buddhism was grounded in a solid and correct philosophy.

Haru gained confidence in her practice and, after passing the examination, enthusiastically involved herself in Soka Gakkai activities. Seeing her vibrant example, her husband Keisuke also joined and began supporting his wife's Buddhist activities.

Haru had chronic liver and kidney problems, and suffered also from sciatica and high blood pressure; but as she practiced, her ailments began to subside. Her faith grew deeper as a result, and she gradually became a vigorous promoter of Buddhism. When Amami Oshima Chapter was founded, she was appointed leader of the chapter's women's division.

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1963.



'Imagine Peace' — A Man's Perspective

PERSPECTIVE

By MICHAEL LISAGOR

VIENNA, VA.

Sometimes I need to remove the punctuation from my life and the barriers of understanding that separate me from other people and other ways of looking at the world

Sometimes it is not easy to break out of the masculine side of my experience of my genetic code that would have me withdraw from the connectedness that is so vital to a better world and cause me to withdraw behind the walls of a security that is not really security at all

There are times when I am moved to tears by the willingness of women to fight for peace to engage for peace to build for peace for all our children

I spent the day at the World Bank in Washington, D.C. with 2500 women who dare to imagine peace not just for themselves but for the entire world including women of every size and shape and color and temperament and desire and talent and age and women rich and poor and wife and partner and mother and professional and lonely and alone

I spent today with 2500 angels of peace me an alien from another planet fortunate to be in their presence awed by their commitment inspired by their vision



Sometimes I must break down the punctuation in my life that would prevent me from seeing to the other side and put aside the commas and the periods and the exclamation marks so that perhaps I can see some truth

Like the truth of chorus men who diligently and individually rehearsed their music their task while a chorus woman decided out loud that she would dedicate her song to her husband and children who could not be there And in these two simple but profound punctuated differences of how we men and you women approach the moment I choose to see real hope for us together because it is this balance that we so desperately must find

I hear the truth that this must be the century when women come into full partnership and realize this is the same path I have traveled with my mate for more than 30 years and know that mine must not be yet another marriage or this another century of masculine dominance but one

of equal partnership

I spent today with the spirit of three billion women many who will never know the blessings of freedom and who continue to be systematically punctuated out of existence by uncaring male dominated religious and political systems

Can you hear their angry cries Afghanistan

The women of the world cry out to you

I heard their cries this morning and my heart broke and I could barely contain my grief or my joy as I remembered the

many women in my life who for 50 years convinced me I was worthy of love long before I learned to love myself These women who I would name but for a lack of space

I talked to my daughters today as women not children as keepers of the future confident that they would face their challenges with compassion How could a father ask for more

And my wife who continues to amaze me in every way Who has the courage to understand both my male and female sides and the patience for me to learn

which to use

Sometimes I need to remove the punctuation from my life so that I can remember to respect and listen to the women around me

The world is such a more wonderful place with them at my side

You can e-mail Mike Lisagor at Lisagor@celerityworks.com.

Perspectives printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA or the World Tribune.



Photo by PHIL ROSENBERG

Mike Lisagor says, 'I spent the day at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., with 2,500 women who dare to imagine peace not just for themselves, but for the entire world.'

JOIN THE CLASS OF 2002 AT SUA, CALABASAS

Now in its seventh year, Soka University of America's graduate school in Calabasas, Calif., is accepting applications for its master's degree program in second and foreign language education for the 2001-02 academic year.

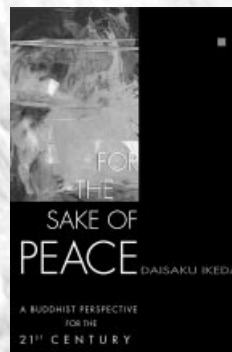
Individuals seeking admission to the MA program must hold a bachelor's de-

gree with a minimum grade-point average (GPA) of 2.7 or B- on a four-point scale. Applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a minimum score of 600 (on a paper-based test) or 250 (on a computer-based test) and a Test of Written English

(TWE) with a minimum score of 5.0.

Applications for the 2001-02 academic year are due by April 30. For more information, contact the Graduate Admissions Office at 26800 West Mulholland Highway, Calabasas, CA 9102. Telephone (818) 878-8717, e-mail: grad_admissions@soka.edu.

NEW FROM MIDDLEWAY PRESS



Based on more than 20 years of peace proposals and university lectures, *For the Sake of Peace* expresses SGI President Ikeda's passionate yet practical vision of the way to achieve peace in the new millennium.

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- The Path of Community
- The Path of Culture
- The Path of Nations
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"Any individual who has questioned whether he or she could actually make a difference should read this book, become inspired and walk the path of peace."

—David Krieger, President, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation



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Available now from your favorite neighborhood or on-line booksellers. (Not available at SGI-USA bookstores.)

Interpreters/Translators/Food Service Conference Held at FNCC

By JESSICA CHENG, RIKA HASHIMOTO AND SUSIE STICKLEY
CORRESPONDENTS

SGI-USA members gathered for the 1st Interpreters/Translators Conference and the 1st Food Service Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, held jointly from Feb. 22-25. Ninety-one participants, many having endured snowy or rainy weather and flight delays, enjoyed four inspirational days together under the Florida sun.

Although seemingly unrelated, the joint conferences were a gathering of people who work behind-the-scenes to support the growth, well-being and happiness of others, while polishing their skills in their fields of expertise.

In his message to the Food Service Conference, SGI President Ikeda said: "The test of faith is to continue to strive in faith even when others do not take notice. Nichiren Daishonin says, 'Where there is unseen virtue, there will be visible reward'" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 907).

President Ikeda encouraged Interpreters/Translators Conference participants to "continue to study and polish yourselves throughout your life, while cherishing the words of the Daishonin, 'It is the heart that is important'" (WND, 949).

Friday morning, the participants welcomed SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima for an invigorating joint session on the mentor-disciple relationship. Vice General Director Ted Morino led another



Photo by EDDY YAMANE

As with each FNCC conference, dialogue groups develop friendships and fresh ideas.

joint session on the topic of Soka Spirit and the evolution of SGI-USA translations beginning in late 1990, when the SGI started to be attacked by the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood.

Carol Woodard from Chicago expressed her excitement of being able to learn about the Nichikan Gohonzon from attending one of the workshops following the joint session, saying: "I was amazed by the in-depth explanation of the Gohonzon inscribed by Nichikan. Learning about his amazing spirit, I have a stronger motivation to help in the Soka Spirit movement."

In a separate session, participants in the Food Service Conference shared their experiences in faith and their struggles in dealing with their demanding work environments. Kiyoshi Ishitani from

Boston, Yumiko and Tatsunosuke Kawagoe from San Diego and Kiyoko Burch from Denver shared their experiences of supporting President Ikeda's movements during his previous visits to the United States.

Senior Vice General Director Richard Sasaki led a session on the spirit of working behind-the-scenes. Acknowledging the difficulties the participants face in attending meetings and keeping in rhythm with the organization due to their work schedules, Mr. Sasaki stressed the importance of building a solid foundation in faith and continuously striving to improve one's life based on faith.

The interpreters and translators expressed a renewed sense of mission, having gained a deeper understanding of the part they play in the kosen-rufu movement. One session was devoted to Kumarajiva's role in the translation of Buddhism, and another session explored practical applications for communicating Buddhist philosophy in America.

It became clear to everyone that each activity involving the spread of Buddhism in

the United States is actually a form of interpreting and translating, because we are promoting Buddhism in a culture that is not accustomed to Buddhist ideals and beliefs.

"Now that I have a better understanding of President Ikeda's strong desire for translators and interpreters to contribute on the frontlines of the kosen-rufu movement, I have a stronger sense of purpose," said Denise Golding from Los Angeles. "Because of this, I want to help others gain more confidence in their abilities to contribute."

Jennifer Yamazawa, a freelance interpreter from Raleigh, N.C., resolved that, "Based on what I gained from this conference, I will go back and create an interpreters/translators group in my area, even if I am the only one at first."

Participants in the Interpreters/Translators Conference from various regions, and those representing languages such as Chinese, French and Spanish, were determined to have more participants from their areas and language groups participate in the next conference. Those in the Food Services Conference expressed their joy in participating in this joyful, historical first conference while already making plans to return to the second conference.

Many participants from both conferences promised to return to the second round of conferences next year and share their growth and victories with everyone. **WT**



Photo by TAKASHI UMEZAKI

Participants enjoy a Saturday night party at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.



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Performers Ignite 'Imagine Peace' Conference

At the 'Imagine Peace' Conference, held Feb. 25 at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., more than 100 performers of all kinds brighten the day with inspiring presentations.

Photo by ROB HENDRY



The combined Washington, D.C., Region and Virginia/Carolina Region Concert Chorus opens the conference with an original song.

Photo by PHIL ROSENBERG



Ashley (left) and Shayne Reeves perform a Native American dance.

Photo by PHIL ROSENBERG



Katherine Archer plays an original composition.

Photo by PHIL ROSENBERG



Gail Goodwin performs 'Wind Beneath My Wings.'

Photo by PHIL ROSENBERG

Photo by JESSICA FLEEK



The Women's African Drummers perform the African drumming rite 'Call to Koteba.'

Photo by PHIL ROSENBERG



Natalie Levin, mezzo-soprano, sings an aria.

Photo by ROB HENDRY



Onoe-style Japanese dancers perform 'The Story of Ohara Shosuke San.'

Photo by KATHRYN AIKEN



The Korean Drum Dancers brightly perform the finale of the 'Peace Performance Extravaganza.'



The Women's African Drummers at their debut performance after two years of preparation, which they dedicated to the founder of their group, the late Camille Mitchell.