



EXPERIENCE

Evelyn Rivera
struggles to
create a happy
family.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S FEB. 27 SPEECH—PART 2

A New Sun of Hope Rises

'We can trust the youth,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'The youth are our only hope. As long as the youth burn with anger against evil and injustice and take bold action against them, a new sun of hope will rise on human history.'

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 3rd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Feb. 27.

Where can we find hope in human history? We can find it in the fact that in every age, youth dedicated to truth and justice have risen up to fight against the forces of injustice.

And where today can we find hope for the 21st century? In you, our SGI youth, and only here.

The Greek philosopher Socrates is hailed as one of the great teachers of humanity. Some 2,400 years ago, however, opponents who envied and hated him falsely accused him. He was slandered with malicious lies, insulted and painted a villain. Finally, he was executed for living a life devoted to truth. The formula of persecution—slander born from jealousy—remains the same today.

Facing his arrogant, gloating persecutors, Socrates declared with solemn composure, "I affirm, you men who condemned me to death, that vengeance will come upon you right after my death, and much harsher, by Zeus, than the sort you give me by killing me." This is a famous scene from Socrates' trial described in the *Apology of Socrates*, written by his disciple Plato.

Socrates goes on to say: "There will be more who will refute you, whom I have now



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been holding back; you did not perceive them. And they will be harsher, inasmuch as they are younger, and you will be more indignant." Socrates is saying here that many young people will inherit his legacy and fight even harder against the corrupt and unjust. He maintains that they will be more fearsome than he, more fierce, and warns his persecutors to be prepared for their vengeance. Even after being sentenced to death, Socrates made such a bold declaration.

At the time, Socrates' young disciple Plato was 28. In perfect accord with his mentor's words, Plato initiated a determined spiritual struggle to avenge the injustice of Socrates' death. It is a

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 6



Photo by ELIZABETH ANDERSON

SGI-USA members from San Diego celebrate after conducting a VOV workshop at Santana High School, March 20.

VOV Workshop Held at Santana High

By ELIZABETH ANDERSON
SAN DIEGO BUREAU CHIEF

When Takayoshi Fujimura, an SGI-USA young men's district leader in San Diego, first learned of the tragic shooting at Santana High School in the small suburb of Santee, Calif., where two students died, he was determined to respond to his community in some way.

He encouraged a group of members to discuss actions they could take to encourage the community. "When SGI President Ikeda hears about something like this, he takes quick action," he said. "We should, too. SGI members are peacemakers!"

Members from all over the San Diego area responded to his call to action and a Victory Over Violence movement was soon underway. VOV is a community outreach program founded by the SGI-USA's Youth Peace Committee in

August 1999. It focuses on the root causes of violence and provides group exercises and role-playing games to emphasize everyone's role in reducing violence in society.

It was the determination of the East Valley Chapter members, where Santee is a district, that SGI-USA would offer some type of outreach to the school's students. They learned the high school had their annual Peace Week Celebration planned March 19–23, even before the shooting occurred. They approached the school and, despite the short notice, the teacher in charge invited them to conduct a VOV workshop. The members had just a few days to pull their workshop together, but with the support of youth from all over San Diego, they came up with a great group and a fun schedule.

On March 20, just two weeks after the shooting, 85 students and three teachers filed into Santana's band room to attend

the workshop. After introducing themselves and the VOV program, the meeting opened with two skits. The first skit addressed stereotyping and the second looked at passive, verbal and physical violence. The skits acted as icebreakers, introducing some causes of violence as well as opening everyone up to discussion.

Two hands-on activities from the VOV workbook took up the remainder of the workshop. Students mingled and spoke animatedly with others they were meeting for the first time. The meeting concluded with the VOV pledge of nonviolence, which everyone signed. Afterward, the VOV presenters also signed Santana's own peace pledge.

On March 23, at the finale of the Peace Week Celebration, the SGI-USA youth also presented a gift of six books to the school's library. The books included *The Way of Youth* by President Ikeda. **WT**

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

Back to the Basics
By MARK KORAL
LOS ANGELES



moment. Our lives are never separate from everything else that is going

ing the “guilty party” for our problems does not help us in the least to become happy. It can even hurt us further. When we attribute the cause of our suffering to someone else—and do not take responsibility for our own destiny—we limit our inherent potential to grow, to change and to overcome any past trauma we experienced.

Our parents’ very existence and the specific circumstances they provided us with ultimately made it possible for us to manifest our individual traits and be born in this world as human beings. For this reason, Buddhism teaches that we are truly indebted to our parents.

By giving in to the view that we are fundamentally separate from other people, we shape every aspect of our lives in a deluded way. We obscure the profound meaning and unique mission that we possess, which we can discover only through our relationship to the world and other people. Nichiren Daisho-

nin explains it this way: “One who studies the teachings of Buddhism must not fail to repay the four debts of gratitude. According to the Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra, the first of the four debts is that owed to all living beings. Were it not for them, one would find it impossible to make the vow to save innumerable living beings...” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 43).

Indeed, if it were not for the influence of other living beings and the various conditions that surround our lives, both positive and seemingly negative, we simply could not have appeared in this world or may not continue to live in it as human beings. Ultimately, it is a result of the karma we ourselves have created through our thoughts, words and actions and that are manifested in our own unique environment, that our birth in this world is made possible.

When the sobering realization occurs that we alone are funda-

mentally responsible for the reality of our lives, a bright ray of hope begins to stream through the veil of darkness. For we realize that it is only through our own causes we make that we can change the suffering in our lives into happiness. This is the point of departure for profound change and growth. Based on our strong practice of faith, we can develop sincere appreciation for everything—both good and bad. We can come to realize that, in fact, everything in our life is functioning in no other way than to point us in the direction of absolute happiness. There is always some courageous action that we can take in response to even the harshest circumstances, opening a bright path to the future.

As we continue to bring forth our potential of unlimited wisdom and life force through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and dedicating our lives to kosen-rufu, we utilize all the circumstances in our lives as the impetus to develop ourselves further. Dependent origination is the magnificent stage upon which this great drama—the life of a Bodhisattva of the Earth—unfolds. **WT**

It is not in spite of but because of other people that we can grow and develop as human beings. SGI President Ikeda explains that “according to the Buddhist concept of dependent origination, all entities exist because of mutually interdependent relationships, and without other entities, one’s own existence would not be” (*Space and Eternal Life*, p. 168).

Buddhism thus teaches that all phenomena in the universe, including our lives, are brought into existence through a web of interconnected causes and effects that make up the totality of all phenomena—the entire universe at any given

on in the universe. Our individual life and environment are similar to a body and its shadow, which can never be separated. They are not fundamentally two separate existences.

From this perspective, we can see the futility of viewing things passively and negatively, as in attributing the cause of our suffering to external circumstances or other people. This would be similar to a person blaming his own shadow for following him around.

For example, we could blame our parents and the way we were raised for the problems we are experiencing in adult life. Even if our parents did horrible things to us, find-

Why Are We Reaching Out to Hokkeko Members?

SOKA SPIRIT Q & A

By JUAN DIEGO HINGAPIE
NEW JERSEY REGION
SOKA SPIRIT YOUTH LEADER



priest is infallible in matters of faith, the Hokkeko members

high priest is precisely why Nikko Shonin cautions future believers in this way. With the betrayal and slander of the “five senior priests” after the Daishonin’s death, Nikko Shonin no doubt foresaw the very real potential for such abuse of power.

But the Hokkeko members are not the ones who have abused this power—they are the ones who have been abused. The Daishonin continuously states in his writings the importance of having compassion for those who have been deceived by authority and taking action for their happiness.

Therefore, as his direct disciples, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, it is our mission to strive along the path of compassion that leads directly to enlightenment not only for ourselves but for everyone. The act of highest compassion that accords perfectly with Buddhism is to lead people who are unknowingly being misled by these priests

to the correct path of faith.

The current high priest’s excommunication of the SGI in 1991 completely betrayed the Daishonin’s compassionate intent. Nikken Abe’s actions constitute the most serious offense in Buddhism—disrupting the harmonious body of believers in the Law. Why is this so bad? It blocks innocent people from the road to enlightenment. It confuses people about where their happiness lies, ultimately leading them down the wrong path. The Daishonin thus states, “It is the way of the great devil to assume the form of a venerable monk or to take the position of one’s father, mother or brother in order to obstruct happiness in one’s next life” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 81).

The Daishonin lived in a time of strife and confusion, when priests of heretical sects were confusing believers and destroying their chance for happiness. “At such a time,” he writes, “one must set aside all other affairs and devote one’s

attention to rebuking slander of the correct teaching. This is the practice of shakubuku” (WND, 126). To reach out to the Hokkeko members—to encourage them, to share the truth with them—is shakubuku. We “rebuke the slander of the Law” through our own human revolution and developing this kind of true friendship.

With strong faith and prayers for their happiness, let’s continue to engage patiently our friends who are being deceived by the false image of priestly authority. **WT**

Q Why is it important to help Hokkeko members to leave the Nichiren Shoshu temples?

A The most unfortunate victims of the scheme to attack the SGI by Nikken Abe, the current high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, are the Hokkeko members, those practicing under the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. Since 1990, when Nikken changed the rules and regulations of Nichiren Shoshu dramatically and started to promote the erroneous doctrine that the high

have been led further and further astray from the correct practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and the chance to become truly happy.

This idea of the high priest’s infallibility completely violates the Daishonin’s teachings and is, in fact, one of the points that Nikko Shonin, his immediate successor, warns against in his “Twenty-six Admonitions.” Article 17 states, “Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha’s Law and propounds his own views” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618).

This warning makes it crystal clear that the high priest is not infallible. The possibility of the arbitrary and authoritarian abuse of the position of

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EXPERIENCE—EVELYN RIVERA, PUERTO RICO

Early Hardships Give Way to a Happy Family

In her quest to build a family, Evelyn Rivera found strength and compassion.

Although I was born and raised in New York City, my parents instilled in me the Latin cultural values “get an education, get married and have children.” I’ve since fulfilled these wishes, but not in that order.

I grew up at a time when drugs and teenage pregnancy were very pervasive and, seeing how this could have negative consequences before finishing high school, I determined not to become a statistic. However, this determination was short-lived. At age 19, I became pregnant. Although my parents never hit me, my first thought was, “They’re going to kill me,” and being one of my grandmother’s favorites, I was certain she would keel over and die. I was afraid, angry and knew I was not ready to take on the responsibility for someone else’s life.

After discussing the situation with two close friends, I decided to terminate the pregnancy without my parents’ knowledge. I remember while in the hospital awaiting the procedure, I felt lonely and scared, but more than anything, angry. With this feeling came the thought, “If I get through this nightmare, I never want to have a child.” I did my best to put this painful experience behind me and went on with my life.

Three years later, as my parents had envisioned, I got married. Two years later, while working at OB/GYN units, my desire to start a family reappeared, and I made an appointment with a doctor. He told me that due to damage to my reproductive organs, I could not conceive. Yet, at the same time, he gave me hope that with infertility technology and other resources, I had a 75 percent chance of having this problem corrected. I submitted to the necessary procedures and had surgery to correct the problem. After a year, nothing happened



Evelyn Rivera and Ian Willoughby and their children, Angie and Alex.

and the feelings of disappointment, fear and anger immediately set in.

It was during this time that my brother, Jimmy, started telling me about his Buddhist practice and inviting me to meetings on Thursday nights. He was always doing strange things, and I thought this was just another one. I hung out with him and his Buddhist friends on any other week day, but avoided him like the plague on Thursdays.

As time passed I saw they were normal, very warm and friendly. There was something drawing me to the practice that I couldn’t deny. Finally, I went to my first meeting. I felt the friendliness of those who today are my “treasures of the heart.” I was told to chant for anything my heart desired. So I began to chant to have children.

Two years had passed since the surgery and with this new

sense of hope and the Gohonzon, I submitted to a second operation. Only this time there was only a 50 percent chance of success. I remember during this hospital stay getting an encouraging call from a women’s leader whom I barely knew to say that she was chanting for my dream. People I didn’t even know were making my dreams their own. Within a year, I was told that the reconstructive surgery was again unsuccessful and this would be the last. I could not have children.

Again, I tried to put this painful experience behind me. The hurt and sense of failure were overwhelming and, being a new member, I started doubting the Gohonzon. But with the support of many members, I continued my practice and received many material benefits, what I thought then was happiness.

About five years later, my

marriage ended in mutual agreement. At this point, I began using my practice in a more profound way, to deal with the roots of my many sufferings, which seemed bigger than the universe. I began having slow gongyo sessions and mid-day group meetings at my apartment. I was invited on a trip to Chicago to see SGI President Ikeda where I heard the poem “To My Young American Friends,” which made me realize, “I am young and should be creating value with my life.”

A year earlier, my mother had been diagnosed with colon cancer and had major surgery. I prayed for her health and was encouraged to read Nichiren Daishonin’s letter “On Prolonging Life” for courage. It helped me realize the precious treasure of life. I remember calling my mother and hearing her say, “I’m happy because you sound so happy.” My mother received the Gohonzon in August 1986 in New York and passed away peacefully in March 1987 in her native Puerto Rico.

I had to use the strategy of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and put all my energy into overcoming this great loss and lonely feeling. During my many SGI activities, I also began to see how many of my personal relationships had no foundation. I realized I had to deepen my faith, not just for my sake, but in order to attract the right person. I chanted for someone that I could not only have a family with, but who would support me in my efforts for the SGI.

In preparation for a large SGI-USA gathering in Massachusetts, a young woman mentioned that there was a handsome young man she liked. Somehow another friend, who had been listening, suddenly appeared with this young man whom I remember always seeing at activities with two children. I always assumed he was supporting the women’s division, but actually the kids were his infant son and young daughter. I was very clear that my life had to stay focused on doing my own human revolution, so upon introduction I was not at-

tracted to him in the least.

As these activities proceeded, this very active young man always seemed to be in my environment and always needed a ride home or to work, which were all on my way home. These encounters allowed us to discuss our practice and I began to see him as a good friend. We were able to share our past relationships and many sufferings and agreed that we were practicing to change poison into medicine.

A year later, I became Mrs. Ian Willoughby and got a family all in one package. The adjustment of becoming an instant mother aroused fear and sometimes anger, arising from deeply rooted feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-esteem. Many times I chanted and cried in front of the Gohonzon, asking, “Why me?” Eventually, the answer was very clear: my mission was to raise these children for kosen-rufu. With this sense of purpose and compassion, I started seeing Ian’s children as my children.

Today, I am a happily married woman and a proud mother of a very vigorous young woman, Angelina, and a determined young man, Alexander.

I owe a great deal to my brother and those who have supported me in my practice. I will continue to strengthen my practice, along with my best friend and wonderful husband, until the last moment of my life, always following President Ikeda’s ceaseless encouragement. ■

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FROM 'MY DEAR FRIENDS IN AMERICA'

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism Lives Only Within the SGI

'Only the SGI has shown actual proof of the benefit of faith,' SGI President Ikeda explains. 'It is an organization of believers overflowing with such proof, an organization that pulses with the lifeblood of faith.'

From SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 1st SGI-USA Executive Conference, held in Malibu, Calif., Sept. 16, 1993.

While making it clear that we should base ourselves on the Gohonzon, 26th High Priest Nichikan [one of the restorers of Nichiren Shoshu] also insisted that strong faith and practice are necessary to tap the infinite powers of the Buddha and the Law. He wrote in his commentary on "The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind": "One should understand that when one believes in the object of devotion [that is the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] hidden in the depths of the Lotus Sutra, and chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, one can, through the powers of the Buddha and the Law, perfect the practice of observing the mind and attain enlightenment. But if one is lacking in faith, the power of the object of devotion will not enable one to attain enlightenment" (*The Commentaries of Nichikan*, p. 456).

Faith is crucial. Only with the actual practice of chanting daimoku and taking action for kosen-rufu does one's faith become true and correct and can one reap infinite benefit and blessings.

Nichikan also wrote: "The Gohonzon of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is not somewhere outside us. It resides within the faith of us ordinary people" (*Commentaries*, p. 465).

Of course, Nichikan's declaration is based on Nichiren Daishonin's injunction: "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself.... This Gohonzon also is found only in the two characters for faith" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 832).

Even though you may possess the Gohonzon, you will not enjoy its true benefit unless you have faith and take action for kosen-rufu.

First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi spread the Law by teaching the concept of punishment. Believe it or not, there were priests who opposed this, saying that it contradicted the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu. Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda decried this error on the part of the priests and wrote: "In the upper right corner of the Gohonzon are the words, 'If you slander this Law, you will have your head broken into seven pieces.' Doesn't this signify the theory of punishment? At the same time, in the upper left corner of the Gohonzon is an inscription that reads, 'If you make offerings to the Law, you will receive more good fortune than that derived from holding the ten titles of the Buddha.' Doesn't this signify the promise the Gohonzon makes to us that we will receive benefits when we devote ourselves to it? Benefit, or value, and punishment, or anti-value, constitute the reality of our daily lives. Some Nichiren Shoshu priests had forgotten that the power of the Gohonzon can be revealed in one's daily life in either way until President Makiguchi discussed it. They were astonished at what he brought out, and I am dumbfounded that many of them have since pretended that they have known this principle very well for quite some time.

"Also, some priests are not yet aware of this principle. I am saddened rather than surprised by their ignorance" (*The History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai*, 1951).

How astonishing was the priests' ignorance of Buddhism, and how little their faith in the Gohonzon! What is worse, they attacked and criticized the Soka Gakkai, which was working hard to spread the teachings in exact accord with the Daishonin's



SGI President Ikeda talks with youth at Soka University of America, Calabasas, September 1993.

teachings while demonstrating the power of the Gohonzon.

The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood today has not the least bit of faith in the Gohonzon. To them, the Gohonzon is nothing more than a tool for controlling the believers and greedily plundering their offerings. They will inevitably face the Daishonin's condemnation.

Nichiren Daishonin said, "And even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact" (WND, 599). Nothing is more powerful than the proof of actual fact. Nothing is more convincing than the actual fact of benefit and victory. The purpose of our faith is to show actual proof of the benefit we derive.

Only the SGI has shown actual proof of the benefit of faith. It is an organization of believers overflowing with such proof, an organization that pulses with the lifeblood of faith.

Nichikan attacked aberrant teachings out of his passion to accomplish kosen-rufu.

Nichikan strongly desired the realization of kosen-rufu. All of his writings, including the *Six-Volume Writings* and commentaries on various Goshos, were written solely for the sake of kosen-rufu. That is why he fiercely attacked the

many aberrant teachings rampant throughout the land at the time and proclaimed the truth of the Daishonin's teachings. It was all an expression of his desire to accomplish kosen-rufu.

For example, in his introduction to the "Interpretations Based on the Law," one of the six treatises that comprise his *Six-Volume Writings*, he wrote: "I have examined the passages [of the Lotus Sutra] that clearly indicate the Three Great Secret Laws, and, using them as proof that these principles represent the truth hidden in the depths of the Lotus Sutra, I humbly present this treatise to the disciples of later ages. It is entirely for the sake of accomplishing kosen-rufu."

Nichikan also criticized as slanderers of the Law those people who do not face the Gohonzon nor wish in their hearts to share Buddhism nor spread the teachings with their mouths.

In his "Commentary on 'On Practicing the Buddha's Teaching,'" Nichikan wrote: "The minds of those who forget *shakubuku* and are not always mindful of the four dictums are identical to the minds of slanderers of the Law. If they are not practicing *shakubuku* with their mouths, it is the same as if their mouths are slandering the Law. If their bodies are not facing toward the Gohonzon with prayer beads in their hands, it is equal

to their bodies slandering the Law." (*Commentaries*, p. 767)

No one can compare to SGI members when it comes to practicing the Buddha's teachings as Nichiren Daishonin instructs in the Goshos, for it is we who face the Gohonzon, do gongyo, chant daimoku, pray for the achievement of kosen-rufu and teach others of this Buddhism.

We have prayed, worked, taught others with all our might, faced and overcome one great persecution after another, and through it all, introduced many people to the Gohonzon. As a result, we have seen kosen-rufu develop on an unprecedented scale throughout the globe.

The Nikken sect does not do gongyo as it should; it does not do *shakubuku*. It excommunicated the SGI, which is faithfully practicing in accord with the Buddha's teachings; it obstructs kosen-rufu. It is in total and direct violation of the aforementioned injunction of Nichikan.

Nikken and his followers are committing great slander of the Law in all three categories of action—words, thoughts and deeds. To carry out Nichikan's teachings properly, we must strictly rebuke their slander of the Law.

The SGI will henceforth confer upon members *okatagi* Gohonzon produced from a

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

Gohonzon transcribed by Nichikan, who clarified the correct way of faith and practice and who embraced a strong desire to accomplish kosen-rufu. This marks the start of a new phase in the advancement of kosen-rufu and is, I believe, a development in complete accord with the wishes of Nichiren Daishonin, Nikko Shonin and Nichikan. I am also confident that it would give them all the greatest joy.

We can transform our lives into the Buddha of limitless joy.

Nichiren Daishonin's purpose in revealing the Gohonzon was to share with all people the heritage of the Law for becoming a Buddha, in other words, to enable them to attain enlightenment.

In the Goshō "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life," the Daishonin wrote: "Nichiren has been trying to awaken all the people of Japan to faith in the Lotus Sutra so that they too can share the heritage and attain Buddhahood. But instead they persecuted me in various ways and finally had me banished to this island" (WND, 217).

Nichikan also declared that when common mortals embrace the Gohonzon, their lives are transformed just as they are into the Buddha of limitless joy from time without beginning. This refers to the principle of the oneness of mentor and disciple.

In his "Commentary on 'The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,'" Nichikan wrote: "Everyone who receives and

embraces this object of devotion enters the way of the Buddha of time without beginning.... And we common mortals who have entered the way of this Buddha are entirely one with this Buddha of limitless joy. The Buddha of limitless joy is entirely one with us common mortals. How could this not indicate the oneness of mentor and disciple?" (*Commentaries*, p. 488).

The mission of followers of the Daishonin is to uphold the Gohonzon and to teach others about the Gohonzon and lead them to embrace faith so that they may attain Buddhahood. Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin's immediate successor, wrote, "Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 1618). This instruction is primarily addressed to priests. But in fact it is none other than the members of the SGI who are practicing without begrudging their lives to propagate the Gohonzon throughout the world in accord with Nikko Shonin's admonition.

Where within the Nikken sect have we seen anyone practice with the spirit of "not begrudging one's life"? Nikken himself has schemed to destroy the SGI and disrupt the flow of kosen-rufu.

SGI members are directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin.

The previous high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, Nittatsu, told the priests: "Always remember that our believers are believers

of the Daishonin. Our duty is simply to look after the believers and make it easier for them to pray to the Daishonin" (Jan. 15, 1972). Nikken tried to usurp the believers of the Daishonin and make them believers of Nikken. This is a revolt against the original Buddha.

Nichiu, the ninth high priest, declared that when someone strays from the faith of the Daishonin, the heritage of the Law for attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime is severed. [In his treatise "On the Formalities of True Buddhism," Nichiu wrote: "When we remain true to the faith of the Daishonin, our bodies and minds are the bodies and minds of Myōhō-enge-kyō, but when we stray from that faith, our bodies and minds are those of mere mortals, and as mere mortals, we cannot receive the heritage of the Law, which ensures the attainment of Buddhahood in our present form."]

About this statement, the 59th high priest, Nichiko, said that when we deviate even in the slightest from faith as it is taught by Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin, falling into false faith that deviates from the Buddha's intent, we lose our claim to receive the heritage of the Law. [Nichiko wrote: "When we do not deviate in the least from the faith of Nichiren Daishonin, the founder of true Buddhism, and Nikko Shonin, the founder of Taiseki-ji, we, as their followers, though possessing lives that are vulgar, evil and impure, will exhibit the truth, goodness and purity of Myōhō-enge-kyō in body and mind.... However, when our

faith deteriorates into impurity and becomes mistaken and confused, thereby straying from the Buddha's intent, the path of the water of the Law will be clogged, and only our inherent baseness will be manifest in our body and mind, thus disqualifying us from receiving the heritage of the Law for attaining Buddhahood in our present form."]

Nikken has excommunicated the SGI, an organization of believers that, in accordance with the Buddha's mandate and decree, is dedicated to the advancement of kosen-rufu. He is an aberrant priest who rebels against the Buddha's will. He has, as a result, disqualified himself from receiving the heritage of the Law for the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form, just as Nichiko stated. It goes without saying that Nikken has lost all qualifications to transcribe the Gohonzon and confer it upon anyone. I want to make this fact perfectly clear.

The SGI is carrying out the Buddha's will to achieve kosen-rufu.

In May 1951, soon after his inauguration as the second president, Mr. Toda declared that the time had come for a great propagation campaign, and he requested that the high priest transcribe a Gohonzon specially dedicated to the fulfillment of the Daishonin's vow to accomplish kosen-rufu.

Responding to the Soka Gakkai's request, the high priest at that time, Nisshō, transcribed the Gohonzon, and down one side he wrote the following dedication: "For the Fulfillment of the Great Desire for Kosen-rufu Through the Compassionate Propagation of the Great Law." This Gohonzon clearly reveals the great significance and mission of the SGI, which made its advent to carry out the Buddha's mandate and decree to achieve kosen-rufu.

Now that Nikken has become an enemy of the Buddha, it is the mission and duty of the SGI to undertake the conferral of Gohonzon for the sake of people who seek it the world over, as well as for the sake of the ongoing advancement of kosen-rufu. This is an undertaking that accords with the time. It is also in perfect accord with the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin.

As I have already discussed at length, there is profound significance in the SGI's conferral of the Gohonzon transcribed by Nichikan, who was directly connected to the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin.

We should look upon the Gohonzon in our homes as Nichiren Daishonin's life.

The Dai-Gohonzon, which Nichiren Daishonin bestowed upon all people of the world and which was the ultimate purpose for his advent in this world, is and will always be the basis of our faith. This will never change.

High Priest Nittatsu remarked: "The Daishonin has already died. His life, the life of Nichiren Daishonin, is the Dai-Gohonzon of the high sanctuary.... The Gohonzon enshrined in your altar is, itself, the life of Nichiren Daishonin. Your Gohonzon manifests the three enlightened properties of the Buddha—the property of the Law, the property of wisdom and the property of action—that is, Nichiren Daishonin himself" (Sept. 7, 1962).

We should look upon the Gohonzon enshrined in each of our homes as the life of the Daishonin, the entity of the original Buddha. When we chant daimoku with that conviction, it is the same as if we are devoting ourselves to the Dai-Gohonzon itself right where we are.

Nittatsu also said: "Wherever the Gohonzon is enshrined, that place, in a broad sense, takes on the significance of the high sanctuary. The sincere daimoku you chant to that Gohonzon with a concentrated mind free of all extraneous thoughts is instantly received by the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism. The place where you chant Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō is instantly transformed into Eagle Peak. And this is where you attain Buddhahood in your present form" (Nov. 23, 1977).

Wherever you may be in the world, if you believe in the Gohonzon and chant daimoku with sincere faith, you are in contact with the Dai-Gohonzon at that moment and in that place. The claim that unless you visit the head temple you will not acquire true benefit is a great falsehood in violation of the teachings of Nittatsu.

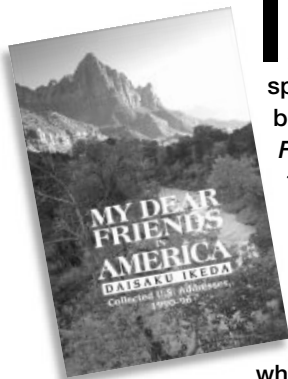
Nichikan wrote of the benefit of the Gohonzon, "If only you take faith in this Gohonzon and chant Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō even for a while, no prayer will go unanswered, no offense will remain unforgiven, all good fortune will be bestowed, and all righteousness proven" (*Commentaries*, p. 443).

Let us continue to advance confidently on the golden road to worldwide kosen-rufu, always basing ourselves on the Gohonzon and accumulating infinite benefit on our way. **WT**

'My Dear Friends in America' Series

In this series, in response to readers' requests, we are reprinting excerpts from some of SGI President Ikeda's 1990s speeches in the United States. All of these will be available in May in the new book *My Dear Friends in America: Collected U.S. Addresses 1990-96*, published by the World Tribune Press. Due to an oversight in the production process, an earlier edition of *My Dear Friends* was missing five speeches. All the SGI-USA bookstores have been asked to stop selling the book, and it is being reprinted. Anyone who has purchased an incomplete copy can

exchange it for the reprint, when it is released next month. To help facilitate this exchange process, the reprint will have a different color jacket to make it easily distinguishable from the defective version. Details on the re-release will be announced in the *World Tribune*.



FROM SPEECH, I

well-known historical fact that Plato's efforts did much to establish his mentor's reputation as a great philosopher and teacher.

Plato's ideal of rule by philosopher-leaders was also born from this unrelenting pursuit of truth and justice that he shared with his mentor. Even after more than two millennia, their struggle shines with undiminished brilliance.

It is young disciples who realize the ideals of their mentors.

In the past, militarism dragged Japan into war, caused first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi to die in prison and inflicted untold suffering on the peoples of Asia. Second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda rose to challenge the despicable evils of nationalism head-on. I have inherited that same spirit.

At any rate, we can trust the youth. The youth are our only hope. Both Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda shared this conviction, leaving it to us as their legacy. I hold exactly the same sentiments.

As long as youth burn with anger against evil and injustice and take bold action against them, a new sun of hope will rise on human history. Please do not forget this unchanging law.

If youth do not struggle, they will lose out in the long run.

I want to talk a little bit about former Chilean president Patricio Aylwin, a philosopher-statesman with whom I have published a dialogue in Japanese entitled *Dawn Over the Pacific*. I have met Mr. Aylwin several times, including at the magnificent La Moneda Presidential Palace in Santiago, Chile's capital. He is a tall, dignified leader, a lofty revolutionary and a president who will go down in history.

For 16 years, following a coup d'état in 1973, Chile was ruled by a military dictatorship. The authoritarian regime trampled brutally on the human rights of its citizens. More than 2,000 people were executed by firing squads. And more than 1,000 others "disappeared"—no one knows if they are still alive. Countless innocent people were arrested, persecuted, tortured and exiled. Some 900,000 children suffered the pain of seeing parents or grandparents subjected to this fate.

For many years, the authorities and the mass media worked hand in glove to spread



SGI President Ikeda meets with former Chilean president Patricio Aylwin in February 1993, at La Moneda Presidential Palace in Chile.

lies that became a breeding ground for violence. This led to a climate in which the persecution of good and honest people went unchallenged. The most outrageous and unbelievable deeds were committed with impunity.

During the 1973 coup d'état, the home of SGI-Chile General Director Yoshimasa Chinen, who hails from Okinawa, came under tank fire.

Many SGI members around the world are struggling under truly trying conditions. They are working intrepidly to build districts and chapters and expand our SGI network.

It was youth who took the lead in reversing the nightmare reign of terror that held Chilean society in its grip. A galvanizing incident took place at an officially sanctioned, televised gathering of youth. In a dramatic turn of events, a young man rose to deliver the opening remarks. He put aside the speech that had been approved by the censors and suddenly exclaimed: "I want to tell the truth about Chile."

He continued: "Chile today has many problems, and its youth live in suffering and fear. The Chilean people are being abused." Then a young woman got up and spoke out bravely: "We want justice, not injustice! We want freedom,

not oppression! We want truth, not lies!" This is how it should be, they declared—this is how our country was meant to be! How thunderously the audience must have applauded in their hearts!

The youth of Chile continued to speak the truth, fighting the dictatorship head-on. The passion and strength of these youth, who were willing to put their lives on the line for freedom, changed history.

In a speech after Chile's democratic revolution, President Aylwin praised the nameless young men and women who had spoken out: "For all peoples, youth represent promise and hope. Without the power of youth, a society is in danger of stagnation."

I now place all my trust in the youth. I have faith in none but the youth.

Mr. Aylwin has great hopes for young people. When he visited Soka University in 1994 and delivered a speech there, he was happy to see how lively and engaged our students were. He also said that the presence of these wonderful young people was proof of the validity of our movement.

Mr. Toda, too, treasured the youth beyond measure. He also trained us rigorously.

Young people are the creators of the age. This is true in

every country of the world. That is why I hope you will never betray our ideals.

Youth must struggle. If you do not, you will lose out. You will have no fond memories to look back on.

The people of Chile carried out a unique grassroots protest against the military dictatorship. When evening came, mothers stood in their doorways and banged on pots and pans, sending a rousing voice of protest ringing through the streets. This was a brilliant idea devised by ordinary citizens. And not only was it effective, it was free!

The clamor spread through the town and struck fear in the military authorities. They were more afraid of the united force of the people than of bullets.

This awakened citizenry went on to carry out the Chilean democratic revolution and usher in a new era. With pencil and paper—in other words, the power of the vote—they toppled a dictatorial regime of guns and brute force.

When you are energetic, everything that happens turns into something positive.

The time for the revolution had arrived. In October 1988, the military government confidently scheduled a national

election to endorse their rule. With their enormous political power and the mass media under their control, the authorities believed they could persuade the people to legitimize their rule.

Mr. Aylwin, leader of the Christian Democratic Party, bravely decided to run in the election. He would beat the dictator on the dictator's own ground!

For the sake of democracy, Mr. Aylwin and his supporters made a massive effort to build a nationwide coalition of citizens that transcended regional and group affiliations. One of their major challenges was getting the people of Chile, apathetic and fearful from the long years of oppression, interested and involved in the political process again.

The people of Chile united behind the call "Say 'No!' to the Military Dictatorship!" The coalition of citizens fighting for democracy was filled with vigor. They forcefully refuted the baseless insults and slander thrown at them.

When they were criticized as an uncohesive "hodgepodge" of diverse groups, they used the attack to their advantage and adopted as their symbol a rainbow—a beautiful harmony of different colors. They made the diversity of their "hodgepodge"

a point of pride and turned it into a strength.

When you are filled with energy, you can put everything to positive use, make everything an asset.

The military dictatorship declared a "national emergency" and used that as an excuse to restrict the freedom of the press and freedom of assembly, and to sow doubt and anxiety among the people. But the citizens responded by singing the song "Chile, Joy Already Comes!" and using upbeat slo-

gans to give the people hope and confidence.

Other songs appeared as well. As the people happily sang them, their spirits rose and their movement gained momentum. This is why Chile's democratic revolution has been called a triumph of "songs and handshakes" — handshakes symbolizing the coalition forged among so many groups.

Mr. Aylwin was active in the campaign. He personally went to see people, patiently visiting them again and again and en-

gaging them in dialogue, always with an encouraging smile on his lips. Broadly extending the scope of that dialogue to those without any party affiliations and to thinking people all over the world, he made every effort to insure that the election would take place fairly and openly.

Words are the ammunition of truth.

Mr. Aylwin also used radio to let the people of Chile hear his energetic, confident voice urging them to take back their freedom. The power of his voice stirred and inspired the people.

Words are the ammunition of truth. The voice is the herald of victory.

Mr. Aylwin declared to his fellow citizens:

We are going to win.

Because Chile wants peace and it does not want more war.

Because Chile does not want more hatred and violence.

Because Chile wants justice and not more crimes and privileges.

Because the people of Chile want to shake off the humiliation of fear and regain their dignity as free citizens.

Because Chile wants democracy and not more dictatorship.

We are going to win, because we are an immense majority!

We are going to win, because we represent hope!

Then, on Oct. 5, 1988, the elections resulted in a loud and clear "No!" to the military gov-

ernment. Peacefully, without bloodshed, the door to democracy was opened.

The youth had won! The people had won! A joyous cry for the victory of truth and justice rang out in the skies of Chile, echoing against the towering Andes.

The victory of the Chilean people's solidarity, along with a move toward democracy in many other Latin American nations, was a crowning event of the 20th century. It was part of a wave of democratization that later swept Eastern Europe and saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Velvet Revolution, which brought an end to communist rule in Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Aylwin says, "History is made by the men and women who give their all to build a better world."

For us of the Soka Gakkai in Japan, the curtain has risen on our first big challenge of the 21st century, with the whole world looking on. I hope that our youth will leave behind a history of great victory, as they continue to expand our network of justice and humanism even further.

The ultimate essence of faith is to manifest Nichiren Daishonin's life within ourselves.

The 26th high priest Nichikan states, in an important passage in "Commentary on 'The Entity of the Mystic Law'" that I have mentioned many times before, "Through

the power of the Mystic Law, we manifest the life of the Daishonin within ourselves."

When we chant and exert ourselves for kosen-rufu, we can block devils or negative, destructive forces from "entering" our lives and allow the positive, protective forces of the universe to "enter" instead. Please chant with strong conviction, as if calling, "Brahma, Shakra and the gods of the Sun and the Moon, 'enter' my life and put your power to work!" The ultimate essence of faith in the Mystic Law is to manifest the Daishonin's life within ourselves. We can then fight with the same strength as the Daishonin. When we do so, we will never be defeated, no matter what hardships we encounter. We will not be unhappy. We will not fail to win. We will not fail to become happy. This is the quintessence of faith. I hope you will all be completely convinced of this and live your lives filled with optimism and hope.

Please always advance in harmony and friendship with one another. Harmonious development is the starting point for happiness, construction and value creation.

As we each strive to grow with every passing year, let us accumulate good fortune and together achieve happy, healthy and wonderful lives.

Thank you for your long attention today. Please take care not to catch cold in this wintry weather. Let's meet again next month! **W**

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Capturing Nichiren Daishonin's Spirit

From This Speech:

The ultimate essence of faith in the Mystic Law is to manifest Nichiren Daishonin's life within ourselves. We can fight with the same strength as the Daishonin. When we do, we will never be defeated, no matter what hardships we encounter. We will not be unhappy. We will not fail to win. We will not fail to become happy. This is the quintessence of faith. I hope you will all be completely convinced of this and live your lives filled with optimism and hope.

- 1) SGI President Ikeda says, "The ultimate essence of faith in the Mystic Law is to manifest Nichiren Daishonin's life within ourselves." What does this mean? How does this correspond to the oneness of the Person and Law?
- 2) Does manifesting the Daishonin's life mean we lose our own identity?
- 3) Why is it important for us to study the Daishonin's life? Why is it important to understand his spirit?

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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 degree 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.

School Honors SGI President, Rosa Parks

Canyon Springs High School in Moreno Valley, Calif., has named SGI President Ikeda and American civil rights activist Rosa Parks honorary principals for the year. The honors came as part of the school's newly established honorary principal program, which has the aim of recognizing accomplished individuals from a wide range of fields and providing a means for students to gain a greater appreciation for their own role as world citizens. The selection of President Ikeda and Mrs. Parks was announced March 6 by Principal Patrick Kelleher.

Located in the rapidly growing new city of Moreno Valley, which is 66 miles east of Los Angeles, Canyon Springs High School has an enrollment of some 3,000 students.

In making the announcement, Mr. Kelleher explained the considerations that informed the process of selecting the school's first honorary principals. The decision was made to nominate prominent leaders (male and female) in the areas of peace and human rights, since these are the foundation of all endeavors from politics and economics to science and art, he said. Moreover, he added, extreme care was taken in making the selection, because of the awareness that the value of the entire program will hinge on those chosen as the first honorary principals. Taking all of this into account, he explained, they arrived at their selections. Mr. Kelleher introduced President Ikeda as leader in the field of education and human rights who advocates building peace and friendship through dialogue.

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima accepted the certificate of honorary principal on President Ikeda's behalf and read a message from the SGI leader (see right).

Ms. Denise Nicholas, Pathways to Freedom coordinator of the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development, who represented Mrs. Parks at the event, said the human rights activist was delighted to be hon-

ored together with President Ikeda. Relating that she had an opportunity to personally meet Mr. and Mrs. Ikeda when she accompanied Mrs. Parks to Japan in May 1994, Ms. Nicholas said she would never forget the deep friendship she witnessed between President Ikeda and Mrs. Parks, nor Mrs. Ikeda's warm hospitality. **W**



On behalf of SGI President Ikeda and Rosa Parks, SGI-USA leaders and representatives of Mrs. Parks receive plaques commemorating their selection as honorary principals for Canyon Springs High School in Moreno Valley, Calif.

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO CANYON SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL

Education Will Change Society

'The key to creating a society based on human rights,' says SGI President Ikeda, 'lies in education based on developing character through your own efforts.'

Principal Patrick Kelleher, respective teachers and students, as a fellow individual who regards education as life's greatest work, it is the greatest joy to be named Honorary Principal together with my most respected friend, Rosa Parks, the mother of American human rights, from your castle of education in California's Moreno Valley Canyon Springs High School.

I am not able to attend today's prestigious ceremony but I would like to send my heartfelt appreciation from across the Pacific in Japan.

I first met with Ms. Rosa Parks at Soka University of America, Calabasas in 1993, and since then have had the opportunity to communicate with her on numerous occasions.

I have also conducted countless dialogues with many champions of human rights such as South Africa's former president Nelson Mandela, Adolfo Perez Esquivel of Argentina, Austregesilo de Athayde of Brazil, B. N. Pande of India, Linus Pauling and Arun Gandhi. All of them were gentle people, and all of them were strong people. They had

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



SGI-USA donates 30 books to the Canyon Springs High School library in support of the school's honorary principal program.

the strength to endure the hardships of persecution, yet by just meeting them you sensed a warm responsiveness and sensitivity to others' feelings.

Ms. Rosa Parks is another of these gentle yet strong people who embraces those she encounters with gentle and charming eyes.

Ms. Parks has written: "I have never allowed myself to be treated as a second-class citizen. You must respect yourself before others can respect you." These words speak truth. Even at the height of discrimination against African Americans, she refused to ride in the elevators marked "Colored." Unable to compromise with such discrimination, she took the stairs. One hot summer day, her throat was parched, but rather than drink from the "Colored" water fountain, she went thirsty. I am convinced that her dauntless character created the victorious foundation of the civil rights movement.

All of you are now in the process of going to high school, learning the classic and modern wisdom of both East and West, absorbing all forms of knowledge. The key to creating a society based on human rights lies in education based on developing character through your own efforts. It is for this reason I pay my heartfelt respect to you young citizens of the world.

I am a Buddhist, and Buddhism teaches the principle of cherry, plum, peach and damson—that all things have their own unique beauty and mission. Everyone has a right to flower, to reveal their full potential as a human being and fulfill their mission in this world. Buddhism teaches that differences signify uniqueness and that all people are equal and worthy of respect based upon the dignity of life. Consequently, I always share with high school students in Japan that to push others around with narrow-minded hearts, with

haughty hearts, jealous hearts, or with self-centered hearts and thereby hurt them is actually an act of hurting yourself. Ultimately, rather than trying to win over others, a life geared towards winning over oneself is the basis for creating peace and human rights. Up until now our world has been full of conflict and violence. The people who will change this are you who will be living far into the future.

First and second Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda were educators. Today, the SGI has grown to have membership in 163 countries. The goal of these two educators was to create a society that is based on the human being, and they professed that education is the only way to do so. The only way to create a society where the people are happy is to create a society where the people are wise. This is the eternal path of the SGI.

Based upon these ideals of Presidents Makiguchi and Toda, educators who dedicated their lives for the sake of humanistic education, I humbly accept this great honor from your esteemed high school and dedicate it to Makiguchi and my mentor, Toda.

I would like to end today's message with my deepest prayers for the eternal glory of Canyon Springs High School and for the eternal advancement of the teachers and students.

March 6, 2001
Daisaku Ikeda

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

Illustration by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

'SECURING THE FOUNDATION'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 1, PARTS 37-38

'There are cases in which a person's illness is cured soon after taking faith, but true benefit does not appear in this manner,' Shin'ichi Yamamoto explains. 'If the real benefits of faith came in the form of unexpected windfalls without any effort on our part, we'd become lazy and spoiled.'

After the completion ceremony for the Amami Oshima Community Center, interviews were conducted with the proposed leaders of Amami Oshima General Chapter on the second floor of the new building.

This was the first that any of the members had heard about the formation of a general chapter, and they were very surprised. Takashi Nogawa, who was a candidate for the post of general chapter leader, was thinking of turning down the position. He felt that he had been unable to fully carry out his duties as chapter leader, and that he would not be able to handle the even heavier responsibilities of general chapter leader.

When time for his interview came, he expressed this concern to Shin'ichi Yamamoto, who said: "It is true that the Amami Oshima General Chapter will cover a lot of territory and the responsibilities of that leader will be great. But that doesn't mean you cannot do it.

"At the age of 32, I took on the entire world. The Amami Islands may be spread out, but they're not that wide!"

Nogawa could say nothing in response to this. He thought of the personal vow he had made to devote himself to working for kosen-rufu alongside President Yamamoto, and decided to challenge himself to the very end.

At about this time, members were gathering at Shiohama Beach, an area of reclaimed land that faced Naze Harbor, where a large meeting was to be held that day. A covered stage had been set up against the mountain backdrop, and a banner with "Soka Gakkai Amami Oshima Chapter Meeting" written in bold strokes stretched

across the stage. At the last minute, the meeting had been changed to an inaugural meeting for Amami Oshima General Chapter, but there had been no time to redo the banner.

Six thousand members filled the beach by 11:00 a.m. They sat on straw mats and ate picnic lunches as they waited for the meeting to start at 1:00. At 12:45, when President Yamamoto and the other leaders stepped onto the stage, a roar of applause erupted, and the meeting began.

After a chorus of Soka Gakkai songs, Vice General Director Kiyoshi Jujo announced the formation of Amami Oshima General Chapter and introduced the new leadership. This was greeted by a wave of joyous applause that seemed to go on forever.

Next, the new general chapter leader, Nogawa, took the podium and shared his determination with the audience. "Today," he said, "Amami Oshima General Chapter has been established. It is a new beginning for all of us. Seven or eight years ago, there were almost no members in the Amami Islands. I believe that the establishment of this general chapter is a sign of the triumph of our faith and proof that we really can achieve kosen-rufu."

Nogawa called out at the top of his voice: "The karma of the Amami Islands is deep. Not only do we have a painful past, but also each year typhoons inflict great damage, causing our fellow citizens terrible hardship.

"We are the ones who can change all that. I am determined to devote every ounce of my strength to turning these is-



lands into a Buddha land. President Yamamoto has said that the more a region suffers and the more misfortune it encounters, the stronger our organization will grow there. Let's work together and make our general chapter the best in all Japan! Let's stand up together once again!"

The members signaled their agreement by raising their fists high into the air. Their response was immediate and came with a force that seemed to shake the heavens.

After Nogawa, young women's leader Michiyo Watari, director Ryoichi Sawada, and vice general directors Yukio Ishikawa, Katsu Kiyohara and Eisuke Akizuki each delivered greetings, followed by General Director Koichi Harayama. Finally, Shin'ichi expressed his deep appreciation to the members for their hard work, and began his speech with a bright smile on his now-suntanned face.

Declaring that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the ultimate teaching from both a documentary and theoretical perspective, Shin'ichi stated that the benefits gained from its practice are primarily "inconspicuous" in the way they are manifested. "There are two kinds of benefits from our

prayers," he said, "those that are immediately apparent, or 'conspicuous,' and those that we cannot see right away, or 'inconspicuous.' Inconspicuous benefit is the focus of the Daishonin's Buddhism, for it is what brings real happiness.

"There are cases in which a person's illness is cured soon after taking faith, but true benefit does not appear in this manner—nor is it anything like beginning to practice and coming into a large sum of money. If the real benefits of faith came in the form of unexpected windfalls without any effort on our part, we'd become lazy and spoiled.

"So what is inconspicuous benefit? It can be likened to the

growth of a tree. You can spend day after day watching a tree, and nothing will seem to change. But if you observe it after five, 10, 20 years have passed, you will see that it has grown large and tall. In the same way, if you keep practicing this faith for five, 10 or 20 years, your negative karma will disappear and you will change your destiny, accumulate good fortune and gain tremendous benefit. This is what is meant by inconspicuous benefit, and it is the true benefit of the Daishonin's Buddhism."

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

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Consistent Practice Changes Everything

PERSPECTIVE

By JASON HENNINGER
LOS ANGELES

'Because I challenged myself to practice consistently,' writes Jason Henninger, 'I found I chanted more and enjoyed both morning and evening gongyo more than before, and my mood brightened.'



all. And as a studious sort of guy, fond of a good rationalization, I've investigated every possible excuse for skipping evening gongyo.

"Nichiren Daishonin," I'd say, "never specified how gongyo is done. He never said five prayers in the morning and three at night." And in my lazy little mind I'd imagine him nodding, as if to say: "Quite right. Go ahead and sleep."

I studied the origins of gongyo, the recitation of the Lotus Sutra, which dates back to the very beginning of Buddhism, before the written word. "It's just a mnemonic device," I proclaimed, "and not essential." And then I'd imagine Shakyamuni smiling and saying: "Excellent. Sweet dreams!"

The greatest flaw in my argument (aside from being more or less completely stupid) was the fact that I almost never missed morning gongyo despite all my attempts to trivialize it. I almost never went without it.

But at night? I'm asleep, right? Who cares about your life-condition when you're sleeping? And so, armed with this utter foolishness, I slept a lot and missed half my practice.

My wife and I moved to Los Angeles several months ago in high hopes of jump-starting my writing career. We were full of adventure and enthusiasm because we had been heavily involved with the Pacific Northwest's Youth Culture Festival. We both made great causes for our future together in sunny Southern California.

She got a great job right away. The pay was better than ever, and her company paid for our housing for a couple of months. I sent out resumés and thought to myself: "This will be a piece of cake. I'll be an editor for a great metropolitan newspaper and make a jillion dollars and we'll live by the sea, tra la la."

And I sent out more resumés. And yet more. And yet still even

more. There were a ton of great jobs. I just couldn't get the phone to ring. Every night I'd go to bed wondering, "What am I doing wrong?"

I continued to ask myself that as time went on, and money got scarce, and my brain became a big ugly worried mess. Next thing I knew we were living in my family's already full house. Every night I'd go to sleep on the floor wondering, "What am I doing wrong?"

Hadn't I made great causes? Sure I had. Didn't I deserve a home and a job? Of course. So what the %&@! was I doing wrong?

My mother, my sisters and my wife looked at my downtrodden life, noticed my lack of consistent practice, and started to "remind" me about evening gongyo and chanting more often. I'd whine, and I'd rationalize, and I'd pretend to be asleep, but eventually I started down the bumpy road to a regular practice.

Nichiren Daishonin, though he wrote little about reciting the sutra, had quite a lot to say about consistency. In his writing, "Expedient Means and Life Span Chapters," he states, "If

one fails to put faith in the Lotus Sutra...practicing the Lotus Sutra only from time to time...then all the merit of the countless good acts one has performed throughout one's life will suddenly vanish. Moreover, the blessings resulting from one's practice of the Lotus Sutra will for some time be obscured" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 70).

My benefits certainly had become obscured. But because I challenged myself to practice consistently, I found I chanted more and enjoyed both morning and evening gongyo more than before, and my mood brightened whether or not I was asleep!

To top it all off, my wife and I got a great apartment and I started a new job. We don't have all our furniture, and I have the flu like I said, but so what? The future looks bright. And in my mind I can almost see Nichiren Daishonin nodding and saying: "Quite right. About time you figured this out."

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

Feeling the Suffering of Others Far Away

PERSPECTIVE

By HARSH MISHRA
HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

'I am beginning to realize that regardless of how remote or seemingly indirect a phenomenon may be,' says Harsh Mishra, 'it is very much a part of my life.'



SGI for the last nine years, only now am I beginning to realize that regardless of how remote or seemingly indirect a phenomenon may be, it is very much a part of my life and therefore draws a response from me. In our pursuit of developing the qualities of global citizens, as SGI President Ikeda has encouraged us, we are learning this Buddhist truth.

This profound concept first occurred to me on Feb. 11, 1992, the day I decided to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism. I was invited as a guest to the SGI Youth Peace Culture Festival in New Delhi, India. When

President Ikeda spoke, I was touched by the way he spontaneously embraced Indian people and their culture as if it were his own. It seemed as if he cared more for Indian people than many of the Indians themselves. In a recent message to Indian SGI members, too, he expressed his deep feelings of concern for the victims of the Gujarat earthquake.

As his disciple, I try to follow the same path, a path that embraces all humanity without any distinction. There is this ancient Sanskrit saying in India: "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." It means, "The entire planet earth is my neighborhood of close relatives." We are learning this spirit within the SGI.

In my own case, chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo gradually brought back and refreshed these basic principles of humanity I had forgotten. As a young child in the small townships of India, I witnessed the poverty and caste-based discrimination in Indian society. Not conforming to these no-

tions in my young mind, I resented being restricted from playing with other kids who came from poor and lower caste families. I felt angry with the elders who placed such unreasonable demands on me.

Ironically, I thought that those deprived kids were so happy and free and that I was the one imprisoned. In my following years of formal education and building a well-paying career, I slackened in my resolve to feel that freedom—until it was rekindled when I encountered Buddhism. Now, when I chant, I feel confident that I will grow to be able to contribute to others' lives even more significantly.

While many people take action to support those in the midst of unfortunate miseries, we SGI members also have a special role, one that is different from any charitable trusts or social work force. While our contribution may include any of these actions, we more importantly help create the spiritual context within which such

efforts can freely grow and be encouraged in society.

I feel thankful to you, my fellow SGI members, for advancing our movement. Having grown up amidst the visible adversities of the rural settings of India, I can identify to some degree with the struggle of these people. My hope is that some day, our movement of human empowerment will reach every struggling life in each unknown corner of the world, whether it's a rough neighborhood of Philadelphia, the earthquake-devastated villages of Gujarat, India, or a malnourished infant in Ethiopia.

I will challenge myself to aspire for more than just my own comfort. We must never get exhausted in keeping every suffering life in our prayers and taking individual action for an end to this suffering.

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You must have heard about the deadly earthquake in Northern India with tens of thousands of lives tragically coming to an end, leaving millions of friends and families grieving. My heart wept as I heard stories about mothers' desperate search for their lost children in the rubble.

After practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with the

CALIFORNIA CITY HONORS SGI PRESIDENT AND MRS. IKEDA

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The World Tribune welcomes reader submissions. If you are interested in contributing an article or photograph, please contact us for guidelines. Together we can make a great newspaper.

The City of Hawthorne, Calif., honored SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda for their contributions to peace on Feb. 26. During a session of the Hawthorne City Council, Mayor Larry Guidi presented a Certificate of Recognition for President Ikeda and a Certificate of Appreciation for Mrs. Ikeda, along with the Key to the City. SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima accepted the honors on the couple's behalf.

In his presentation, Mayor Guidi lauded President Ikeda for showing people the means to bring families and communities closer together. He also praised the activities of local SGI members, saying that their efforts to contribute to the community provide a model for all citizens. The Certificate of Recognition cites President Ikeda's "superior lead-

ership dedicated to promoting world peace and understanding, dignity and respect for all humankind, and seeking the development of spiritual growth and awareness for all humankind."

In presenting the Certificate of Appreciation for the SGI leader's wife, Mayor Guidi noted that, given the time difference, it was already Feb. 27—Mrs. Ikeda's birthday—in Japan. He said he was delighted to be able to honor her on this special day. The certificate recognizes Mrs. Ikeda's "outstanding contribution, continued support and dedication to the growth of the Soka Gakkai International throughout the world." The mayor, councilors and other city officials then joined SGI-USA representatives in singing "Happy Birthday" in Mrs. Ikeda's honor. **WT**

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUI



Mayor Larry Guidi of Hawthorne, Calif., discusses the work of SGI President Ikeda with SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima, Feb. 27.

Performers Support L.A. Marathon

By DYWANA BOUTTE-JONES
LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT

The SGI-USA Southern California Zone youth performance groups and American Rainbow Chorus performed for the 16th annual City of Los Angeles Marathon on March 4. The Los Angeles Marathon was host to more than 23,000 participants from around the world, including runners, walkers, wheelchair athletes and, for the seventh year in a row, more than 10,000 cyclists in the Acura Bike Tour.

The marathon officially started at 6:00 a.m. with the bike tour and SGI-USA members already in full force, volunteering at the eighth mile. The 20th mile is where the dynamic beat of the SGI-USA Taiko Drummers kicked off a glorious, rain-free day for the singers and dancers.

The threat of rain loomed over the stage area all morning, but the powerful movement of the SGI-USA dance groups International Souls, Rhythm Nation and Dance Crew held it at bay. Their

hour-and-a-half show was completed three times in support of all the runners who had 6.2 miles to go.

Johnny Pastor of Rhythm Nation stated, "The support from the Behind-the-Scenes Group and our zone leaders made the day incredible for us." Trayonna Bradley, 15, said that she is "having fun with all her Buddhist activities." Her sister, Naomi, 13, achieved her goal of chanting every day toward the marathon.

This was the final marathon performance for some of the

young women who will be graduating to the women's division this year. Some had been performing in as many as 10 of these shows, with one member performing for the 12th year in a row.

SGI-USA received a congratulatory letter from the organizing committee, which reads in part: "The Los Angeles Marathon would like to thank you for your continued support. We look forward to working with you on the City of Los Angeles Marathon next year!" **WT**

Photo by DYWANA BOUTTE-JONES



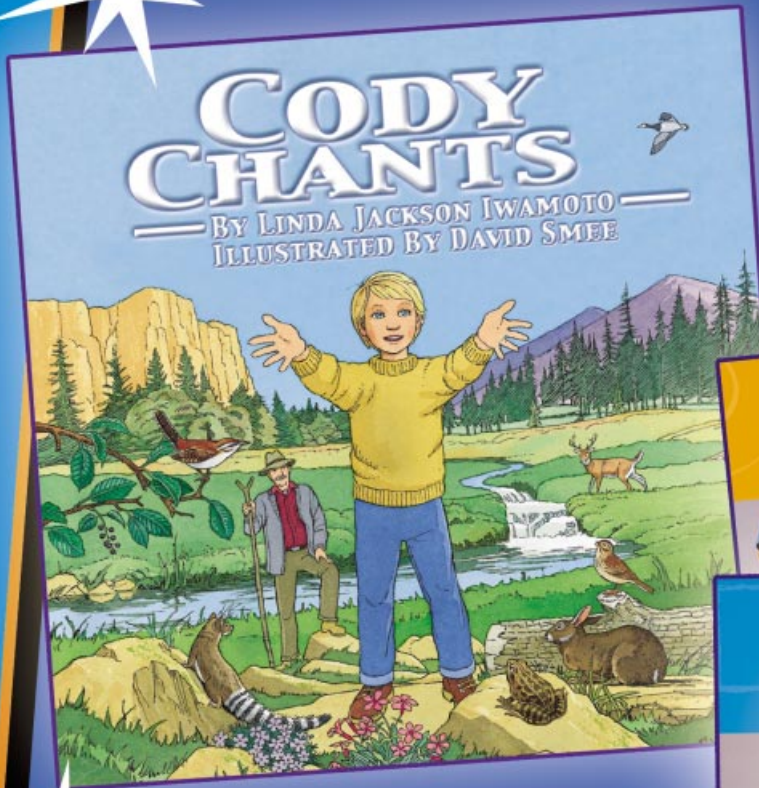
The dancers of SGI-USA's Rhythm Nation perform at the City of Los Angeles Marathon, March 4.



Some of the young women, who will be graduating to the women's division this year, display their joy in performing in a marathon show for the last time.

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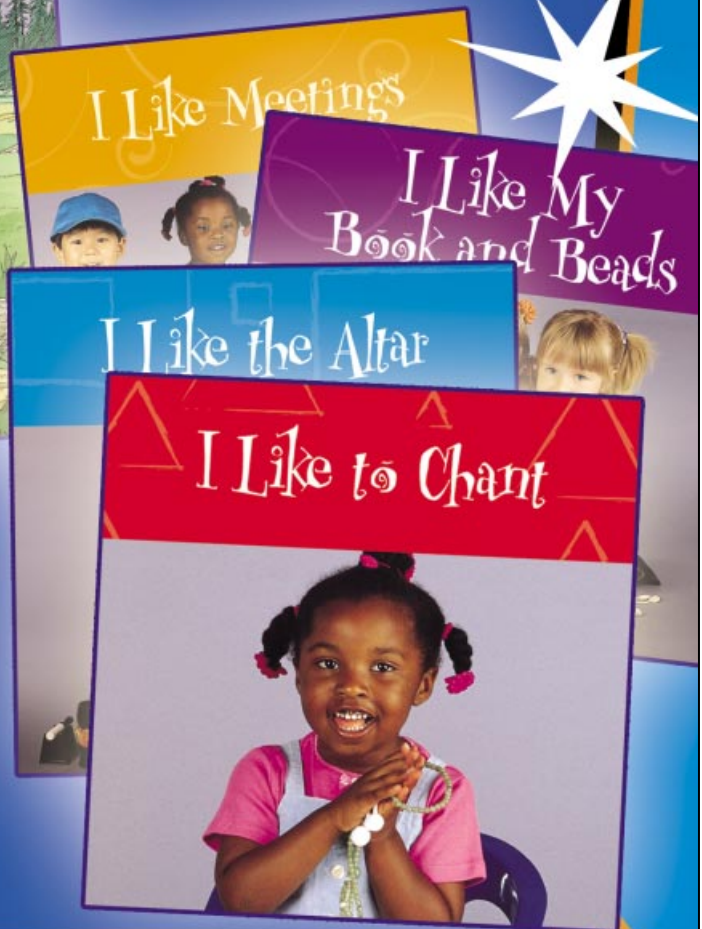
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