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IN THIS ISSUE

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YOUTH SECTION

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Photo by STEPHANIE SYDNEY

May 3, 2001: The New Era Is Here!



The Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda Library at the Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo campus.



What Is Benefit?



By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Q What is the Buddhist view of benefit?

A The idea of benefit, in terms of our daily practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, originally stems from the Japanese word *kudoku*, a transliteration of the Sanskrit word *guna*. Both signify benefit as expounded in Buddhism, the focus being our innate ability to invite benefit into our lives. They also signify what we gain from the

Photo by JEAN PRITCHARD



good causes we make. I want to shed light on the concept of benefit from five different perspectives. First, while it has been traditionally said that there are two types of benefit, conspicuous and inconspicuous, inconspicuous benefit is primary in the practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism. Al-

though conspicuous benefit often plays a crucial role in developing our faith, inconspicuous benefit grows in our lives as our good fortune. This fortune is an aspect of our Buddhahood; it is cultivated within through sincere, serious practice.

Second, Buddhist benefit comes from countering evil. The Daishonin states in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" that "the element *ku* [in *kudoku*] means eliminating evil, while the element *doku* means producing good" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). The intent of Buddhist practice is, after all, to awaken ourselves and others from our attachment to shallow views and emotions. We ourselves diminish negativity and produce great value in our lives and society through our practice for ourselves and others.

Third, Buddhist benefit is equal to purifying our six senses — in other words, our lives. The Daishonin states: "Benefit means to attain Bud-

dhahood as we are. It also means to purify the six senses. We can gain the benefit of the purification of the six senses if we practice the Lotus Sutra exactly as it teaches" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). Purifying the six senses is synonymous with purifying our lives and developing ultimate strength within ourselves.

Fourth, Buddhist benefit can only be revealed through our strong faith. In "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon," the Daishonin states: "*Mandala* is a Sanskrit word that is translated as 'perfectly endowed' or 'a cluster of blessings.' This Gohonzon also is found only in the two characters for faith. This is what the sutra means when it states that one can 'gain entrance through faith alone'" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 832). This passage points out the truth that chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with faith in its power is the real key — nothing else can tap all the benefits contained in the Law of Myoho-enge-kyo.

Fifth, we gain benefit for ourselves by benefiting others. Buddhism encourages us to develop our unique traits in order to fulfill our individual mission to spread Buddhism. The Daishonin thus says in "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life" that "the function of fire is to burn and give light. The function of water is to wash away filth. The winds blow away dust and breathe life into plants, animals, and human beings. The earth produces the grasses and trees, and heaven provides nourishing moisture. The five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo are also like that. They are the cluster of blessings brought by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth..." (WND, 218).

The great benefit of this practice can never reach the people unless we who know of it are willing to share it. From making this greatest of good causes, we naturally experience the most profound benefit the Mystic Law has to offer. **WT**

The Three Evil Paths



By GEOFF ROHDE
SACRAMENTO REGION LEADER

Welcome to the three evil paths — Hell, Hunger and Animality.

Hell is incessant suffering, a state of total discouragement, depression and despair. "Abandon hope all ye who enter here," wrote Dante, depicting the utter hopelessness of hell. In "Letter to Niike," Nichiren Daishonin writes that a person in the state of hell "is no different from a monkey on a string" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1026).

Hunger is never having enough, a state of always wanting more, greedily pursuing money, cars, sex, parties or power. As the Daishonin puts it, "The realm of hungry spirits is a pitiful place where, driven by starvation, they devour their own children" (WND, 1026).

Animality is the Law of the Jungle, where the strong devour the weak but cower before the powerful. When blind instinct alone forms the basis of one's actions, it is inevitable that tragic consequences will follow. We



can wind up compromising with evil, being led the wrong way by unjust authority. Genocidal terror, most recently in Africa and Asia, is a bleak reminder that great evil requires the active or tacit cooperation of many people blindly following authority.

Practicing Buddhism correctly and transforming society and human history in the process require that we control the hopelessness, greed, foolishness and servility associated with the three evil paths from our lives. The Daishonin thus asks his disciples to "summon up the courage of a lion king and never succumb to threats from anyone" (WND, 997).

Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda courageously stood up to military and priestly au-

thority, and their resolve created the foundation of today's Soka Gakkai. Manifesting this kind of uncommon courage and compassion is, I believe, what SGI President Ikeda means by "victory."

Yet, like any long-term struggle, each day brings new threats and new opportunities for growth. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and that is also the price of a happy, robust life. "Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month," the Daishonin therefore teaches. "Should you slacken in your resolve even a bit, demons will take advantage" (WND, 997).

When we strive for kosen-rufu with such resolve, we illuminate the three evil paths with the light of Buddhahood. By raising our life-condition, we begin to view our personal sufferings in the three paths of Hell, Hunger and Animality — objectively, as if looking down on them from high above. The primary difference between a Buddha and common mortal is that the former never, ever forgets that he or she is a Buddha with a freely chosen mission to battle suffering wherever and whenever possible. Every day, our practice of gongyo and daimoku, our study and our efforts to lift the spirits of others are, in many respects, a

constant reminder to us of who we really are.

In "Happiness in this World," the Daishonin encourages us to "suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continue chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, no matter what happens" (WND, 680). Our sufferings and joys are as much a part of the gloriously shining universe as a rainbow, as a sunset, as a Walt Whitman poem, as a Mozart concerto. Using the sorrows and sufferings of the three evil paths as nourishment for our Buddha nature is an essential element in our process of human revolution. **WT**

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EXPERIENCE — DEBRA BARSHA, NEW YORK, N.Y.

Learning How To Live Her Dream

After struggling to find her way as a musician, Debra Barsha learns the importance of winning in every part of her life.

I was 13 when I started writing songs. By 15, I had my first song published. As I grew up, I became a classical pianist and majored in music theory at Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y. In 1978, I moved to New York City and began my career singing and playing piano in piano bars and writing and singing jingles. Eventually, after I left a rock- and-roll tour in 1984, I moved to Los Angeles and commuted back and forth to New York for various gigs.

A friend, Nancy, whom I stayed with on one of my trips to New York in 1987, introduced me to the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I could see that something very profound had changed in Nancy, and I knew it had to do with her Buddhist practice. After much conflict, internal and external, I broke down and asked her, "What is this chanting thing about?" She asked me if I wanted to chant with her and I said yes. I felt something extraordinary when I was facing the Gohonzon and chanting with my best friend sitting next to me. So much so that on Feb. 21, 1987, I received the Gohonzon. I was later able to introduce my two sisters and my parents to the practice.

While living in Los Angeles, I began complaining about my career and not being able to get this or that break in show business. A fellow SGI-USA member told me, "Debra, it may already be your karma to be successful in your career, but who knows if it's your karma to be a great human being." Not exactly what I wanted to hear. But he was right. I had to ask myself, "How do I become a great human being?" And more specifically, "How do I use the gift I have to become a great human being and inspire others to use their gifts to do the same?"

In 1993, two big things happened to me. One: I was asked to be the composer of a show called "Radiant Baby" about the



Photo by JOE HENSON

life of Keith Haring, the late artist. And two: I was out of work. I was tired of doing odd day jobs in between gigs, and had to really think about what I wanted to do next. I started to feel old (I was 35!) and although I was sober (I'd since given up drugs and alcohol), I felt like I was in a depression. I went on unemployment for the first time in my life and decided to take time off to just figure out what I wanted to do. I was chanting, but not much. I always kept my altar nice and knew the practice undoubtedly worked, but I was in a slump. Deep down I knew — things had to change.

I was inspired by the prospect of composing "Radiant Baby" because I had lived through that time period and had actually seen the New York City subway drawings that Keith Haring had created with chalk on blank movie posters. It was also a thrilling time, because the lyricist/book writer Ira Gasman had a show coming out on Broadway and I was honored to be the next composer he worked with. But I had no money.

I accepted a part-time job two days a week in a private school in Brooklyn teaching first grade

my art. I was not going to wait on something to happen, I would make it happen. Amazingly enough, as I started researching Keith Haring, I found out that all his life, even up to the moment of his death, he felt that his mission was to make art accessible to children. I started to see that this project came to me for a reason at this time in my life.

Once we were further along with the production, and after a few readings, we decided that a new book writer had to be brought in. The replacement was a friend of mine, Stuart Ross, whom I had also introduced to Buddhism. Stuart's first idea: "Let's have children in it," he said. Right then and there I realized, "This is what all my chanting to be a great teacher has come to." I now knew exactly how to write for and work with kids. By determining not to compartmentalize my life, my art had found its way.

We were given the opportunity to have a reading of our new script at the Joseph Papp Public Theater, a place perfect for our production. On top of that, the head of the theater attended the reading. He was blown away and came up to me at the end of the reading and said, "You have a home at the Public Theater if you want it."

The obstacles came almost immediately. Now that the piece was going to be produced, we needed the rights from the Keith Haring Foundation, and we knew this would not be easy. Ira, who had brought me the idea, was very sick, and we had to renegotiate

our collaboration agreement. This was also a bad time for the Public Theater because their two most recent musicals had lost millions of dollars.

During this time, with the encouragement of my boyfriend, I resolved to have these business conflicts rectified. I was determined to get "Radiant Baby" produced, and produced now. I renewed my Buddhist practice, started doing a consistent morning and evening gongyo, and made sure that I chanted at least one hour a day until we got a commitment for the show. I was going to do whatever I could.

We received the contract from the Keith Haring Foundation for the rights to use his work, and they are totally behind the project. We also received a written commitment from the Public Theater, despite the fact that there is supposedly no musical theater department there. Everyone at the theater has been completely supportive of my job as a teacher. We've even scheduled readings and developmental meetings around my teaching schedule.

I truly believe that if you stand up for and are proud of what you do, you can find the true artist within.

Thanks to my Buddhist practice, I have been able to work with others and grow beyond my expectations. I am determined to continue to win in every area of my life and inspire others to do the same. Thanks to Buddhism, that dream can become a reality. For this I am forever grateful. **WT**

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Debra Barsha is working on a show about the life of world-famous artist Keith Haring. (Above) Haring's 'Radiant Baby'

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S FEB. 28 SPEECH

Fearlessly Advancing Into the Future

‘Countless people have been persecuted because of their faith,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘The criticism that we face today pales by comparison. Therefore, no matter what hardship we encounter, we have to fearlessly advance until we have triumphed over it.’

SGI President Ikeda's speech at a nationwide conference for prefecture leaders in Japan, held at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo, Feb. 28.

I know that many of you have traveled long distances to attend this meeting. Thank you very much for your efforts.

In any struggle, it is the leaders who determine the outcome. Victory depends on their taking action with indomitable courage.

Nothing is more frightful than the complacency of a leader who is all talk, who supposes that everyone will automatically fly into action when he gives the word. Under such a leader, all efforts will be in vain. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, was extremely strict toward leaders who exhibited such bureaucratic tendencies.

In this day and age, it is not possible to move people on command. The people are wise—they carefully observe the actions of the leaders.

The role of a leader is not to make other people do things but to serve everyone. “I will boundlessly treasure everyone. I will absolutely never betray my comrades.” This is the first tenet of leadership.

Buddhism is a struggle. Life is a struggle. And it is struggle that makes life interesting.

Since struggle is inevitable, we ought to enjoy it. Those who fight for kosen-rufu become healthy. Victory is itself happiness. All our efforts in faith return to us as eternal good fortune and benefit.

Yesterday, Feb. 27, was Women's Division Day in SGI organizations in the United States, Brazil and other countries. I understand that joyful meetings were held at sites around the world to commemorate this occasion.

In Washington D.C., members held a women's conference titled “Imagine Peace.” The event, held at the World Bank, had some 3,000 participants, including the futurist and activist Dr. Hazel Henderson, who is a dear friend, and environmental

activists from Canada.

What has enabled the SGI to spread and flourish around the world while maintaining its lifeblood of profound spirituality? Thoughtful and conscientious people around the world have expressed great interest in, and high expectations for, our movement.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo of China says, “One's body and mind at a single moment pervade the entire realm of phenomena” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 366). Our lives are fundamentally one with the universal life itself. All the treasures of the universe exist within each person. And each person is an infinitely respectable entity.

Therefore, through our mind of faith we can transform ourselves and our family, and we can lead our community, our country and the entire world in the direction of hope, happiness and peace. This is the practice of the ultimate Buddhist principle of 3,000 realms in a single life moment. It is a struggle to elevate the lives of all humankind.

When people are in the states of Hell, Hunger, Animality or Anger, the outcome is a society of jealousy and craving that is pervaded with incessant strife. But when, one by one, people begin to chant the Mystic Law and revolutionize their lives, manifesting the worlds of Bodhisattva and Buddhahood, it becomes possible to realize an ideal society blossoming with peace, culture and education.

Kosen-rufu lies in the unwavering struggle to carry out our human revolution and actualize a grand vision for world peace.

Justice will definitely prevail in the end, despite the scheming of evil people.

The other day someone presented me with a CD of *Fidelio*, the only opera that Beethoven

ever composed. It tells the tale of a courageous woman who lives true to her convictions. The message is that justice will definitely prevail in the end, the scheming of evil people notwithstanding. *Fidelio* is set in 18th-century Seville, Spain, a city of rich history and culture.

The plot goes as follows: There is an upstanding youth named Florestan, who courageously reveals the crimes of Don Pizarro, the tyrannical jail warden. Florestan is framed and locked up in a fearful prison.

As Florestan's prospects turn from bad to worse, his wife, Leonore, courageously sets out to win his freedom. Disguised as a man, she becomes an apprentice to the warden and infiltrates the prison. The title of the opera, *Fidelio*, comes from the name that she assumes in male disguise.

Eventually, Leonore discovers that her husband is being kept in a dungeon. Her beloved husband, who is not given any food, is on the brink of starvation. Moreover, to remove any doubt about his fate, Pizarro is plotting to murder him.

With her husband in critical

danger, Leonore flies forward and cries out: “Kill his wife first!”

“His wife?” comes Pizarro's startled response.

“I am his wife. I have pledged to comfort him. And to destroy you!”

Flying into a rage, Pizarro tries to kill both husband and wife with his dagger. “Fidelio” fiercely confronts Pizarro.

In the nick of time, Florestan's friend the minister Don Fernando, who knows the truth about everything, appears on the scene and saves the two of them. The wicked Pizarro is arrested and dragged off in a most pitiful state.

The opera closes with a chorus that repeats the refrain, “No praise is too high for a woman who saves the life of her husband.”

Ten years ago when I visited Boston, America's intellectual capital, the SGI-USA Boston Renaissance Chorus performed a spirited adaptation of this piece. Through this song, they expressed their determination to resolutely battle evil.

They sang:

We have made a vow and



The Boston Renaissance Chorus performs a piece from Beethoven's 'Fidelio' at the 1st SGI-USA Boston Gongyo Meeting, held at the Boston Community Center, Sept. 27, 1991. They expressed their determination for kosen-rufu through song.

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

have a mission,
to help all those who have
suffered long,
to seek the truth of our
condition,
clearing the clouds of doubt
and wrong.
No, no one should grovel
to another,
the days of tyranny shall end!
Let everyone seek out
another
and offer help as friend
to friend.

I praise the dignified, courageous women of Soka throughout the world. Also, I offer my deepest congratulations on the 50th anniversary of the formation of the women's division and young women's division.

The pattern of persecution that people of justice must face is the same throughout history.

Nichiren Daishonin praised a courageous female follower of his: "Could Shakyamuni Buddha and the bodhisattvas Universal Worthy, Medicine King, and Constellation King Flower be dwelling in your hearts? Surely this is what is meant in the passage of the Lotus Sutra that says that those in the land of Jambudvīpa who believe in this sutra do so because of the power of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy" (WND, 315).

Shakyamuni Buddha exists in the lives of all those who are struggling for kosen-rufu. The power of the bodhisattvas Universal Worthy and Medicine King, and the function of Constellation King Flower—these are all contained in our lives.

Therefore, our wisdom cannot fail to well forth. We cannot possibly be defeated by the devil of illness. We are naturally able to manifest great life force.

The Daishonin teaches that world kosen-rufu is accomplished by the power of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy. In a broad sense, this means that kosen-rufu advances through the power of universal wisdom. [In the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" the Daishonin says: "Universal refers to the principle of the true aspect of all phenomena, the essential, unchanging truth, as embodied in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra; and Worthy indicates wisdom that functions in accord with changing circumstances, as embodied in the essential teaching.... It is due to the transcendental power of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy that this Lotus Sutra is propagated throughout Jambudvīpa" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 780).]

In February, I received my 100th honorary degree. These are laurels that I have received as a direct disciple of Soka Gakkai presidents Makiguchi and Toda, and as the representative of all SGI members. "Universal wisdom"—as represented by leading academic institutions around the world—supports, trusts and has strong expectations for the humanism of the SGI. I am confident this is proof that the SGI is manifesting the wisdom of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy in perfect accord with the principles of the Lotus Sutra.

Goethe, who deeply pursued human nature, says: "There is nothing more disgraceful than depending on lies and idle fictions." Although the Daishonin was derided by people throughout the country as a "monk who transgresses the code of conduct" (WND, 42), this was based on nothing but lies and fabrications. The Daishonin was a "holy priest" who remained celibate throughout his life and did not eat meat. Nevertheless, people spread slanderous allegations about him that flew in the face of the truth. He was denounced as a priest who broke the precepts.

The Daishonin sent encouragement overflowing with sincerity to his followers, and they joyfully sought out his instruction. It may be that there were ill-intentioned people who found cause for suspicion in his writing letters to women. This is despicable.

Elsewhere, the Daishonin says that these people "all join together to slander him to the ruler of the country, so that, after having been exiled to the province of Izu, he was also exiled to the province of Sado" (WND, 932). The Daishonin surmises that although he had not committed any wrong, crimes were assigned to him arbitrarily, part of a scheme to have him exiled. In short, these attacks were due to the jealousy of malicious individuals.

Doing away with a person of justice through lies and fabrications—this pattern of persecution is no different today. We have to see strictly, wisely, through the smoke screen of false accusations.

"Letter from Sado" says: "There are also those who appeared to believe in me, but began doubting when they saw me persecuted. They not only have forsaken the Lotus Sutra, but also actually think themselves wise enough to instruct me. The pitiful thing is that these perverse people must suffer in the Avichi hell even

longer than the Nembutsu believers" (WND, 306).

Many religions have developed globally because they have had the spirit of martyrdom.

The essence of faith is found in the spirit of martyrdom. This means maintaining your conviction in something you believe to be true even at the cost of your life. Many religions have developed globally because they have had this spirit. I want to briefly cite a few examples.

First of all, let us consider the case of Christianity. Jesus, betrayed by his disciple Judas, was crucified. Later, during the age of the tyrannical emperor Nero, Christians were blamed for a conflagration in Rome, with the result that many were put to death.

In Roman times, Christians were subject to the cruelest treatment, such as being fed to lions or burned alive as a public spectacle. But in the face of such fierce persecution, the faith of Christians grew even stronger.

Moreover, their courageous martyrdom moved the hearts of many others. Over time, Christianity was officially recognized by the emperor, with Rome eventually becoming Christian.

As the work of missionaries advanced, Christians were suppressed in the East, too. This was true in China and Korea. And in Japan, particularly under Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the Tokugawa regime, persecution of Christians reached horrible extremes.

As for the Jews: After the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah and the Babylonian captivity in the 6th century B.C.E., the Jews experienced a succession of persecutions and hardships. In Roman times, Jews who stood up to repressive rule were harshly suppressed. Their homes destroyed, many became wanderers.

In Europe, from the 11th century on, Jews suffered frequent persecution at the hands of the Crusades. Across the continent, wicked clerics stirred people up with unfounded rumors.

As a result, many Jews were suppressed and massacred. At the end of the 15th century, the Inquisition banished Jews from Spain en masse.

In Russia, during the second half of the 19th century, there were repeated, large-scale pogroms, or organized attacks, against Jews. During World War II, some 6 million Jews were robbed of their precious lives in the Holocaust.

What about Islam? The founder, Mohammed, taught a

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monotheistic faith. But since Arabs at the time were generally polytheistic, he was accused of having profaned the gods of his forebearers.

Still, Mohammed's fiercely uncompromising words captured the hearts of youth. This in and of itself made him an object of jealousy and fear, the target of oppression. He was attacked with stones, forced to flee his native town and nearly killed. The attacks were also directed against his relatives and disciples.

In Buddhism, Shakyamuni underwent what are known as the nine great ordeals. His clan was decimated by a king named Virudhaka who "put hundreds...to the sword" (WND, 799). Shakyamuni was mocked as a person of great evil by the religious leaders of his day.

He was betrayed by his disci-

ple Devadatta and an attempt was made on his life. Scandalous rumors were circulated about him, and he was showered with abuse. After Shakyamuni's death, his disciple Aryasimha was decapitated because of his devotion to Buddhism.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China was resented by the Buddhist establishment of his day—the so-called three schools of the South and seven schools of the North. The monks all gathered together like a pack of wolves, loudly vilifying and mocking him.

The Great Teacher Dengyo of Japan was hated by the six established sects of his day and was subject to an unending barrage of vilification and abuse.

The Daishonin boldly over-

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SPEECH MARCH 27 SPEECH—PART 1

One Victory After Another

‘Winning is fun,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘Winning brings happiness. In contrast, losing is sad. Everyone feels bad and disappointed. Buddhism is a struggle to win. Therefore, let us boldly and joyfully create a history of successive victories.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 4th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Toda Memorial Auditorium in Sugamo, March 27.

Congratulations on this Headquarters Leaders Meeting! Winter is over, and the bright season of cherry blossoms is here again! Thank you for attending this meeting today. A warm welcome to our visiting SGI members from a total of 15 countries.

Congratulations also to the Kansai Soka High School baseball team on their first victory today in the national invitational high school baseball tournament, held at the Koshien Stadium in Kansai. Thank you to the team for a fantastic effort! I watched the game on television and was impressed by the tenacity and fighting spirit of our Soka students.

To have the courage to always keep pressing forward and be utterly committed to winning. To persevere right to the end, even in a pinch, when the odds are stacked against you. To have the invincible spirit to press forward further still. When you give your all, victory is exhilarating.

How a team fares in a game is important, but even more so are how the team members have been trained, how they play the game. As a leader, this is what always interests me. I sensed that Kansai Soka manager Toshikazu Yoneda has made these basics an integral part of his team's training.

The quintessence of Buddhism lies in being swayed by nothing.

Sugamo, where this meeting is being held, is a place that I often used to visit in my youth. I would go to a cemetery not far from this Tokyo Toda Memorial Auditorium, actually. In those days, Josei Toda's office was in the Ichigaya area of Tokyo, and whenever I had time I would come here to Sugamo. I would find a spot in the cemetery, sit down on some sheets of newspaper and avidly read

works of world literature.

On the train was also a good place for reading, but often just as you would get to a good part in the book, you would arrive at your station. Or the train would get really packed and it would be impossible to continue reading!

Also, in those days, Mr. Toda's business was foundering and swamped in debt. I worked hard but had no money. Going to a coffee shop was a luxury I could ill afford. The cemetery, however, was quiet, and it was free! It was an ideal place for reading.

Since all around Japan right now the cherry trees are in full bloom, I want to start by talking about a memorable book I read in my youth, Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*. Chekhov is one of Russia's leading writers and playwrights, and *The Cherry Orchard* is the last play that he wrote. It was completed in 1903, the same year that first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi published his work *The Geog-*

raphy of Human Life.

The play is set in Russia in the period following the 1861 emancipation of the serfs and before the Russian revolution. The old powers are on the wane, and new powers are on the rise.

The cherry orchard of the play's title is the beautiful backdrop against which the story unfolds. Chekhov's message in this work is that life should be beautiful and that we should work unceasingly for this goal.

Allow me to briefly outline the story. It is May in Russia, a time when the cherry blossoms are in bloom. An impoverished landowner, Madame Liubov Andryeevna Ranyevskaia, returns from Paris to her home and a cherry orchard that has been in her family for generations. Once rich and prosperous, Liubov Andryeevna is now heavily in debt.

Yermolai Lopakhin, a businessman whose family had formerly been serfs, urges her to divide the cherry orchard into plots that could be leased out for summer residences. Although Liubov Andryeevna desperately wants to hold on to her orchard, neither she nor her brother come to grips with the changing times, and they ultimately fail to find a way out of their predicament. The orchard is auctioned off and bought by Lopakhin.

Having lost possession of the beautiful cherry orchard that has held so many happy memories for her since childhood,

Liubov Andryeevna makes the heart-wrenching decision to return to Paris. Her daughter, Ania, on the other hand, is glad that at last they can make a break with the past and start afresh. She encourages her mother, "We'll plant a new orchard, even more splendid than this one..." Joining hands with a youthful companion, she sets out toward a new era and a new life, filled with bright hope.

The play's ending might not exactly be described as a happy one. The future of each of the characters is left up in the air. For my part, however, I can hear Chekhov's words of encouragement echo forth, as though saying: "When spring comes, the cherries will bloom. Somewhere they will bloom. Never lose hope. Patiently wait for spring. Triumph and adorn your life with victory without fail!"

Life is full of vicissitudes. The times are constantly changing. The heart of life and the quintessence of Buddhism lie in how we stay ahead of these changes and win, rather than being swayed by them.

We have an SGI chapter in Russia. Our members there are carrying out their activities in high spirits.

In the orchard of Buddhism, all will lead long, healthy lives.

In my youth, almost every time I met Mr. Toda he would ask: "What book are you

reading now? What does it say?" And wouldn't you know it, whenever I thought, "He's not going to ask anything so detailed," he would do exactly that! Second Soka Gakkai president Toda was an incredibly strict taskmaster. He was a genius. He was a first-rate world intellect—I still believe that.

The Cherry Orchard is a beautiful story. I was so moved by it that I remember reading it two or three times over.

Chekhov has one of his youthful characters, a student named Trofimov, say, "Humanity is advancing towards the highest truth, the greatest happiness that it is possible to achieve on earth, and I am in the van!" These words encapsulate the author's powerful sentiments on this subject.

I quoted this passage during a conversation I had in April 1991 with then Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev at the State Guest House in Tokyo, on what was the first-ever visit to Japan by a Soviet head of state. I said to him, "The struggle that you are waging is the same as the struggle of this youth." I can still remember the Soviet leader nodding and voicing his understanding.

Chekhov's works are filled with profound insights. They reflect a highly perceptive view of society and human beings. Let me give you some examples: He writes, "But how many people there are...who exist to no purpose whatever!" A life without a sense of purpose is sad and empty, pitiful.

And he asserts, "Man must work by the sweat of his brow whatever his class, and that should make up the whole meaning and purpose of his life and happiness and contentment." Just leading an idle life of pleasure is not happiness. Human beings should work, make effort. This is where happiness and joy are found. This spirit exemplifies the Soka Gakkai youth division. The brilliantly blooming cherry orchard we are cultivating—it is the orchard of Soka, the orchard of peace and happiness, the orchard of mission. The orchard of Buddhism is an orchard filled with lovely, fragrant blossoms, where all lead long, healthy lives.

Chekhov also says: "But you can rest assured...that better times will come. ... a new life will dawn one day, and justice will triumph." A new age will definitely come! Justice will definitely triumph! Let us advance energetically with this



SGI members from 15 countries and regions attend the 4th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, March 27.

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



SGI President Ikeda encourages members from overseas at the 4th Headquarters Leaders Meeting.

unswerving conviction.

New history begins from new places, new foundations, new enthusiasm of new capable people.

To the members of Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama prefectures: My sincerest congratulations to you on holding your first general meetings of the 21st century!

Kanagawa has broken new records by achieving, over a two-month period, a phenomenal increase of 50,000 subscriptions for the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. I salute you on this unprecedented achievement! We are also now entering the Age of Saitama and the Century of Chiba. All three prefectures are advancing forward powerfully.

It was 750 years ago that the brilliant sun of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism rose from Chiba. In the more recent past, 50 years ago this year, the remarkable propagation efforts of the Kanagawa members adorned the first issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*. Mr. Toda himself came up with the headline, "The Flame Burns High in Tsurumi." [The first issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, then a two-page broadsheet, was published on April 20, 1951. The second page featured the dynamic propagation activities of Tsurumi Chapter in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture.]

And after Mr. Toda passed away, it was the youth of Saitama who strongly called on

the Soka Gakkai's top executive of the day to hasten the efforts to appoint me to the position of president.

New history begins from new places, from new foundations. It begins from the enthusiasm of new capable people. It begins from the energy and vigor of one person. It begins with each of us.

I proclaim that now the driving force for fresh victory in the 21st century is Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama.

Winning is fun. Winning brings happiness. In contrast, losing is sad. Everyone feels bad and disappointed. Buddhism is a struggle to win. Therefore, let us boldly and joyfully create a history of successive victories.

Incidentally, today I received a pair of umpire whistles as a gift for my wife and myself from some Tokyo members. [President Ikeda proceeds to blow the whistles as a demonstration.] Let us advance to victory with the sound of these whistles as our starting signal!

The protagonists in history are always the people.

Today, we have a number of my beloved fellow SGI members from Italy, birthplace of the Renaissance, with us. Thank you for traveling so far.

During World War II, the authoritarian forces of fascism ran roughshod over Italy. In response, courageous citizens fought back by forming a partisan resistance movement, whose efforts helped pave the

way to victory over the fascists.

The people are the protagonists.

The partisans were determined not to rely on others but to wage their battle themselves. The city of Varallo in northern Italy was a rallying point for the anti-fascist liberation movement. The city is located near the Swiss border in an area with many beautiful lakes. Here, too, in this place of illustrious history, SGI members are carrying out activities. I was deeply honored to be named an honorary citizen of this city of heroes, Varallo, on March 3. I received this award as your representative.

Also, this morning, my wife and I had the privilege to be named honorary citizens by the Federated States of Micronesia, a Pacific paradise. I asked a representative to attend the presentation and accept the honors on our behalf. I was told that it was held with great ceremony at the presidential offices, with the Micronesian president in attendance.

An eminent Japanese scholar once pointed out that cities put their reputations on the line to bestow honorary citizenships on individuals who will serve as a model for their citizens, and he congratulated me on receiving honors of such significance. Each award is profoundly meaningful.

These honors that I receive from around the world are all due to you, my fellow members. You are setting a wonderful example of good citizenship in your communities, working for

the sake of people's happiness and striving to contribute to a better society and a bright future. Your efforts have borne fruit in the form of the many kudos we of the SGI are receiving today. I want to express my deepest appreciation to each of you.

The 'great power of faith' is a mighty engine.

In a famous passage that the Daishonin wrote to Shijo Kingo, one of our early predecessors in the Kanagawa region, he says, "Live so that all the people of Kamakura will say in your praise that Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo [Shijo Kingo] is diligent in the service of his lord, in the service of Buddhism, and in his concern for other people" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 851). Please strive hard as a member of society in your own sphere of activities, in your workplace and your community, always basing yourself on faith, and become the kind of person of whom others speak with admiration and praise. I want each of you to become a person who is respected and trusted by all. This is kosen-rufu.

Causing people trouble and engaging in duplicity, on the other hand, degrades Buddhism and constitutes slander of the Law.

The Daishonin also urges, "Bring forth the great power of faith, and be spoken of by all the people of Kamakura, both high and low, or by all the people of Japan, as 'Shijo Kingo, Shijo Kingo of the Lotus school!'" (*WND*, 319). I particularly hope that you, our Kamakura members, will be proud of the fact that you are present-day Shijo Kingos and strive to develop yourselves into people of outstanding caliber.

The "great power of faith" of which the Daishonin speaks is like a mighty engine. With it, we can speed powerfully along the highway of life. Since we have been born in this world, we may as well set our sights on a grand objective and enjoy ourselves as we confidently, serenely climb the mountain of glorious personal achievement. If we are weak, life is misery. We should make our way with this pride and resolve: "I am the Soka Gakkai. No matter what anyone says, I am a representative of this great organization."

We are who we are. Our life is our own. It is important that we discard a cowardly, animalistic way of life — where we are always worried about what others say or do, about how we might appear to others — and instead live with confidence and conviction. If people say rude or

unkind things to you about your practice, just go ahead and say: "What's wrong with my practicing this Buddhism? Is it banned by the constitution?" [Laughter.] Or you could try saying: "The Soka Gakkai has helped a huge number of people. What have you done?" [Laughter.]

Please live with strength and resilience. You miss out on so much in life if you are not strong. President Toda often used to say, "Advance confidently!" This is faith. There is nothing stronger than this. Faith is the most powerful force there is.

The Daishonin was persecuted. All people who strive to achieve great things suffer this fate. Those who are fawned upon and flattered from an early age tend to lack inner substance and can be easily crushed. Those who dedicate their lives to following the path of justice and the path of principle are ultimately the most admirable of all.

Hence the Daishonin says: "One should regard meeting obstacles as true peace and comfort" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750). "What greater joy could there be?" (*WND*, 767). "Nichiren's disciples cannot accomplish anything if they are cowardly" (*WND*, 481).

The Daishonin is telling us: "Obstacles are to be expected! Rejoice when you encounter them! Rejoice when you meet with criticism and attack! You must not be cowardly!"

The Soka Gakkai now is indisputably the "pillar of Japan." And the more than 160 honorary citizenships I have received attest to the immense trust we enjoy around the world. This is living proof of the principle that Buddhism is manifested in society.

There are deep expectations for our SGI movement as a world religion of the 21st century. I proclaim, "The Soka Gakkai has won around the world!" Please advance with great confidence.

Being here with Kanagawa members today brings back a fond memory I have of watching the Yokohama's annual Port Festival parade from a window in the Kanagawa Culture Center with a handful of local members. It was in May 1979, shortly after stepping down as Soka Gakkai president.

This year's parade is being held on May 3. I am told that our delightful emissaries of peace, the Fife and Drum Corps, will be performing. Their participation is a symbol of the Soka Gakkai's triumph.

To be continued in the May 11 issue.

Fostering Humanitarian Competition

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

Dialogues on Peace

‘The United Nations exists to encourage humanitarian competition — countries outdoing one another in terms of trustworthiness, sense of duty and benevolence.’

On March 6, SGI President Ikeda held a discussion with Dr. Ruud Lubbers, the new U.N. high commissioner for refugees at the Seikyo Shimbun Building in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. The two previously met in The Hague 18 years ago, in 1983, when Dr. Lubbers was prime minister of the Netherlands.

Dr. Lubbers assumed the top government post at the age of 43 and was in office for 12 years (from 1982–94), giving him the dual distinction of being both the youngest and longest-serving prime minister in Dutch history. Among his many achievements, he succeeded in reviving the Dutch economy. He also demonstrated outstanding leadership in such areas as environmental protection and European unification. Since retiring from politics in 1994, the former prime minister has been active in the international sphere.

President Ikeda congratulated Dr. Lubbers on his recent appointment as U.N. high commissioner for refugees, adding that he had been most impressed by the official’s inaugural speech. The high commissioner called for a “minimum of bureaucracy and a maximum of flexibility” in helping the world’s 22 million refugees, and made an appeal for refugees to be recognized for their individual and collective achievements. Mr. Ikeda commented on the fact that Albert Einstein had been a refugee, as had one of his recent guests, Mayor Le Hoa Lam of Auburn, Australia. Respect for refugees, he asserted, will be an important principle for effecting a transition from a “century of refugees” to a “century of world citizens.”

Calling attention to the unique predicament of refugees, Dr. Lubbers pointed out that while citizens have a gov-



SGI President Ikeda talks with Ruud Lubbers, U.N. high commissioner for refugees, in Tokyo, March 6.

ernment to look after their various needs, refugees do not enjoy the protection of any political body. Lamenting the tendency to view refugees as merely recipients of charity, he stressed that the life of each refugee is precious, and that each person possesses great latent strength and potential.

Dr. Lubbers has consistently lent his support to SGI activities. In April 1998, as a member of the Earth Council and the Earth Charter Commission, Dr. Lubbers delivered an address at the SGI-affiliated Boston Research Center for the 21st Century in the United States. In the same year, the research institute that Dr. Lubber chairs, Institute for Globalization and Sustainable Development at Tilburg University, bestowed a certificate of commendation on the SGI leader in recognition of his efforts to promote human rights.

Noting that Dr. Lubbers graduated from Erasmus University, Rotterdam, President Ikeda reflected that the school’s namesake, Dutch humanist Erasmus, articulates in his *Coloquia* a vision for the future in which power struggles based on military might are replaced by competition among countries to outdo one another in terms of trustworthiness, sense of duty and benevolence. The SGI leader described the United Nations as existing precisely in order to foster such humanitarian competition. Toward that end, he suggested that major summit conferences should be held under U.N. auspices, in-

stead of being hosted by participant nations on a rotating basis.

The high commissioner affirmed the need to strengthen U.N. humanitarian activities. In this connection, he emphasized that individuals have a vital role to play in supporting such efforts, and also expressed the hope to see Japan become more involved in the work of the UNHCR. President Ikeda concurred, stressing that Japan must show greater commitment to humanitarian activities. He

said he is personally committed to spurring the Japanese public to action, adding that he feels doing so is his duty as a citizen.

The SGI leader recalled how, during World War II, Dutch historian Johan Huizinga condemned the excesses of nationalism and urged that the power of the nation be redirected into positive channels by means of building trust, reviving humanistic culture and promoting international spiritual exchange. Citing Huizinga’s conclusion

that this will require individual spiritual reformation, President Ikeda remarked: “This is exactly what the SGI is doing. We are putting this farsighted philosophy into practice.”

Mr. Lubbers has said that economic value is not enough, and that the present age requires a new system of values based on the sanctity of life. Mr. Ikeda explained that this completely agrees with the ideals and convictions of the SGI, and is also consistent with the founding spirit of Soka University.

During his time as prime minister of the Netherlands, Mr. Lubbers played a key role in successfully drawing up the Maastricht Treaty, which laid the groundwork for the European Union. Previously, the treaty, which provided for the introduction of a common currency, had reached an impasse due to disagreement among individual countries. President Ikeda noted that Mr. Lubbers had once compared negotiation to riding a bicycle, in the sense that you will fall down if you go either too fast or too slow. The SGI leader agreed that maintaining just the right balance is the secret to diplomacy. Mr. Ikeda further observed that we have entered a time when no country can thrive without actively cooperating with and earning the trust of the international community. **WT**

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the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'JEWELLED SWORD'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 1-2

'The Soka Gakkai does not discriminate,' explains Shin'ichi Yamamoto as the 'Jeweled Sword' chapter begins. 'Wishing to see all people become truly happy, we have devoted ourselves wholeheartedly to serving others.'

The creation of a new age rests in the hands of youth. In the summer of 1963, Shin'ichi Yamamoto again put his whole life into developing the youth of the Soka Gakkai. He resolutely looked forward to the emergence of tens or hundreds of thousands of young people who were his equals in terms of spirit and capability.

On July 1, he attended a young men's division leaders meeting at the Taito Ward Gymnasium in Tokyo. There, he announced that the seventh memorial (sixth anniversary) of Josei Toda's death on April 2, 1964, would be the start of the "essential phase" of the Soka Gakkai's development. His declaration resounded like a lion's roar.

Essential here is a reference to the latter 14 chapters of the Lotus Sutra. In contrast, the first 14 chapters are called the theoretical teaching. *Theoretical* in this case indicates a shadow or reflection of the truth, while *essential* means the actual substance of the truth. The core of the Lotus Sutra is revealed not in the first half of

the sutra, but in "The Life Span of the Thus Come One" chapter in the essential teaching.

By "essential phase," Shin'ichi therefore meant the time when the actual work of kosen-rufu would begin. This astonished the participants. It was as if an electric current had passed through them. All had been consistently amazed at the new developments in the movement to spread Nichiren Daishonin's teachings and at the Soka Gakkai's tremendous growth since Shin'ichi had become president. So to hear Shin'ichi declare that a new, essential, phase would begin with Mr. Toda's seventh memorial meant that until now they had only been in the theoretical phase. They couldn't imagine what sort of time the essential phase would be.

Realizing, however, that it would far exceed anything they could conceive of, they were very excited and determined. Their eyes were clear and bright, reflecting the brilliant future image of kosen-rufu. As leaders of the generation that would rebuild society, all of them felt great joy and pride

to be developing their strength and ability while spending their lives with the Soka Gakkai. Youth excel where there is hope. Wherever there is progress in the Soka movement, there is also a beautiful atmosphere of hope.

Three days later, on July 5, Shin'ichi attended a young women's division leaders meeting, also at Tokyo's Taito Ward Gymnasium. A new song for the young women's division titled "The Song of Joy" was sung there for the first time.

Youth!

Let us sing!

Friends around the world—

We will change history

And let culture flourish.

The Seven Bells shall resound

Heralding the victory

Of freedom and peace.

It was a bright and cheerful song, expressing the young women's fresh determination and awareness of a new beginning.

At the young women's leaders meeting, Shin'ichi suggested that the young women's and young men's divisions each aim for a new membership goal of 1 million. The young women's division at the time had 430,000 members and the young men's division, 640,000. Should they reach their goal of 1 million, each would be a youth organization of a scale unprecedented in Japan.

To make progress, it is necessary to have a goal. Once a goal is set and it becomes clear what actions and effort must be made over the days and months to achieve it, momentum in that direction increases. Shin'ichi suggested the respective goals of 1 million members because he wanted to give the youth fresh hope.

He also spoke about the way



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

the media provoked criticism of the Soka Gakkai by reporting on the actions of certain members as if they were problems caused by the Soka Gakkai itself. "There have been cases in which people suffering from mental illness have joined the Soka Gakkai and then have caused some unfortunate incident," he said. "In other cases, people with criminal records, who have been shunned by society, have become members and then gone on to be involved in another crime.

"Each time something like this happens, the newspapers and weekly tabloids print stories implying that the Soka Gakkai was in some way responsible, intensifying the attacks against us.

"Fundamentally, it is the responsibility of politicians and government to look after such people, ensuring that they are able to live with dignity without endangering others. But this is not happening. Instead, society has abandoned these people and no one is doing anything to help. In fact, many politicians and high-ranking officials simply look the other way when it comes to the unfortunate. Japan's leaders are self-centered and irresponsible.

"We Soka Gakkai members, on the other hand, are working to rid this world of unhappiness. When we meet those who are suffering, we explain to them

that all people have the right to be happy and teach them about the Daishonin's Buddhism.

"The Soka Gakkai does not discriminate. Wishing to see all people become truly happy, we have devoted ourselves wholeheartedly to serving others. People who are concerned only with their social image and their own needs cannot do this.

"We embrace many people with all kinds of backgrounds and problems, and there is a chance that some may get into trouble. But which is right—what we are doing now or turning our backs on such people just because we are afraid of what might happen?"

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



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A Most Important Lesson

EDITORIAL

By **JEFF FARR**
MANAGING EDITOR

There is a great lesson to be learned from SGI President Ikeda's leadership since May 3, 1979.



Seeing the great health of our organization today, it may be hard to believe that just two decades ago the SGI faced a very serious problem. In 1979, some Nichiren Shoshu priests, hoping to take control of the organization, pulled together a conspiracy to force President Ikeda's resignation (as Soka Gakkai president in Japan).

For many members, it was an intensely confusing time — what the priests were really up to was unclear, although the tension between Nichiren Shoshu and the organization was well known. The function of the priesthood vs. that of the laity became a big question in many people's minds. What was the right way to proceed for kosen-rufu? Who was best qualified to lead the way? Did Nichiren Daishonin have anything to say about this in his writings?

Over these 22 years, President Ikeda has taken the SGI from great confusion to great clarity through what we could call his own Soka Spirit movement. He has worked harder than anyone to educate all of us — always based on the

Gosho — of the grave danger found in blindly following corrupt priests and the absolute necessity of committed people like ourselves taking *total* responsibility for the spread of the Law.

"This May 3, I hope we can all reflect on the greatness of President Ikeda's achievement since 1979," SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima says. "In a relatively short amount of time, he has accomplished centuries' worth of progress for kosen-rufu, firmly establishing the understanding that each of us, as a Bodhisattva of the Earth, has a mission in this movement that we alone can accomplish.

"As disciples, I feel we must continue President Ikeda's Soka Spirit movement, now more than ever. We have to teach more and more people the truth of the Daishonin's Buddhism, never forgetting what we have learned: *We* are the true heroes of kosen-rufu. Buddhism is by and for the people. It must be this way from now on. It has to be."

On May 3, 1979, just days after his resignation, President Ikeda made the same point in dramatic fashion. The May 3 meeting that year was held in the

Soka University Gymnasium, where members were told not to anger the priests by applauding or even acknowledging President Ikeda.

As President Ikeda was leaving the gymnasium, a group of women, who had been waiting a long time with their children to see him, cried out, "Sensei!" He encouraged them one by one and then strictly said to the top Soka Gakkai leaders: "The Soka Gakkai exists to make such people, the genuine common people, happy. For this purpose, Buddhism, too, exists. Don't you think so? *You have to remember this point.*"

Kosen-rufu is an endless effort to remember this. To return to this all-important idea again and again, in everything that we do. To always find new ways of putting it into practice, making it real, sharing this empowering outlook with more friends.

"We should base every SGI-USA activity, from our district discussion meetings to the May Commemorative Contribution, on the members' happiness," Mr. Nagashima emphasizes. "This is our starting point, every time. Our sole purpose is to discover greater and greater happiness for every participant."

We could call it Purpose No. 1. As long as we keep strengthening it in our hearts, we cannot help but stay on the right track. This is the lesson of May 3, 1979, the lesson of the last 22 years. This is how the SGI will keep growing, how kosen-rufu will keep expanding, from May 3, 2001, far into the future. **WT**

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Monterey Park Commends Youth Efforts for VOV

By **JAMIE LIPTAN**
STAFF WRITER

On April 18, the city of Monterey Park, Calif., presented a commendation to the youth of SGI-USA for their local efforts to promote the Victory Over Violence program and support the city's annual Cherry Blossom Festival.

City Council Member Judy Chu, impressed with the contribution of the youth of SGI-USA's Los Angeles No. 4 Region to the festival each year, recommended the commendation to the city council. "We applaud you for encouraging youth participation in identifying and counteracting the root cause of violence in their lives," the commendation reads.

In a message to the mayor and city council, SGI President Ikeda wrote: "Thank you very much for this generous gift. It is such a great honor for us. The most important people are today's youth, who will shoulder the future of humanity. Therefore, we are receiving this recognition as encouragement to continue our efforts to inspire and cultivate successive generations of capable youth dedicated to peace and nonviolence. In this way, all the SGI-USA members will dedicate ourselves to living



City Council Member Judy Chu (right) of Monterey Park, Calif., presents a commendation to SGI-USA members for the organization's efforts to promote the Victory Over Violence program in the city, April 18.

up to the lofty ideals your recognition today represents. From the bottom of my heart, thank you very much!"

A group of SGI-USA youth received the commendation and donated 50 copies of Pres-

ident Ikeda's book *The Way of Youth* to the city. "In this book, Dr. Ikeda aims to help young people to have hope and confidence in their future," said Nobuko Kobayashi, SGI-USA's high school division

leader and a youth leader for the area that includes Monterey Park. "The book donation is a symbol of our commitment to and extension of our friendship with the youth of the city of Monterey Park." **WT**

FROM SPEECH, 5

came many life-threatening persecutions. His followers were likewise imprisoned, banished and killed as a result of false allegations.

During the Atsuhara Persecution, 20 peasant followers were arrested and tortured. And three of them — Jinshiro, Yagoro and Yarokuro — were decapitated.

Because Soka Gakkai fought militarism, presidents Makiguchi and Toda were sent to prison, where Makiguchi died.

These are just a few examples. Countless people have been persecuted because of their faith. We must on no account forget this. The criticism or calumny that we face today pales by comparison. It is like tiny ripples on the water's surface. Therefore, no matter what hardship we encounter, we have to fearlessly advance until we have triumphed over it.

At the same time, while we might speak of martyrdom, we definitely must not be reckless with our precious lives. Steadfastly struggling for kosen-rufu, making use of every available moment, is comparable to martyring ourselves for the teaching.

We must have the discerning eye to strictly distinguish between justice and injustice. The French thinker Rousseau says: "A person of genuine tolerance does not condone evil. He does not tolerate any dogma that vilifies people." Thomas Jefferson cries out, "If you enlighten the people...you will find that their oppressions of body and mind 'will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day.'"

Unless young philosophers speak out for justice, there is no hope for the future.

Before the unforgettable March 16, 1958, President Toda composed a message for youth:

"When youth of the present age deeply ponder how they can bring peace to the confused political and economic conditions of the world, and how they can create security for the people of Japan and other countries, it is certain that all people, including those middle- and old-aged, will naturally join them in their efforts to elect upstanding national representatives.... Youth should be entrusted with vigilantly watching over politics."

That was Toda's testament. I want to present his words to youth. For unless young philosophers speak out for justice, there will be no hope for Japan's future.

This is the century of the youth division. I want you to stand up and take full responsibility for kosen-rufu, struggling with all your might to construct your own golden tower of victory. Now is your chance.

Any area you choose is fine,

but somehow create a history. Such efforts will bring you tremendous gain.

Even if no one is watching, the Gohonzon sees everything. Rack your mind, take bold action and tirelessly speak out for justice — 10 times, 100 times more vigorously.

I hope you will seek out difficult struggles, train and polish yourselves, and grow with ever-increasing speed. That is the most important thing. Your growth will determine the SGI's future.

Helen Keller writes: "It is for us to pray not for tasks equal to our powers, but for powers equal to our tasks, to go forward with a great desire forever beating at the door of our hearts as we travel towards the distant goal."

Let us undertake a cheerful, joyful struggle, vowing to realize great victory during the first half of this year. I look forward to seeing you again soon. **WT**

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HUMAN RIGHTS LECTURE SERIES AT SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA, CALABASAS

Former U.S. Surgeon General Lectures at SUA, Calabasas

By MARK KORAL
LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT

On Feb. 28, the Human Rights Lecture Series at Soka University of America's Calabasas campus welcomed M. Joycelyn Elders, M.D., the first African American and second woman to hold the post of surgeon general of the United States. Dr. Elders is also a renowned lecturer and the author of *From Sharecropper's Daughter to Surgeon General of the United States*. She is the recipient of many awards including the Dr. Nathan Davis Award and the National Coalition of 100 Black Women's Candace Award for Health Science.

During the U.S. Senate hearings on her confirmation as surgeon general in 1993, Dr. Elders commented: "I want to change the way we think about health by putting prevention first. I want to be the voice and vision of the poor and powerless. I want to change concern about social problems that affect health into commitment. And I would like to make every child born in America a wanted child."

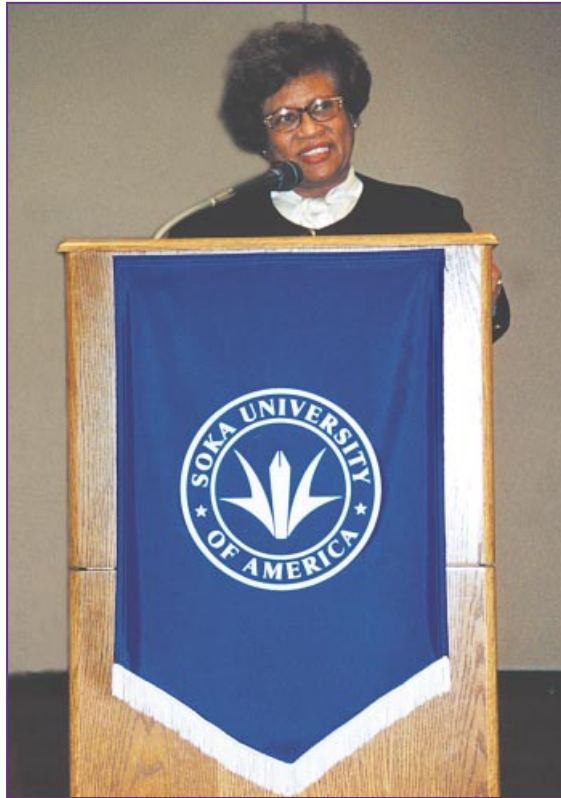
In her human rights lecture on "Education and Personal Responsibility," Dr. Elders spoke about giving priority to public health education programs to the young and poor. She remarked that every U.S. president has been an "education president." But now it's time that we, the people, begin to

make our leaders live up to what they say they'll do.

Dr. Elders told the audience that if "we don't like the direction things are going, then we, ourselves, have to get up, get involved and make sure our politicians become the kinds of leaders we want and do what we want done. We want to make sure we protect the most valuable resource we will ever have, our children, and make sure they are healthy, educated, motivated and that they have hope for the future." Dr. Elders urged that in order for a revolution to occur in our society—that is, to have the kind of society we say we want—each of us needs to be present at the table, to speak up and be part of the decision-making process.

She went on to say that "for democracy to continue in this country, we must overcome the ignorance that endangers it. We need to teach our young people about responsibility for self, for others and for the community. To make a difference in our society, we have to become more responsible as a society."

Dr. Elders told the students, "When you complete your studies, please take with you four things: first, keep a voice in your ear that can hear all the people who are less fortunate than you—the people who are suffering, people who need your help—so that when you are making decisions for the



Dr. Joycelyn Elders, former surgeon general of the United States, speaks at the Human Rights Lecture Series at Soka University of America, Calabasas, Feb. 28.

21st century you will hear their voices; second, keep a vision in your eyes that extends much further than your eyes can see; third, have a diploma in your hand, and; fourth, keep a song in your heart to deal with the difficult problems that will come before you."

Dr. Elders shared her view that "we've got to have comprehensive healthcare education programs in our schools from kindergarten to 12th grade. If we have the schools teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, why not also have them teach the students to be physically, emotionally and psychologically fit? What good does it do for them to be experts in physics and calculus if they don't know how to care for their physical and psychological health?"

She told the audience her mother gave her four gifts of wisdom that has served her well throughout life, espe-

cially during the most difficult and trying times: "Always do your best; that's good enough. Don't throw away tomorrow by worrying about yesterday. Recognize the truth and speak out against wrongdoing. If you want to get out of the cotton fields, get something in your head." Dr. Elders concluded by quoting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who said, "Be something, do something and leave something."

From its inception in 1992, SUA's Human Rights Lecture Series has provided a forum for dozens of nationally and internationally renowned speakers to address issues relating to peace, social justice and societal reform. For more information on the Human Rights Lecture Series, which is free and open to the public, please contact Deborah diCesare in SUA's Calabasas Program Development Office at 818-878-3780. WT



Dr. Elders with Soka University of America, Calabasas graduate students and staff at SUA's Human Rights Lecture Series.

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