

World TRIBUNE

IN THIS ISSUE

FRIENDS
for Peace

BOYS AND GIRLS SECTION

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FLORIDA FESTIVAL EXPRESSES DIVERSITY

Photo by NORIKO KAKUSHO



Children in costume at WorldFeast 2001 at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, April 29.

By SHARON KAPLAN, MONICA
LEMA AND JIM DREISBACH
FLORIDA CORRESPONDENTS

On April 29, more than 2,000 SGI-USA members, guests and friends crowded the courtyard at the Florida Nature and Culture Center to celebrate the joy of

diversity. WorldFeast 2001 afforded the opportunity for the 32 districts that comprise all of South Florida Region to create motifs of culture from all over the world.

Diversity is nothing new for this crossroads of the Americas. Two years earlier, the region held Diversity '99, which

was a natural extension of the many cultures represented by the area. Many wondered if anything could top it.

This year, the festival planning committee had something different in mind. "We wanted to show the Buddhist idea of diver-

PLEASE SEE FLORIDA DIVERSITY, 12

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



Kaneko Ikeda (right) greets SGI-USA arts division member Angela Olivera at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall, June 2000.

SGI President Ikeda's New Poem for Mothers

SGI President Ikeda recently wrote a new poem for all the mothers of the SGI, "The 21st Century Is the Century of Women." The poem celebrates Mother's Day and the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the women's division. See pages 6-8 for the entire poem, in which he shares his great expectations for women in the new century.

*Now the fiercely burning
sun
Has begun to light the
way ahead
For these extraordinary
mothers.*

◆◆◆

*We must change this
base, arrogant,
Almost insane society in
which we live,
And
With a new spirit,
With a new philosophy,
Create an age
Which eternally honors
mothers.*

*This
Is the century of women,
A wise person said.*

*Come!
The century of women
Has dawned,
The sun rises on
the horizon.
Instead of the pallid,
Dim light of old,*

The Gohonzon Reflects Our Infinite Potential

Q&A ON FAITH

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Q What is the true significance of the Gohonzon?

A In contrast to T'ien-t'ai's Buddhism, where an introspective, meditative practice of looking into one's own life was stressed and an object of devotion did not play a chief role, Nichiren Daishonin made a written mandala, not a Buddhist statue, the central object of devotion. He did this by inscribing the Gohonzon, which manifests the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo that "illuminated" his life-condition. The Daishonin said that "this Gohonzon is the essence of the Lotus Sutra and the eye of all the scriptures. It is like the sun and the moon in the heavens, a great ruler on earth, the heart in a human being, the wish-granting jewel among trea-



asures, and the pillar of a house" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 624).

The Daishonin made it clear that the Gohonzon was the legitimate culmination of all Buddhist teachings. He explained that "the sutra itself and the commentaries of T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo explicitly state that the Gohonzon will appear after two thousand years have elapsed following the Buddha's passing..." (WND, 831). He also stated, "This mandala is in no way my invention" (WND, 831). In other words, the entirety of Buddhist history was a prelude to the inscription of

the Gohonzon.

But to the people of his time, this object of devotion designed for their enlightenment was something entirely new. To help them appreciate its true value, the Daishonin stressed the importance of their faith in the Gohonzon. He told them: "Believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart" (WND, 412). "Believe in this great mandala of the five characters" (WND, 468). "Believe in the Gohonzon, the supreme object of devotion in all Jambudvīpa" (WND, 386).

He also stressed the Gohonzon's protective functions. The people of his time harbored great uneasiness toward the future. Fear of an impending attack on the Japanese nation by a Mongolian expedition contributed significantly to their anxiety. The Daishonin thus taught them that "when we have this mandala with us, it is a rule that all the Buddhas and gods will gather round and watch over us, protecting us like a shadow day and night..." (WND, 624). And that the Gohonzon "is a ship to ferry people over the sea of the

sufferings of birth and death" (WND, 414).

The Daishonin also often expressed his conviction that the appearance of the Gohonzon would be the harbinger of the widespread propagation of the Law throughout the world. "I was the first to reveal as the banner of propagation of the Lotus Sutra this great mandala that even those such as Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu, T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo were unable to express" (WND, 831). The Gohonzon was grounded in the Daishonin's compassion for all people, not just those of his country or his time.

The following two passages reveal the essential nature of the Gohonzon and how we should practice to it:

1) "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon" reads: "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo" (WND, 832). This passage clearly indicates that our own Buddhahood is the entity of the Gohonzon. The Gohonzon is comparable

to a clear mirror that reflects our innate Buddhahood. It is inscribed to let us know the great essence of our own lives. Therefore, we have to be careful not to put ourselves and others down, as this negates the purpose of the Gohonzon.

2) "On Attaining Buddhahood" reads, "When you chant *myoho* and recite *rengo*, you must summon up deep faith that Myoho-enge-kyo is your life itself" (WND, 3). All in all, the Gohonzon exists to let us realize how precious the essence of our lives are. In this sense, the Gohonzon is an eternal "reminder" of the importance of appreciating the infinite potential of our lives. As SGI President Ikeda says: "We can attain a state of life where we can thoroughly enjoy good times and bad. This drives home again just how momentous and unprecedented it was for the Daishonin to reveal the Gohonzon of the true entity of all phenomena. My heart is filled with gratitude when I think of it" (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 183).

Coming up next in this series: more on the Gohonzon.

RIDING THE GREAT VEHICLE TO HAPPINESS

WORDS To WIN By

By DORIS McCLOSKEY
GREAT LAKE REGION WOMEN'S LEADER

From "The Selection of the Time," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 538-94.

Thus a single word of this Lotus Sutra is as precious as a wish-granting jewel, and a single phrase is the seed of all Buddhas. We may leave aside the question of whether Shakyamuni's listeners at that point possessed the capacity to understand such doctrines or not. The fact is that the time had come for him to preach them. As the sutra says, "Now is the very time when I must decisively preach the great vehicle" (WND, 539).

Nichiren Daishonin asserts that "a single word of the Lotus Sutra is as precious as a wish-granting



jewel" because the Lotus Sutra contains the teaching of the eternally inherent equality of Buddhahood, which is a life-condition we awaken to through faith in the Mystic Law. "The infinite and unbounded state of Buddhahood can be described as a state in which the freedom, openness and harmony of life are maximally realized," SGI President Ikeda explains (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, volume 1, p. 24).

The most profound teaching for the happiness of all humankind remained "hidden" in the depths of the essential

teaching of the Lotus Sutra — no one before the Daishonin was able to bring this teaching to light. He brought forth the great vehicle for the attainment of Buddhahood that was implicit in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

And he embodied this realization in the form of the Gohonzon, the object of devotion for attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime, in one's present form, thereby establishing a practice fully accessible to all people. Because all people are inherently Buddhas, the Daishonin taught the true Law in a form that corresponds to the time and the capacity of all people.

Reciting the sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to the Gohonzon is the "great vehicle" that takes us on the journey along the limitless path of Buddhahood.

President Ikeda further explains: "The dynamic of Shakyamuni's Buddhism is 'from the cause to the effect,' while that of the Daishonin's Buddhism is 'from the effect to

the cause.'...The principle 'from the cause to the effect' refers to people of the nine worlds (the cause) practicing in order to attain Buddhahood (the effect). In contrast, the principle 'from the effect to the cause' indicates people who, based on the state of Buddhahood (the effect) they have attained instantly through chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon, pursue and challenge the reality of the nine worlds (the cause) in daily life. You might say Shakyamuni's Buddhism is like climbing a mountain, starting at the foot and heading toward the summit. During the ascent, we are given explanations of how wonderful the peak is, but we ourselves cannot appreciate or comprehend it. Nor is there any guarantee we will eventually reach the top. We may get lost or meet with an accident on the way. In contrast, the Daishonin's Buddhism reveals the way to the direct and immediate attainment of enlightenment, so in an instant we find ourselves standing on the mountain peak" (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, volume 1, pp. 99-100).

Therefore, the key to correct practice for the times we are living in is reciting the sutra, chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and going from the "mountain peak" out into society armed with the wisdom to perform a great transformation of ourselves and the world for the sake of all suffering beings. **W**

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EXPERIENCE — JUNKO SIGMON AND JENNIFER OBIDAH, ATLANTA

Learning the Value of Appreciation

After suffering the loss of a loved one, Junko Sigmon befriends fellow member Jennifer Obidah — and they learn the value of appreciation from each other.

Junko Sigmon: In 1995, I lost my son, Bobby. He was 19 years old. At first, I didn't feel like living anymore. I struggled a great deal with his death, but through chanting and reading SGI President Ikeda's guidance, I resolved that I would not be defeated. I would make it my mission to become a person who encourages others.

Before every meeting, I would chant for such an opportunity. I challenged myself to smile at every person at the meeting and tried to think of what I could do or say to encourage him or her. When they left the meeting, my wish was that they were glad they came, and that they were encouraged to fight against whatever difficulties they were facing.

I made this determination not only because of the encouragement I received from President Ikeda, but because of the support I received from the leaders and members during my most difficult time. I wanted to give something back. I would pray, "Give me the chance to say one word to someone that will encourage him or her." It was during this time that I met Jennifer.

Jennifer Obidah: I came to Peachtree District after the geographical reorganization of the SGI-USA in Atlanta. I had been in Atlanta for over a year, one of the most difficult years of my Buddhist practice. I did not feel as though I fit in and felt at odds with my leaders. Unlike the past, I would leave every meeting feeling uptight and angry. I was discouraged, except when I attended the Peachtree District meetings. I felt more at home there than anywhere else, but I was still reluctant to get close to anyone in the district.



Junko Sigmon (left) and Jennifer Obidah.

There was a little Japanese woman who, after every meeting, would talk to me. She just talked. I would say hi, and she would begin to give me guidance as if I asked her something. At first, I politely listened, but then I would get annoyed because she just kept talking. This woman was Junko.

Junko: When I saw Jennifer, I could see that she was not happy, and sometimes she even seemed angry. I decided that I would talk to her, but when I tried to have a conversation with her, she did not really appreciate it. She seemed to think that no one understood her. I would speak and she would nod politely but I could see that she was not really listening. This made me feel even more that I wanted to talk to her.

After a while, I began to feel that she didn't like me, so I started to chant for her. However, the more I chanted about her, the more things arose that I wanted to talk to her about. It didn't matter to me whether she liked me or not, I just wanted to talk to her.

Jennifer: Junko never gave up.

whole attitude." This quote said everything I felt about Junko's efforts to encourage me. It takes a person with courage to talk to someone, even when they can see that that person really doesn't want to talk to them. Through her actions, Junko taught me what real courage is about.

Junko: I was very surprised when Jennifer picked my name, and shocked when I later read the quote on the plaque. I consider those gifts to be treasures. I also felt that this was proof that my determination was working. I appreciated Jennifer giving me the chance to grow in my practice.

After a while, Jennifer's whole attitude changed. She was happier. She volunteered more in the meetings, started to study more and extended herself in the organization. I enjoyed seeing her grow. Two years later, Jennifer joined the women's division, and soon after, she became the district leader.

Jennifer: I was in awe of the responsibility of a district leader, but the district supported the

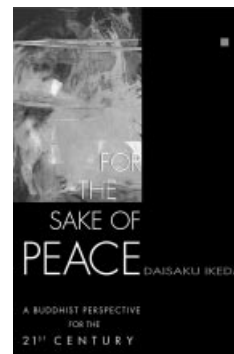
decision and I determined to do my best. My first goal was to visit every member of the district. Not surprisingly, Junko was the first one I visited.

From the moment I walked in, Junko's home was like a sanctuary. It felt so comfortable, like I had been visiting her for years. I sat at her kitchen counter as she cooked for me, and we talked and laughed like dear old friends.

Before I left we did evening gongyo together. As we entered her Gohonzon room, she pulled out the card and plaque that I had given her two years earlier. That was the first time she told me about her determination and what the quote meant to her.

Junko: Jennifer's gifts, and her friendship, are my treasures because they represent something I learned from my son, Bobby taught me how to appreciate life. I appreciate others, my challenges and my victories. With this appreciation, together with the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and my friends in the SGI, I am encouraged every day. **W**

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S APRIL 25 SPEECH — PART 2

OUR STRUGGLE LIES BEFORE US

'For the SGI, our full-fledged struggle for the 21st century now lies in front of us,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'Our advance will contribute to the happiness of the entire world.'

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 5th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, commemorating May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, held at the Tokyo Toda Memorial Auditorium in Sugamo, April 25.

Dr. Joseph Rotblat, Nobel laureate and president emeritus of the Pugwash Conferences, whom I met in Okinawa last year, is a great scientist who has waged an unflagging struggle to realize a world free of nuclear weapons and war. He is a truly admirable man. To my delight, I received a letter from him the other day.

First-rate people really treasure, and make diligent efforts to sustain, the friendships they have forged. I want to share his letter with you:

Dear President Ikeda,

I am writing to congratulate you on the occasion of the opening of Soka University of America, the fulfillment of one of your dreams.

You are admired throughout the world for your ceaseless efforts towards universal peace, and the establishing of a Culture of Peace. It is most important that the concept of a Culture of Peace be imbued in the young generation; this can be brought about by education, the kind of education—to quote your own words—that fosters love for humanity, develops character, and provides the basis for the realization of peace. Soka University of America is designed to provide this type of education and thus is an integral part of your life-long endeavors.

I send my best wishes for the success of this valuable center of education.

With warm regards for yourself and your wife.

Yours sincerely,
Joseph Rotblat

On May 3, the dedication of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo is taking place at last. The first class will comprise more than 100 outstanding students from around the world. [The entrance ceremony for the first freshman class will take place on Aug. 24.]

In advance of the university's long-awaited dedication, congratulatory messages have been pouring in from international leaders and dear friends around the world. I want to share some of them with you today.

First, a message of congratulations from Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand:

The campus at Aliso Viejo will offer good facilities in a beautiful natural setting and should attract students from around the world.

The long-standing work of Dr. Ikeda and Soka Gakkai International for peace and international cooperation transcends barriers of class, culture and nationality. I trust that this same spirit infuses life at the new university and wish everyone involved all the best for the future.

Congratulations!

We also received a message from Fidel Ramos, former president of the Philippines:

It is commendable that Soka University continues its mission to develop the potential for hope, courage, and altruistic action among its students. This prepares the youth, as well as their elders and mentors, to face the challenges of the new millennium with more responsibility towards oneself and to fellow citizens in the global human family.

Also, may I extend my congratulations to the founder of Soka University, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, for his vision of peace through education.

Mabuhay (continued success) to Soka University of Aliso Viejo, California, USA!!!

Our purpose is to win true liberation — to safeguard justice and human rights.

What is the significance of this day, April 25, in world history? Is it Italy's triumphant



SGI President Ikeda speaks at the 5th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, April 25.

Liberation Day—the day it won its victory over fascism. On this date in 1945, at the end of a long struggle in which the people rallied bravely together, all of Italy was finally liberated.

For the SGI, our full-fledged struggle for the 21st century now lies in front of us. It is crucial that we achieve victory all across Japan. Kosen-rufu is a movement to win true liberation—to safeguard justice and human rights. Our advance will contribute to the happiness of Japan and the entire world. This was Nichiren Daishonin's desire. And it was the dearest wish of my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda.

We have no course but to realize their dream without fail. Today constitutes an important departure toward that goal.

In Campomorone, Italy, right now, to commemorate Liberation Day, an exhibition titled "Three Great Leaders of Peace" is being shown. The exhibition features the lives and achievements of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as well as myself. I am deeply humbled to be included alongside such great individuals.

Nichiren Shoshu has derailed Nichiren Daishonin's lofty spirit.

If we turn to Japan, April 25, 1872, was the day on which the Meiji government issued an edict pertaining to priests. This was in the year following first Soka Gakkai president Tsu-

nesaburo Makiguchi's birth. The edict stated, "From this time on, Buddhist priests are free to eat meat, marry and grow their hair." This was a directive issued solely to suit the government's own agenda, without paying any regard to the Buddhist teachings.

On the surface, this decree may seem to be generous, offering the priests substantial freedom. But the underlying motive on the part of the authorities was to undermine Japanese Buddhism by encouraging the moral decline and corruption of the priests, so that Shinto could be established as the state religion. This is an example of the frightening, diabolical nature of authority.

There have been those among our own ranks who foolishly succumbed to the insidious nature of authority, grew arrogant and corrupt, and strayed from the path of human honesty and decency. President Toda sharply saw through this fundamental corrupting nature of power. That is why he constantly called on us to fight against abuses of authority.

Unable to discern the government's true intent, Japan's Buddhist clergy in the early Meiji Era took the edict at face value and happily adopted its directives. Moral decline and corruption soon followed.

Deplorably, as records of the day show, many priests were ecstatic when they read the edict. Some even wept with gratitude,

declaring that "the government's compassion surpasses even the Buddha's."

Of course, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood was no exception. In a journal published by the head temple during the Taisho Era, we can find such defiant declarations as "Priests are human beings, too. They have the right...to keep mistresses." [An article in the October 1914 issue of the Nichiren Shoshu journal *Natural Sound* reads: "Priests are human beings, too. They have the right to take wives, to eat meat, to have children, and to keep mistresses."]

The subsequent moral decline of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood and its lamentable development into an increasingly closed, narrow order, where priestly family ties came to be valued above all and nepotism ruled, are well known. And today the priesthood has degenerated into a school that has deviated completely from Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

The Daishonin writes: "I have neither wife nor children, nor do I eat fish or fowl. I have been blamed merely for trying to propagate the Lotus Sutra. Though I have neither wife nor child, I am known throughout the country as a monk who transgresses the code of conduct, and though I have never killed even a single ant or mole cricket, my bad reputation has spread throughout the realm" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 42). The Daishonin,

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

who strove nobly throughout his life to lead people to happiness, was maligned and called the vilest names by people throughout the land—all at the instigation of those jealous of him. But aware that the persecutions befalling him accorded with the Lotus Sutra's prophesy, the Daishonin said of his state of mind, "I cannot possibly express my joy" (WND, 43).

High Priest Nikken Abe and the Nichiren Shoshu priests have desecrated this lofty spirit and become utterly debauched and degenerate. I want to leave a clear record of this fact for future generations.

President Toda often used to say: "Though they are called priests, they get married, eat the same food, wear the same clothes and chant the same Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that we

do. They are exactly the same as we are, aren't they? In that case, self-respecting priests should not act as if they are superior but work together with us on an equal footing for the sake of kosen-rufu."

I am happy that we are joined today by our friends the reformist priests—priests of kosen-rufu—who are working together with the SGI in the manner that President Toda described.

History shows that great people are always criticized and attacked.

The Daishonin's ideal of the harmonious unity of believers (Jpn *wagoso*) is today found only in the SGI. Although *believers* here is represented by the Chinese character for *priest* (Jpn *so*), the term does not refer

only to clerics. This Chinese character is also used to represent the community of believers, including both priests and laity—the *samgha* as it was known in Shakyamuni's day—who correctly uphold and propagate the teachings of Buddhism. [Originally, this character, *so*, was used to represent the Sanskrit word *samgha*, but it later came to be used as the character for *priest*.]

Based on this understanding, the community of believers is comprised of those whose faith is dedicated to kosen-rufu. It is not a matter of outward appearance or formality. Though we are laity, we who are correctly advancing toward kosen-rufu embody a harmoniously united community of believers in the truest sense.

In closing, I want to quote some words by the famous Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore: "To derive self-satisfaction from traducing [maligining] others is the entertainment of the weak." History shows us that there will always be petty individuals who criticize and attack great people.

The Daishonin writes, "To be praised by fools—that is the greatest shame" (WND, 287). And Josei Toda says, "To be praised by the great sage [the Daishonin] is the highest honor in life." Let us continue to fight with this proud conviction.

On your return to your respective areas, please convey my best regards to all your fellow members.

Congratulations again on today! Thank you! **WT**

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

The Community of Believers

From This Speech:

Nichiren Daishonin's ideal of the harmonious unity of believers (Jpn *wagoso*) is today found only in the SGI. Although *believers* here is represented by the Chinese character for *priest* (Jpn *so*), the term does not refer only to clerics. This Chinese character is also used to represent the community of believers, including both priests and laity—the *samgha* as it was known in Shakyamuni's day—who correctly uphold and propagate the teachings of Buddhism. [Originally, this character, *so*, was used to represent the Sanskrit word *samgha*, but it later came to be used as the character for *priest*.]

1) SGI President Ikeda says, "This Chinese character [for *priest* (Jpn *so*)] is also used to represent the community of believers, including both priests and laity... who correctly uphold and propagate the teachings of Buddhism." How do you think the essential meaning of the harmonious unity of believers relates to the difference between formality and substance in Buddhist practice?

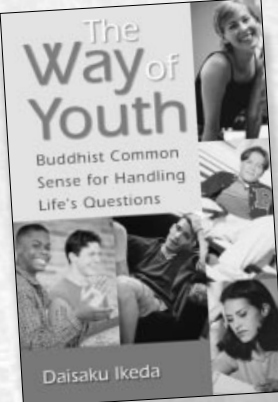
2) Can you think of instances where becoming attached to outward appearances over real substance can destroy people's happiness? Do you have any experiences of challenging mere outward appearances to reveal the truth?

3) In an age of democracy, do you think it is still necessary for a priestly class to instruct lay believers on the correct practice of religion?

4) Do you think there is still a place for priests, by virtue of their clerical position, to claim any special authority? If not, why not? Do you think this type of behavior violates Nichiren Daishonin's spirit?

For further discussion on the role and development of the priesthood in Buddhist history, see "Do We Need Priests?" by Shin Yatomi, October 1999 Living Buddhism, pp. 5-15.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S POEM

The 21st Century Is the Century of Women

— *With Deep Appreciation for All the Noble Mothers of the World*
 — *Praying for the Happiness of All Women*

By Shin'ichi Yamamoto [the name President Ikeda uses for his character in the *Human Revolution* novels]

*I know
 And you know
 The secret
 To why we were born with
 a shared destiny
 As human beings
 And became friends of
 profound connection
 And comrades in faith.*

*In our own unique way,
 You and I
 Strive to fulfill
 The wondrous dream
 And the wondrous mission
 That pervade our lives
 Across eternity.*

*We decisively embrace hope,
 We feel no anxiety.
 Toiling with every ounce of our beings,
 Our hearts sing,
 We who have stood up
 For world peace,
 For a philosophy of happiness
 Based on the eternity of life.*

*Though nameless ordinary people,
 We will be remembered in history
 Under the noble name,
 Victory.*

*My home
 Is humble, but
 It is one of true humanity,
 Filled with many resolute dreams.
 This is
 My greatest source of pride.*

*I have no need
 To look in a clouded mirror:
 With the power to change my karma,
 A bright future awaits me;
 Once colored by a bleak outlook
 on life,
 The past and all its attendant
 sufferings
 Have now vanished.*

*I am living my life.
 I am free of anguished dreams.
 With high spirits,
 I live in and gaze upon
 A beautiful earthly kingdom.*

*I have many
 Wonderful friends.
 I have many
 Wonderful books.*

*My life is removed
 From the pitiful self-conceited.
 Not for me
 A life of vanity
 That brings only darkness.
 I will not fall into those insidious
 Hidden traps.*

*We who gravitate toward happiness
 and good
 Are greeted by friends who sympathize
 with our ideals,
 Always respecting the beauty
 within us,
 And by a paradise tremulous
 with hope.*

*Our doubt and anxiety
 Toward a society rife with
 contradictions
 Have been replaced by
 an unshakable faith
 That we have always longed for.
 We have won!*

*Our unimaginably painful struggles
 Have also given way
 To a state of life
 In which we gaze upon all
 from a lofty height.*

*We are saddened
 That many people
 Lead miserable existences,
 Allowing themselves
 To be dragged about
 In the pitch-black darkness
 of delusion,
 Slavishly following force of habit.*

*Our lives
 Are always a vibrant dawn.
 They are a realm
 Of mothers' youthful affection,
 Forever harkening to morning's song
 Drenched in golden sunlight
 And golden rain.*

*The eternal and unique power
 of mothers.
 Their great presence
 Is more powerfully attractive
 Than any adventurer.
 Women are truth incarnate.
 Mothers are victory personified.*

*No matter how they may be deceived
 Or attacked by devilish forces,
 They command the power to,
 In the end, adamantly indict
 the offender.
 With mental wheels of wisdom
 ever spinning,
 They possess the courage to
 see through deception.
 This awe-inspiring beauty
 Is the strength of mothers, of women,
 That fills their lives with happiness.*

*Come!
 The century of women
 Has dawned,
 The sun rises on the horizon.
 Instead of the pallid,
 Dim light of old,
 Now the fiercely burning sun
 Has begun to light the way ahead
 For these extraordinary mothers.*

*These praiseworthy mothers
 Must never be imprisoned
 By the iron bars of misery.*

*Let us all live noble lives,
 Brimming with golden affection,
 Comforting these mothers in
 their loneliness
 And strongly supporting and
 protecting each other!
 Let us make mothers the queens
 Of this empire of supreme happiness.*

*And
 With a stylus,
 Let us inscribe an epitaph
 In tribute to these mothers
 As great immortal nameless actors.*

*O the century of women!
 Now we close the curtain
 On a long history of misfortune,
 Letting it sink
 Beneath the tides of time,
 And allowing a drama
 Of genuine human happiness
 To unfold without end.*

*Repeatedly
 Throughout past ages,
 An unjustifiable history
 Of sadness
 Has flowed continuously,
 Like so much flotsam,
 In the beautiful hearts of mothers.*

*No matter what insult
 We suffer in society,
 Our vision is
 To vanquish without fail
 The shadowy knaves of hell
 And create everywhere
 A world abloom with the flowers
 Of love and laughter
 Of mothers, those heavenly beings.*

*There are people who grow jealous
 At the sight of others' wealth.
 Jealousy has the power
 Of a devil's sword
 To make people unhappy.*

*Nichiren Daishonin writes,
 "A woman who embraces
 The lion king of the Lotus Sutra
 Never fears any of the beasts of hell
 Or of the realms of hungry spirits
 and animals."*

(The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 949).

CORBIS/Laura Dwight



CORBIS

There are those who grow jealous
At the sight of mothers
enjoying success,
And who resort to spreading
false rumors,
Inflicting pain and anguish
On these golden-hearted ones.

But
Mothers are made of
greater substance.
They possess a profound,
abiding strength.
That is why
They pay no heed
To petty rumors or malicious gossip.

We must change this base, arrogant,
Almost insane society in which we live,
And
With a new spirit,
With a new philosophy,
Create an age
Which eternally honors mothers.
This
Is the century of women,
A wise person said.

Even if they are poor,
Even if they are sick,
Even if they have lost their partners,
In the dauntless hearts of mothers,
Citadels of happiness and victory
Are forged.

The Daishonin said,
"The woman who upholds the
Lotus Sutra
Is like clear water,
In which the moon of
Shakyamuni Buddha
Is reflected" (Gosho Zenshu, p. 1395)

Mothers!
Clever mothers.
Mothers!
Gentle mothers.
Mothers!
Unlearned mothers.
Mothers!
Nagging mothers.
Mothers!
Wise mothers.
Mothers!
Mothers of strong faith.
Mothers!
Unaffected and talkative mothers.

But
In the hearts of mothers
Who have been buffeted by storms,
There is always
Fresh and passionate
Determination and love
Born of profound life experience.

Mothers unadorned
By expensive jewels—
Who instead wear only
A simple brooch,
Far from regal,
Yet rich in sentimental value.

Even so,
Stroking
Their children's heads,
They possess the beauty of triumph,
Ever shining,
Towering over a life of misery,
And even more a life of folly.

Mothers!
You are great uncrowned queens of life
Living with a firm purpose
That nothing can destroy—
A life which shines
With awesome beauty.

The youthfulness of a mother
Who turns up at a meeting
In a hastily borrowed blouse
Of her daughter's.

The endearing mother who,
After borrowing her daughter's
high heels
With a quick "I'm sorry,"
Rushes to a meeting,
Only to complain for a week after
About how much her feet hurt!
Yet she doesn't make
a single complaint
About not being able to afford
A new pair of shoes for herself,
She lives so frugally
That it is touching.

Late returning from a meeting,
She is scolded unreasonably
by her partner,
But she retains her dignity
And defends herself ably, saying:
"It's for the sake of justice and
our good fortune"—
With a skill outrivaling
Any politician on the House floor.

The confident spirit of a mother,
Who is the embodiment of love itself.
Like the Count of Monte Cristo,
She finally draws an admission from
her partner,
"All right, all right, I was wrong."
A mother whom all praise
As being more eloquent
Than any prime minister.

Though her partner the scholar,
Her son the student,
And her daughter the genius,
Start out thinking they can best
Her in an argument,
In the end
They are no match
For her intelligence and wisdom.

The proud mother retorts:
"That is an argument
You've learned somewhere,
But it is not real life.
It has no flesh or blood.
Words you've read are just pouring
From your heads.
I am waging a real-life struggle
For survival
In daily life,
In actual society.
That's why I am strong."

As Goethe said:
"Trust in life!
It teaches us more
Than any orator or book can!"
How true!

Mothers
Are fearless.
They are invincible victors
Who have won the quintessential
triumph
Of the human spirit.
A famous poet asserted
That this formula—
In every time and place—
Is the hidden essence of
Human history.

Though a mother may
Be bedridden, exhausted and feverish,
She says to others,
"Please take care."
Though no one pampers her,
She encourages
Her partner and children,
and her friends.

How noble these actions of
the Bodhisattva!

The infinite strength of mothers who,
Even if they have lost their partners,
Live courageously,
Like the immortal phoenix,
Working actively
Amid the harsh realities of society.
Children grow up
Looking at the example of
their mothers.
That is without a doubt
An eternal truth.

The century of women
Is truly a period
Of the ripening of democracy.
Elections are the first step
To the sovereignty of the people.
Elections are the right of all citizens
And their duty.

For the sake of kosen-rufu as well,
For the unbounded expansion
Of those who share our ideals,
Let us carry out a cheerful struggle
To redraw the face
Of Japan.

Mothers, living in the real world,
Work tirelessly to advocate our cause,
Talking cheerfully about many issues.
A learned scholar has praised
their efforts
As a movement to realize
True sovereignty of the people.

Seemingly foolish yet wise mothers.
Seemingly cranky yet pure-hearted
mothers.
Mothers who, though on occasion
Incur people's dislike,
Can be counted on in a crisis.
Mothers who put on airs
But privately reflect on their own folly.

Mothers whose lives are modest
But whose hearts
Are as rich as billionaires.
Mothers who are like queens.
Mothers who, deceived by seemingly
valid arguments
Despite glaring contradictions,
Stubbornly set about proving
The righteousness of their position.

PLEASE SEE POEM, 8



IS/Reflections Photolibrary

CORBIS/Laura Dwight

FROM POEM, 7

And mothers without children,
They, too, are not lonely in the least,
exclaiming,
"I have so many friends;
There are so many young people
in my life
Who will carry on in the future."

And, with cheerful laughter,
They say serenely:
"There are too many people in Japan,
Too many people on our planet.
We don't need so many people!"

When mother is in a good mood,
Everyone is bright and happy,
Like the sun.
When mother is irritated,
It is like a sad and lonely night
Lashed by cold winds and heavy rain.

Glad when her children's
grades go up,
Sad when her children's
grades go down,
But in the end, she gives up and,
Turning the report card upside down,
Smiles and says with humor,
"Now these are good grades!"

Mothers who know
The rules for living
Honest and decent lives
With a spirit of generosity, enthusiasm
And diligence.

Mothers who treasure
Boys and girls who have no hope
or love
As if they were her own.
And life's quintessential mothers,
Always strict yet compassionate,
Who, when children are suffering
Through disaster or disease,
Search for the cause
And fight against inhumanity.

The compassion of mothers
Who can love
Children who have lost hope

And been abandoned by society
As if they were their own.
Idealistic mothers
Filled with courage
Who, like great liberators,
Extend staunch protection to children
Who have fallen into cruel,
human hells.

These uncrowned mothers
Are far, far greater
Than those who stand
In the vanguard of the revolutions
Of the world's renowned thinkers.
They are greater
Than any eminent political leader,
Yet nations do not bestow
Upon these mothers
Even a single medal.

O the courage of mothers
Who carry out orderly humanitarian
efforts
In the cause of justice,
Naturally and without pretension,
On the world stage.

A certain distinguished educator noted
That even the president of a country
Has the highest respect for mothers.
I agree.
This is life.
This is humanity.
Those whose hearts
Are ruled by Animality
Are pitiful wretches
Who have strayed
From the path of humanity.

Mothers who are natural pacifists,
Opposed to war.
Mothers who hate cruel deception.
O the inner flame of love
With which mothers make their way
Through life's sorrows and
disappointments,
Hurt by their partners,
Or weeping over the delinquency
of their children!

The vast, expansive realm
Of Buddhahood,
That enables all mothers
To lead truly happy lives
Is a global, borderless nation
Of genuine happiness.

There can be no discrimination
Among mothers.
Just because one has a luxurious
house,

Or money,
Or social status,
Or smart children,
Or a partner with a prestigious job,
Or a noble lineage—
All such things
Are completely irrelevant.

Being alive
Is itself
The greatest joy.
This is true happiness.
This is a mother's wish.

Not wealth.
Not honors.
Not vanity.
Not fame.
Not social status.

A true mother—
No matter how humble her existence,
Her love as a mother
Shines.
This is an eternal
And indestructible treasure.

There are occasionally
Mothers
Who commit terrible acts,
But this springs from immaturity;
It is not the true reality of motherhood.

Children
Respect their mothers
When they see
The beautiful way they exert
themselves
On behalf of others in society.

Mothers
Are the primeval sun.
And
Our deceased mothers
Are always alive in our hearts.
We converse with them
Throughout our lives.

Mothers desire
A world of eternal harmony and peace.
In Buddhism,
This is called *kosen-rufu*.
To achieve this
The SGI women's division members
Have launched a momentous struggle.

The history
Of this strong and beautiful alliance
Now marks its glorious 50th year;
Now marks its proud 50th anniversary.

At times scolded by their seniors,
At times teased by their juniors,

At times criticized by people in
their community,
At times abused by their next-door
neighbors,
At times ridiculed by their
old school friends
As "religious fanatics"—
Amidst all this,
They have worked tirelessly
To realize world peace,
The dream of all humanity.
This is the reality
Of our noble and lofty women's
division members.

If the Buddha's teachings are true,
How highly these hard-working
women
Must be praised
By all Buddhas and bodhisattvas
Throughout the three existences
And ten directions.
The citadel of life that brings
Eternal prosperity, glory and victory
To their families and relatives
Is without a doubt
Everlasting and indestructible.

I have won.
You have won.
We have definitely won!
That is the declaration
Of the Daishonin and Shakyamuni
Buddha.

We do not need
The praise of fools.
We do not need
The praise of the envious.
The wonderful praise
Of the Buddhas and heavenly deities
Is shining brightly,
Enfolding our mothers' lives
In its brilliant illumination.

Our mothers are strong,
Our mothers are wise,
Our mothers have won!

May 8, 2001
In commemoration of Mother's Day
And the 50th anniversary of the
women's division

SGI President Ikeda is recognized
throughout the world as a poet laureate.



the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'JEWELLED SWORD'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 9-10

'Wherever I went, the circumstances were the worst they could be, but I won against all obstacles and met Josei Toda's expectations,' Shin'ichi Yamamoto says. 'That is the way of a disciple. The Soka Gakkai does not need young people who pretend to work hard but are in reality lax and self-indulgent.'

At the Suiko-kai guidance session, a young man named Genji Samejima asked Shin'ichi Yamamoto, "What does it mean to have resolute faith?"

Before joining the Soka Gakkai, Samejima had belonged to the Hokkeko, another lay organization of Nichiren Shoshu. He became a member of the Soka Gakkai after Shin'ichi had become its president. After graduating from Tokyo University, he went to work for a certain company, but later was hired by the Soka Gakkai Headquarters and assigned as staff of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

Opinions about Samejima were divided among the other staff. Some described him as a serious and talented young man of good character, while others were convinced that he was overly ambitious and had left

the Hokkeko for the rapidly growing Soka Gakkai because he saw more personal opportunity there.

Shin'ichi was aware of this duality in Samejima's personality. He also knew that Samejima would frequently criticize senior leaders behind their backs and act as though he was the only one who really cared about the organization's future. Everyone, to some extent, has two sides. Buddhism teaches that good and evil exist inseparably in the human heart—that our minds contain both the state of life of the Buddha, Shakyamuni, and of Devadatta, who sought to destroy the Buddha. Shin'ichi wanted to help this young person, who had come to the Soka Gakkai to change his life, realize his full potential at any cost.

In answer to Samejima's question, he said: "People of resolute faith are those who stick with the Soka Gakkai

throughout their lives and support their seniors who are devoted to spreading Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. Those who stay with the organization through thick and thin, no matter how others may criticize, attack or try to make them leave, are people of resolute faith. That's all there is to it!"

As he said this, Shin'ichi looked Samejima directly in the eye. He was determined to watch over this young man for the next 30 years. Shin'ichi knew that time would reveal who was genuine. If Samejima could continue his faith in earnest for 30 years, then he would gain mastery over himself and show wonderful proof of achieving human revolution. But if he was dominated instead by ambition and tried to use the Soka Gakkai for his own objectives, in that time he would leave the organization.

Shin'ichi put a lot of energy into teaching and training Samejima and even gave him important responsibilities within the organization. Somewhere along the way, however, Samejima became consumed by the desire to control the Soka Gakkai himself. He later became a vice president, but in the end he turned against the Soka Gakkai and took the sad road of one who has abandoned faith.



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

The members continued asking questions, sharing opinions and giving reports. One young man asked Shin'ichi: "There are only a handful of young men's division members in the area I am responsible for, and the situation is very tough. What can I do to turn things around?"

Shin'ichi immediately replied, "You need to rise to action!" Tension swept the room, and everyone fell silent. "Youth have to stand alone! Then, everything will change. That is what I have done. After President Toda died, the media and others began to predict that the Soka Gakkai would fall apart. There were some older leaders who changed their attitude after Mr. Toda's death, taking advantage of his absence to become willful and selfish. Some plotted to exploit the organization. I realized that if nothing were done, the Soka Gakkai might really fall apart. This is why I took a stand. As general administrator of the organization, I worked behind the scenes, taking full responsibility for everything. I was 30 years old at the time.

"My spirit all along has been to stand up alone amid the hardest of circumstances. This was the case when, as a member of the staff of Kamata Chapter, I took the lead in introducing people to the Daishonin's Buddhism. At the time, the number of households joining even the

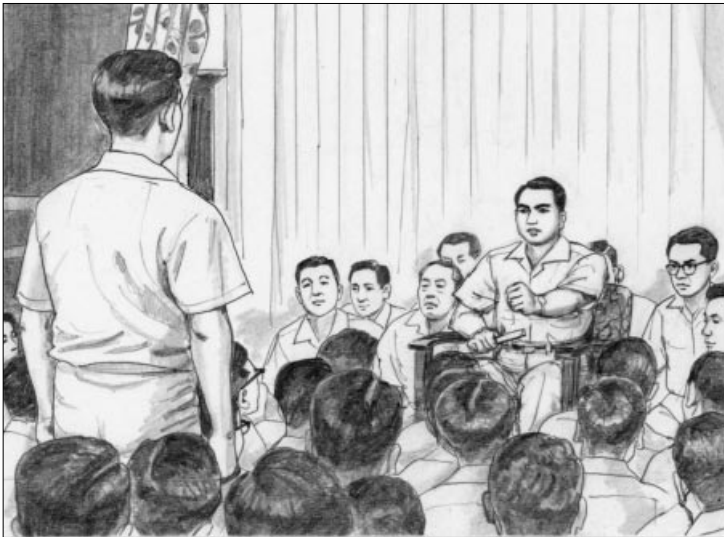
largest chapters in any given month hovered around 100. I knew that at this rate we would never reach Mr. Toda's goal of 750,000 member households. Who was going to do it? It was up to his disciples. So I waged a battle, and in one month Kamata Chapter achieved a new membership record of 201 households.

"I was 24 years old. There were of course men's and women's division members in the chapter. In fact, almost all of the leaders were older than I was. But in the end, they all fought alongside me. Why? Because I was so determined. I was more determined than anyone. They all thought: 'We can't do this on our own, but if we do what this person tells us, we can break through our current deadlock.' And I produced results.

"Wherever I went, the circumstances were the worst they could be, but I won against all obstacles and met Mr. Toda's expectations. That is the way of a disciple. The Soka Gakkai doesn't need young people who pretend to work hard but are in reality lax and self-indulgent.

"I want you to stand up! You have to rise to action! I'll be watching!"

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



MESSAGE TO GOLDEN STAGE GROUP MEMBERS

Let's Support the Family Youth Festivals!

By KAZUE ELLIOT AND
DAVID KASAHARA
SGI-USA GOLDEN STAGE
GROUP COORDINATORS

The month of June, the most beautiful time of year, has arrived. We are sure that you are fully enjoying the refreshing weather and your activities in your respective communities, homes and SGI-USA centers.

Glorious May 3, 2001. We have been looking forward to this day for a long time. We are so fortunate to be able to celebrate this significant day together with our mentor, SGI President Ikeda, and Mrs. Ikeda. Since establishing our se-



niors group on Jan. 2, 2000, and receiving the name of Golden Stage Group from President Ikeda, many of you have been conducting joyous activities,



Photo by JEAN PRITCHARD

such as general meetings, health seminars and friendship exchange meetings.

During our youth, we engraved the words of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's "Precepts for Youth" in our hearts, especially the first sentence, "A new century will be created by the passion and power of youth."

Under the powerful, energetic direction of SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima, the youth have made a firm determination to create indestructible unity as a solid foundation for this year's Zone Family Youth Festivals, which will be held at many locations

throughout the nation. As we promised President Ikeda in 1990, the youth will gather 100,000 people to sing "Ode to Joy" to celebrate this significant year of "Total Victory for the New Century."

We are challenging ourselves as seniors to leave a record of our efforts at this most significant time in the history of kosen-rufu. We have a golden opportunity to put the finishing touches on our lives, adorning them for eternity. Let us encourage and support one another for the sake of fulfilling the mission that is ours and ours alone.

We received a message from President Ikeda in April, during the Golden Stage Group conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. He stated: "The long-awaited 21st century has arrived. Now is the time to put the finishing touches on your lives. I ask that all of you, who have dedicated your lives to American kosen-rufu, patiently love and nurture the next generation of capable youth, utilizing all your abilities. Through such efforts your true benefit and fortune will shine." Based on President Ikeda's

guidance, we want to propose that each one of us chant a minimum of 100,000 daimoku by Aug. 24, in order to fully support all of the Family Youth Festivals throughout the nation. Let us do more than our best to support those young people who will carry out the entire responsibility for the future of all humankind.

Also, we want to propose the following targets for our Golden Stage Group daimoku campaign:

- 1) The excellent health and longevity of President and Mrs. Ikeda.
- 2) Total success of the Family Youth Festivals.
- 3) Total victory in the Soka Spirit campaign.

We sincerely wish that all of you will support this proposal as the first national campaign for our group. Let us continue struggling to the very end of our lives with a great sense of appreciation toward the Gohonzon and President Ikeda.

We wish all of you the very best of health and happiness each and every day. **BT**

HOW TO SUBMIT AN EXPERIENCE

Got an Experience in Faith? We Want To Hear It!

There is nothing that can explain the power of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism as well as someone sharing his or her experience. It makes Buddhist practice very real and tangible.

If you have had an experience that you want to share, or know of someone else who has had a great experience, please submit it to the *World Tribune*.

Here is what you need to prepare:

- The experience should be between 1,000 and 1,500 words, or roughly four or five typed, double-spaced pages.
- You should include at least three good photos of yourself. These could include photos of yourself with friends or family who are mentioned in the experience. Please include the name of the photographer.
- You should also include contact information: name, address, phone number, e-mail address, SGI-USA region.

The experience needs to answer a few questions:

- What was the problem or obstacle you faced?
- How was the problem/ob-

stacle overcome with your Buddhist practice? What was the turning point? How did this experience revolutionize your life?

- What was the outcome?

What you should expect:

- Due to the volume of experiences we receive, we cannot publish every experience submitted. But we will review them all and confirm receipt.
- We cannot promise that materials will be returned. Please do not send original pictures or documents of irreplaceable value.
- If your article is chosen for publication, we will contact you to go over edits and adjustments.

Where to submit:

- Via e-mail: wt@sgi-usa.org
- Via U.S. mail: World Tribune Experiences, 606 Wilshire Blvd., 4th Floor, Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907

That's it. We thank you in advance for your submissions. We look forward to hearing from you and sharing your victories in faith.

The Power of Our Voice

EDITORIAL

By JEFF FARR
MANAGING EDITOR

In sharing Buddhism with our friends, we put into practice Nichiren Daishonin's teaching that 'the voice does the Buddha's work.'

America is a country filled with voices. From the TV set at home to the water cooler at work, we encounter a wide variety of voices every day urging us to do many different things: "Buy this." "Vote for that." "Put your faith in so-and-so."

Add to the mix our voices — the voices of the SGI-USA, voices offering Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to the



Photo by JEAN PRITCHARD

may react negatively.

But if we are brave enough to give it our best, we can help our friends, we can help this country, and we can help ourselves.

The spirit to want to share Buddhism ultimately comes from the depths of our lives — from that most gutsy life-condition of all, Buddhahood. If we were not Buddhas, we would never think of talking about these most deeply held beliefs with other people.

This process of sharing always brings out our Buddhahood more and more, making it stronger. Making it *louder*, if you will. This is what the Daishonin is talking about when he says, "The voice does the Buddha's work" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708).

The whole history of the SGI has been based on this idea. The first three Soka Gakkai practitioners used their voices to open up a path for the Daishonin's Buddhism to spread from Japan

American people. To introduce the Daishonin's Buddhism in such a noisy country takes lots of courage. We never know for sure if people will understand us, if they will really *hear* what we are saying.

Trying to think of the best way to explain this profound philosophy to those unacquainted with it can be quite a challenge. Our friends may ask us many questions that are not easy to answer. There is also the chance that, despite our best intentions, they

Embracing Differences in Portland

By **RANDEE SCHMIDT**

PORTLAND, ORE., CORRESPONDENT

SGI-USA members in Oregon joyfully celebrated May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, at a local middle school, with a spirited meeting of performances and experiences by the youth. The celebration's theme was "Creating True Justice and Unity Through Embracing Our Differences." To the Oregon members, this meant they would stand together in harmonious solidarity, each giving full play to their unique capabilities and making the cause to create an ideal human community.

A tremendous amount of effort went into this event: many practices and rehearsals; coordination of lighting, sound and stage crews working behind the scenes; and lots of daimoku to surmount all the obstacles that come with such a supreme effort. The diversity of performances brought into bold relief the essence of the theme: "The Impossible Dream," performed by Lisa Craner; "In this World," created and performed by Steve Baianu; the Jazz Band; pianist Jennifer Moe; and the Chorus.

The Taiko Drum Corps performed "Kodo Juku." This amazing group originated in Portland two years ago, springing from the determination of one young man. At that time, a cluster of youth came together and studied the basic elements of taiko drumming. They designed, built and polished the beautiful taiko drums that graced the stage.

More youth performed in a skit that illustrated the significance of the Seven Bells. The youth gave their determinations and goals — how they will con-



The Dazzling Unity Soul Sisters pose for a photo after their performance at Oregon Area's May 3 celebration, held May 6 in Portland. The meeting's theme was 'Creating True Justice and Unity Through Embracing Our Differences.'

tribute to society and shoulder the responsibility for kosen-rufu. Elizabeth Dawson confidently proclaimed, "I'm going to be a senator!" The Boys and Girls Group joined the youthful assembly on stage, reflecting the bright future of the SGI-USA's movement.

A dance was choreographed and performed by the Dazzling Unity Soul Sisters dance team. Like the drum corps, this young women's group was created from the determination and vision of one young woman in Portland four years ago. The eight young women embodied the theme of the celebration — youth with

widely diverse backgrounds unifying for the sake of our shared and noble purpose of peace.

"There is a new wave of youth in Oregon who want to really do things in the community and help the SGI grow," said Lisa Craner. "They are learning through experience to communicate and understand each other."

The remarks of Jim Cheek, Oregon Area young men's leader, lifted the entire assembly. "SGI President Ikeda's desire is for all people to be happy," he said. "And my desire is for every single person in this room to be happy. The writer George Eliot said, 'It's never too

late to become what you might have been.' That little voice, dream, desire that you have, that you've covered up — now is the time to do it."

In a message to every member, Oregon Area Women's Leader Debbie Liptan spoke about the significant milestone of May 3, 2001. "This is a point of departure for all of us," she said. "Many of us are facing huge challenges and major changes in our lives and are making significant efforts to reawaken our dreams. From this day, life is different. What a glorious moment. What a beautiful day!" **WT**

FROM EDITORIAL, 10

to the world. The only power they had was their voices — they were by no means powerful men in society.

When we see SGI President Ikeda winning trust for our organization with world leaders and top intellectuals today, we are actually seeing the result of 70 years of "doing the Buddha's work" through dialogue. This is how the SGI became as strong as it is.

From the beginning, there was great resistance to the SGI's voice. Presidents Makiguchi, Toda and Ikeda each raised his

voice against oppression, including from the Japanese government and the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. All three had to experience unjust imprisonment for speaking out for the people in this way.

But "the voice does the Buddha's work" also means — as the three presidents have proven — that our voices can eventually overcome any kind of obstacle we face in the pursuit of kosen-rufu. Our voices, just our voices, are more powerful than any prejudice, than any negative force that is out there trying to stop us.

This summer, as we invite friends to our Family Youth Festivals — or even ask them to participate in creating the festivals — all we need is the power of our voices to win their understanding. "Our friends may be seeing the SGI-USA for the first time. And they will be seeing it through us, through the dialogue we have with them and through our behavior toward them," says SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima. "If we tap the same courage President Ikeda has to speak about our movement, we will surely be able to reach everyone's heart."

The only thing that has ever changed society for the better, after all, is the voice of the people: The voice of those with a strong sense of mission. The voice of those courageous enough to tell anyone what they really believe. The voice of those determined to spend as long as it takes to convince everyone of the truth.

In our case, it is the powerful voice of those who speak a vibrant new language that the 281 million people now living in America have long been waiting to hear — the language of Buddhist philosophy. **WT**

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FROM FLORIDA DIVERSITY, I

sity," said Lucy DiCresenzo, one of the event coordinators. "The focus was to make the district the building block of diversity. So we didn't task the members to do what comes naturally — representing their own cultures. Instead we asked them to pick from a pre-selected list of countries and cultures. The idea was to allow people to expand their horizons, learn about other cultures and make new relationships."

How was each district going to teach the others about another culture? Through food. That's the reason for the name, WorldFest. The main course was to discover the true native cuisine, how it is made and then serve one another a taste.

"Everybody in Costa Rica eats tortillas with sour cream and white cheese. We also made *agua dulce*, which is like Coca-Cola there," said Ligia Calviati, a member of Fountainbleau District who hails from Guatemala. "I talked to a friend of mine from Costa Rica and we researched the country using the Internet. We also contacted the Costa Rican Consulate in Miami to gather information. We even have fresh flowers in our booth that were flown directly to Miami from Costa Rica. My main effort was to try teach the new members how to gain benefit by participating in this activity. The most important thing was that everybody did something."

Beyond the culinary delights, the event was judged a success that was well done. For many who attended, the

festival brought them back home.

Frances Haddock, a guest, exclaimed upon arriving, "Look! There's Puerto Rico!" Shortly thereafter, Frances, a native of Puerto Rico, was on the stage dancing to salsa music.

During the three-hour festival, there was hardly enough time to sample all the food because of the great variety of music and dancing. African story telling, jazz, Brazilian piano, powerful original songs, folk dancers from Bolivia and Peru, thundering taiko drums and an inspiring performance of "Ode to Joy" by the Ikeda Rainbow Chorus were just some of the performances that entertained and inspired.

Guests were able to gain a greater understanding of the teachings of true humanism through the video theater in the Miami Community Center. In addition, in one of the community center rooms was an exhibit of visual art by both SGI-USA members and people in the community.

But by far the most valuable memory of the afternoon was the camaraderie and feeling of accomplishment that validated the activity.

"What a wonderful experience," said Loren, a new member and booth coordinator for Sunrise District. "We spent a lot of time chanting just for the success of this festival. We felt that it brought us together as a group. We also found out that we had an extremely talented group. Some could bake, some made costumes, others decorations. We fit together like a jigsaw puzzle." **WT**



Photos by NORIKO KAKUSHO and FRANCISCO PALACIO