



EXPERIENCE

Takako Lewis overcomes serious health problems with Buddhism.

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# New World Culture Center Opens

By JAMIE LIPTAN  
STAFF WRITER

The much anticipated reopening of the SGI-USA World Culture Center was held Aug. 22 in Santa Monica, Calif. SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda was on hand to welcome Santa Monica Mayor Michael Feinstein, representatives from the city and county of Los Angeles, and more than 600 guests to the lively celebration.

The center was completely rebuilt over a period of three years, including a substantial facelift for the adjacent World Peace Ikeda Auditorium. The auditorium features a brand new, state-of-the-art sound system, with 10 channels for simultaneous language translation. The comfortable new chairs are modular, allowing for any number of seating configurations, up to a maximum capacity of 1,100 seats. Also included is retractable theatrical lighting, making the space suitable for dramatic productions, music concerts, lectures and SGI-USA meetings.

Presenting a proclamation from the city of Santa Monica, Mayor Feinstein commented that "the inner beauty and hap-

piness that people seek through religion and spirituality has definitely been reflected in the beauty of this building."

In a message commemorating the center's reopening, SGI President Ikeda wrote: "As you know, the World Culture Center is a meeting place that I have visited time and again. It is a place where we have struggled together to create the history of American kosen-rufu. The joy I feel at this new beginning is indeed immeasurable...."

"The emergence of Soka University of America, the palace of education, and the birth of the new World Culture Center, the castle of faith and the Law, are proof that the SGI-USA has entered a new era, where the substantial expansion of kosen-rufu is certain to take place. So please live a fully satisfying existence through your courageous and correct faith.

"My heartfelt request is that you devote yourself to encouraging and nurturing youth. I ask that you use your new edifice as the site to foster young capable leaders of Soka, thus developing the World Culture Center into the true home of peace, culture and education." **WT**



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

Southern California Zone holds a leaders meeting in the remodeled World Peace Ikeda Auditorium, Aug. 25.

## Washington, D.C., Festival A Hit

Photo by PETER HOWE



More than 15,000 people attended Washington, D.C., Region's Family Youth Festival, Aug. 11, titled "Create Peace: The Heart is What Matters." Please see pages 6 and 7 for more on the festival, at which SGI-USA youth led discussions on peace, sponsored arts, music and sports exhibitions, and directed games and crafts for children.

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



The new SGI-USA World Culture Center, 'the castle of faith and the Law,' opens in Santa Monica, Calif., Aug. 22.

# CREATING VALUE FROM ATTACHMENTS

## WORDS To WIN By

By DORIS McCLOSKEY

GREAT LAKES REGION WOMEN'S LEADER

From "Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment," The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 317-20.

These are also what is called "earthly desires are enlightenment," and "the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana." ... The Universal Worthy Sutra states, "Without either cutting off earthly desires or separating themselves from the five desires, they can purify all their senses and wipe away all their offenses." (WND, 318)

This is the passage from which this letter takes its name. Earthly desires is a generic term for all the negative workings of life, including the desires and illusions that



cause one physical and spiritual suffering and impede the quest for enlightenment. Perhaps another way to view earthly desires is as the tendency to be swept along by various wants and cravings.

Among the earlier provisional teachings of Shakyamuni, it was taught that the "flame" of enlightenment could be kindled only when the flame of earthly desires was extinguished. Or that one could enter the "ocean" of Buddhahood only after departing from the sea of suffering.

Contrary to this view, as

Nichiren Daishonin indicates in the above passage, Buddhism teaches that "without either cutting off earthly desires or separating themselves from the five desires, [people] can purify all their senses and wipe away all their offenses." The Lotus Sutra teaches the truth that Buddhahood possesses all nine worlds.

Thus, even after achieving enlightenment, a Buddha still retains the nine worlds of the common mortal and their accompanying worries and attachments. There is neither extinguishing nor departing from the desires in our lives.

When based on the world of Buddhahood, the nine worlds and the fundamental illusions and sufferings inherent within them work to create joy for us rather than suffering. Our Buddhist practice allows us to discern the true nature of our desires and attachments—to see them for what they are—and utilize them as a springboard for our happiness.

The Daishonin states in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" that "we burn the firewood of earthly

desires and behold the fire of enlightened wisdom before our eyes" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 710). Because earthly desires are innate in life—and for that reason can never be fully eradicated—it is important that we make full use of our attachments in a positive way rather than letting them control us.

SGI President Ikeda explains that it is by cultivating strong attachments that our lives are made interesting and significant (see Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 93). Because we are attached to our work or our activities for kosen-rufu, for instance, we can fill our lives with great passion and produce tremendous value.

Of course, we must maintain our various attachments in such a way that they do not cause us suffering. To gain the perspective that our various sufferings and attachments are the fuel for growth and the source of deep joy requires us to fully establish our fundamental objective in life.

By chanting sincere

daimoku to the Gohonzon and taking action for kosen-rufu, we are putting the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment into practice. We can continue developing our lives, able to take on progressively greater challenges, including leading many other people to the path of true happiness. **WT**

## We Want To Hear From You

If you have a comment or suggestion about the content of the *World Tribune*, please write to us via U.S. mail at WT Mailbox, P.O. Box 1427, Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907. You can also send an email to [wt@sgi-usa.org](mailto:wt@sgi-usa.org).

# The Four Debts of Gratitude

## Back to the Basics

By FRED KAPLAN-MAYER

PHILADELPHIA

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda once said it is better to remember what others have done for you rather than what you have done for others. And SGI President Ikeda has pointed out that people who have an ungrateful, complaining nature "are not respected by others. From both Buddhist and secular perspectives, their behavior does not benefit a wise or worthy person" (*Faith into Action*, p. 11).

As a matter of etiquette, no one would argue the virtues of expressing gratitude; most people would agree it is an ideal way to behave. Moreover, gratitude in terms of Buddhist practice is that essential element that makes the difference be-



tween a practice that becomes stagnant and one that remains a true expression of deep faith. In other words, victory in life boils down to one critical factor—can you maintain appreciation and confidence in your life, no matter what is going on? This dynamic of faith and practice becomes even more apparent when you consider Nichiren Daishonin's writing "The Four Debts of Gratitude."

The Daishonin tells us here that "One who studies the teachings of Buddhism must

not fail to repay the four debts of gratitude" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 43). The four debts of gratitude are as follows: 1) the debt owed to all living beings; 2) the debt owed to one's mother and father; 3) the debt owed to one's sovereign; and 4) the debt owed to the three treasures (the Buddha, the Law and the Buddhist Order).

In this writing, the Daishonin observes, "It is the way of ordinary people that, even though they spur themselves on to arouse the aspiration for enlightenment and wish for happiness in the next life, they exert themselves no more than one or two out of all the hours of the day, and this only after reminding themselves to do so" (WND, 43). This human predicament is why these four debts are so important. They are not just a "common courtesy" that we owe—each one represents a relationship to our environment that serves as the measuring stick of our Buddhist practice and, ultimately, our Buddhahood.

Logically speaking, it is easy to see the benefit of these four debts when considering their absence: No other living beings would mean no people to care about, interact with, share Buddhism with—even to engage in healthy competition. No parents would mean no birth, which in turn would mean no opportunity to encounter Buddhism or to attain enlightenment. No system of government, economics or society would equal no context in which to measure your growth or to establish yourself.

Finally comes the debt we owe to the three treasures, and the Daishonin specifically emphasizes the treasure of the Buddhist Order: "Without the members of the Order who studied [Buddhism] and passed it on, it would never have been transmitted throughout the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days into the Latter Day of the Law" (WND, 45).

Although Nam-myohorenge-kyo exists, and therefore the path to enlightenment ex-

ists, it is the people, the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, who spread the teachings and make enlightenment for all living beings possible. In other words, without a body of believers to practice and pass on this teaching, it would remain merely theory.

With all the marvels that humankind possesses, it is gratitude that proves to be the driving force of faith. **WT**

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EXPERIENCE — TAKAKO LEWIS, LOUISVILLE, KY.

# Determining To Win In All Battles

**Following her mother's example, Takako Lewis uses her Buddhist practice to overcome health problems and provide support for her family.**

In 1957, my mother joined the Soka Gakkai after she was told that she had only three months to live because of tuberculosis. Being the oldest daughter of 12 siblings, I saw my mother's suffering first-hand. She was extremely ill, sometimes vomiting blood, but we were so poor she could not afford medicine. What little money we had my father spent on alcohol. Despite these dire circumstances, my mother vigorously participated in Soka Gakkai activities and chanted a lot of daimoku. She overcame tuberculosis and extended her life for 39 years. As her daughter, I became determined to win whatever battle life threw my way.

On Aug. 15, 1998, I began to bleed from my right nipple. I hurried to a hospital and had numerous tests, but the cause of the bleeding was unclear. The hospital referred me to another hospital, and again, the cause remained unknown. I went to three different hospitals, but nothing was found. Yet because of the bleeding and the pain, I knew this was not just my imagination.

After additional visits and tests, a cyst was found in a mammogram. It required an operation to remove it. I immediately began to chant for a successful operation and for the doctor to perform his best. During the operation, the doctor found two small lumps in my right breast, which were also removed during the same procedure. Tissue from the lumps was sent to pathology and came back confirming second stage breast cancer. We also found out these lumps would have been very difficult to find in a mammogram. When the doctor informed me of the severity of my condition, I was numb.

For three days, my husband and I chanted through tears and read *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and SGI President

Ikeda's guidance. We also determined to chant two million daimoku together. Nichiren Daishonin's words "[Chanting] Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the greatest of all joys" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 788) became our touchstone and our feelings of grief turned into courage. We began to have hope.

When I went back to see the doctor, I was told that there were two options: a mastectomy (complete removal of the breast), or a lumpectomy (removal of the growth). In either case, the operation needed to be performed quickly. When we went to the hospital to talk to the surgeon about the prep, I asked what type of operation I should have. He told me he couldn't tell me which procedure to take, but if it was his mother or his wife, he would recommend the lumpectomy. I made up my mind and had the lumpectomy the following week.

Thanks to a lot of daimoku, the surgery went fine and it was followed by a central node biopsy. Unfortunately, the biopsy was a disappointment. The results indicated that I had four lymph nodes positive for cancer. This meant that I would have to undergo a very severe treatment regimen. Though my husband and I were initially shocked, we resolved to overcome this obstacle with faith.

Obstacles also appeared within our family. Our daughter began having difficulties with her job and lost her car. Our son started doing drugs, dropped out of high school and no longer came home on a regular basis. One day, while driving a friend's car, he apparently passed out or fell asleep at the wheel. He ran his friend's car into a brick wall and totaled it. When I saw the car, I was surprised that he was alive and relieved to find out that he only received a small cut and some bruises. The car belonged to my son's friend's parents, and we were fortunate that their insurance paid for the car and they did not want to sue.

My husband and I have always prayed for our children's protection and that they would grow up to be capable people for kosen-rufu. We decided to chant even more daimoku to realize this prayer. We also

began going to our daughter's home to do gongyo and chant with her.

Friends and other members came over to our house to chant with us through this very rough period. We received letters of encouragement from members all over the world, as well as support when I returned home from the hospital.

Through all of this, I gained a deep sense of gratitude toward the Gohonzon and determined to chant for those who are suffering. My husband's family and our neighbors often visited and eventually some of them decided to receive SGI-USA publications. I was able to take three of them to a women's meeting, and two of them began to practice Buddhism.

I had a total of seven operations and continued with chemotherapy and radiation. In the morning, when I sat in front of the Gohonzon to do gongyo, I felt I had already won over my illness that day. Every day I had to fight, yet I never missed gongyo. When I asked my doctor what were my chances for survival, he said 60 percent. I determined that my chances would be 110 percent, and decided to make up the other 50 percent with daimoku.

My husband was so supportive, it was as if he was trying to protect my life with his own. While I was recovering in the hospital room, he held my hand while laying on the hard floor without a bed or pillows, chanting for my recovery. When I was having a difficult time because of the chemotherapy, he told me to rest, and he would chant the daimoku I was unable to chant. Every day he would chant two or three hours. The chemotherapy was very hard,



Takako Lewis (front right) has received tremendous support from her family: Richard, her husband, Vicki, her daughter, and Ricky, her son.

but with his support I was determined to win.

The Daishonin writes: "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-renge-kyo, no matter what happens" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 681). This sense of determination and the support of those around me helped me through this ordeal. The result is that now I am in better health than I could have hoped for. Recently, my doctors ran the usual tests and discovered that there is no evidence of any cancer in my body.

My family has pulled through as well. My daughter has graduated from college, was on the dean's list with a 4.0 grade average and is currently pursuing a career in nursing. My son has a good job with a large bank and has completed his GED. He has also just returned from his first trip to the Florida Nature and Culture Center. No matter how many

times I am reborn in this world, I always want to be the wife of my husband and the mother of my two children.

I feel tremendous gratitude toward the Gohonzon, SGI President Ikeda and my friends and fellow SGI members for their support and encouragement. Because of them I am able to share this experience. I will continue to repay this debt of gratitude for the rest of my life. With faith in the Gohonzon, there is no way I can lose. **WT**

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## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S AUG. 1 SPEECH — PART 2

# Perseverance Makes All the Difference

**'Perseverance is the key,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'Determined perseverance — this is the secret to victory and glory.'**

*The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 8th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Toda Memorial Auditorium in Sugamo, Aug. 1.*

Today members from 27 countries, including France, South Korea and Brazil, join us. Thank you for coming from so far away!

The SGI is committed to forging bonds of friendship throughout the entire world. This is our basic policy.

Recently, a new SGI culture center was opened in Ivory Coast, a great country of peace in West Africa, and a lively general meeting was held to commemorate the event. [The culture center, located in the country's largest city and de facto capital, Abidjan, was completed on July 14, and the general meeting was held the following day.]

Speaking of Ivory Coast, I have met and talked at length with Mr. Amara Essy, the country's former minister of foreign affairs, now secretary-general of the African Union. Through that encounter in July 1999, we formed a strong bond of friendship.

Such meetings are part of my ongoing efforts for the prosperity of Africa, a continent I love so dearly, and for the happiness of our members there.

A true struggle means making strenuous, painstaking efforts behind the scenes, always being the first to take action on all fronts, always thinking ahead and being well prepared in advance, in order to open a sure path to victory.

My wife, who is constantly by my side, knows better than anyone does the efforts I make in this regard.

**Happy people are always sincere, possessing the greatest inner strength.**

Today, we have some 5,000 members active in Ivory Coast. SGI-Ivory Coast General Director André Déason is providing inspiring leadership. He is an assistant professor at the University of Abidjan-Cocody, specializing in computer science, and a model of intelligence in action. I have met and talked with him on several oc-

casions. His French-born wife, Martine Déason, is SGI-Ivory Coast women's leader. Mr. and Mrs. Déason are both persons of great sincerity. Nothing can beat sincerity.

Victors are always sincere. The arrogant, who betray others' sincerity, always come to a fall in the end, even though it may seem for a time that they have gained the upper hand. The happy are always sincere, and they possess inner strength. Such people shine as the ultimate victors.

Due in no small part to the exemplary character of Mr. and Mrs. Déason, understanding of the SGI is spreading rapidly in Ivory Coast. This is in complete accord with Nichiren Daishonin's teaching that "the Law does not spread by itself. Because people propagate it, both the people and the Law are respectable" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 856).

In Ivory Coast, it is our youth who are most active. They also comprise more than 60 percent of the entire membership in that country. By the youth inspiring and rallying other youth, their numbers continue to grow and grow. Young women's leader Djato Akoua, incidentally, took 1st place in the Ivory Coast National Karate Championships in May.

In Japan, as well, the valiant efforts of our young women and men shine brilliantly. I wish to loudly proclaim, "The age of youth has arrived!"

**The SGI has expanded to 177 countries and territories.**

Let me share some news with you. Recently, at a women's division meeting in the Tokyo area, I announced that the SGI had reached 166 countries and territories where there are members. Today, I can announce another 11 countries and territories where SGI members are practicing — bringing the grand total to 177. I proudly report this to all of you, as well as to Tsunesaburo



SGI President Ikeda announces at the 8th Headquarters Leaders Meeting that there are now SGI members practicing in 177 countries and territories around the world.

Makiguchi and Josei Toda, our first and second Soka Gakkai presidents [whose portraits hang in this auditorium].

Of the new countries and territories, four are in Africa. The first is the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the oldest independent country in Africa. The famous Olympic gold medalist Abebe Bikila, a marathon runner, was from Ethiopia.

The next is the Republic of Namibia, located in southwestern Africa, long wracked by civil war. Here, too, our fellow members are striving earnestly in faith, carrying aloft the banner of the great Buddhist teaching of peace.

Next is the Republic of Botswana, east of Namibia and famous for its diamonds.

And finally, we have SGI members on the island of Saint Helena, which is in the South Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Africa. Saint Helena is well known, of course, as the place of Napoleon's exile and final days.

We have two new territories in North America and the Caribbean, as well. One is Bermuda in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Florida.

The second is the tropical island of Aruba in the southern Caribbean Sea. In both locations, women are the central driving force of SGI activities. The Age of Women is a global trend.

Another addition in South America is French Guiana, north of Brazil. The territory already has an active membership of some 150.

Next, in Europe, is the Republic of Estonia, on the Baltic Sea, and the idyllic Republic of Malta, in the Mediterranean.

Finally, there is the Isle of Man, which is situated between England and Ireland and is the home of the oldest regularly operating electric railway.

There are also SGI members in the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan, long a victim of internal conflicts, in which many lives have been lost. Our members there are working wholeheartedly to help rebuild the country.

These 11 countries and territories now join the list of places where SGI members are sincerely striving for the sake of the Law. Let us share our joy at the increasingly rapid rate at which worldwide kosen-rufu is proceeding.

**Our own efforts contribute to a dynamic momentum that spreads throughout the world.**

Committed to the welfare of your local communities, you have all labored diligently under the hot sun in the noble cause of kosen-rufu, visiting the home of one friend after another out of sincere concern

for each of their happiness. This is our greatest strength.

You have also carried out steadfast, tenacious one-on-one dialogue with many people. These unflagging efforts build on one another and are the reason why the Soka Gakkai will never perish. This is the foundation for great victory, for great construction.

Our earnest prayers and grassroots activities — starting from the local community and rippling out to the entire world, starting from the individual and rippling out to all humanity — create the momentum for the achievement of peace and kosen-rufu.

Some may think our daily activities are inconsequential and mundane. But I hope you will be aware and proud that each of our efforts contributes to a dynamic momentum that spreads throughout the entire world. The Age of the SGI has finally arrived, causing people around the world to sit up in wonder!

**The unknown warriors who comprise the ranks of ordinary citizens are the true heroes.**

Some 60 years ago, when Japan was in the grip of militarism, presidents Makiguchi and Toda intensified their efforts to propagate the Law. They manifested incredible life-force in the face of adversity. The

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harsher the wartime persecutions became, the stronger their faith and their courage grew.

At about the same time in Europe, the famous Battle of Britain took place [July–September 1940]. The future of the world hinged on the outcome of this critical battle between the evil forces of the Nazis, who were growing more powerful by the day, and the last bastion of the forces of democracy in Europe, the people of Britain. Hitler initiated a fierce attack on London, the British capital, with the aim of intimidating the populace and crushing their spirit.

Intimidation — this is the dictator's perennial weapon of choice. The same is true of the Nichiren Shoshu priests, who have attempted to intimidate the SGI and have misused our members' offerings.

But Hitler's plan misfired. The invincible fighting spirit of the British people could not be crushed. They united with their military forces and repulsed the enemy. In the end, Hitler's strategy failed. It was a miraculous victory of the British people.

Perseverance is the key. Determined perseverance — this is the secret to victory and glory.

Britain's wartime leader, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, praises the actions of the British people, the "unknown warriors," in defending their nation: "This is indeed the grand heroic period of our history, and the light of glory shines on all." He declares that the unknown warriors who comprise the ranks of ordinary citizens are the true heroes. *Unknown warriors* — that also aptly describes all of you who are striving energetically for kosen-rufu.

I receive letters from many of our members. Some of them are from grandmothers of the SGI. These letters show me just how hard everyone is working. The brave, determined spirit that shines through the words bring tears to my eyes.

Sometimes, the sentences are awkward. Sometimes, there are misspellings. But all of these letters are from praiseworthy champions of kosen-rufu. Out of deep appreciation for their hard work, I cherish and preserve their letters.

When the Nazis were finally defeated, Churchill said, "The evil-doers...are now prostrate before us." And he called out to the British people: "This is your victory! ... In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this." I offer these words to all of you, noble fellow members in faith who

have accomplished your own great victory.

### **Soka graduates are taking on important roles in every sphere of endeavor.**

Graduates of Soka University and the Soka schools of both Tokyo and Kansai are beginning to make their mark in the world. They are taking on important roles in every sphere of endeavor.

For instance, there are already some 3,000 Soka graduates active as educators. In April, a Soka University graduate was appointed principal of a junior high school in Japan for the first time. In addition, every year the number of Soka graduates teaching at overseas universities — in the United States, Kenya, Malaysia, mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan and Mexico, among other nations — is increasing.

I hope that, more than anyone else, those Soka University graduates who teach at their alma mater in Tokyo or at Soka University of America — which opened this year thanks to the unstinting support of SGI members — will stand in the vanguard and do their best as educators. I hope that they will hone their scholarship and take good care of their students.

The contributions and cooperative spirit of the Soka alumni also shine brilliantly in the world of business. Several Soka Junior and Senior High School alumni who are company presidents or run their own businesses generously supported the Tokyo and Kansai schools' annual student festival "Day of Glory," which was held on July 17. I was very happy at this expression of their sincerity and devotion to their alma maters.

In addition, a member of the 1st graduating class of Soka University holds a top position in a leading company that was recently listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange. The ranks of the Soka alumni now include more than 10 branch managers of banks.

We have entered the age when the achievements of the Soka alumni, graduates of Soka Education, are beginning to shine.

Many alumni also send their children to the Soka schools and Soka University. This is a beautiful expression of their love for their alma maters.

Years ago, President Makiguchi argued fiercely for educational reform, calling out: "Popularity-hungry politicians, wearing nearsighted spectacles that allow them to see only as far as the next election, pay no attention to the

sphere of education, which needs long-range policies with a view toward the next hundred years." Let us look to the far distant future with a broad, global perspective and advance our movement for humanistic education.

The July 25 *New York Times* ran a page 1 article introducing the opening of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, in Orange County, Calif. (see the Aug. 10 *World Tribune*). One of the leading newspapers in the United States is giving serious attention to education and to SUA. The *Times* notes: "Here in the newest incorporated city in Orange County [Aliso Viejo]...humanistic, egalitarian values are to be put to work in the cause of world peace." How happy presidents Makiguchi and Toda, the founders of Soka Education, must be!

I have worked selflessly without rest to convey the greatness of my predecessors, presidents Makiguchi and Toda, throughout the world while constantly striving to protect my fellow members. Nothing makes me happier than having fulfilled another of the vows that I made to my mentor, President Toda, by establishing SUA.

I am determined to do whatever I can to protect and promote for all time the development of Soka University, the Soka School System, and SUA — citadels of learning dedicated to fostering leaders for world peace.

### **Philosophy and spirituality are the foundation for the development of democracy.**

Finally, I want to share the words of some great European thinkers with you.

Karel Havlíček Borovský was a famous Czech journalist and revolutionary fighter for his homeland. His works, written under the pseudonym Havel Borovský, had a strong influence on Czechoslovakia's first president Tomáš Masaryk, who was also a great philosopher. Havlíček says, "One lie breeds a thousand lies, and one act of tyranny destroys a thousand rights." These are important words.

Victor Hugo writes, "Insult only strengthens my certainty and my will."

The father of European unification, Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, with whom I published a dialogue [available only in Japanese], says, "We need leaders rather than rulers." Democracy does not need rulers, it needs leaders — leaders of the people.

Count Coudenhove-Kalergi goes on to say, "We need a lofty spirit rather than lofty titles." Now we have the opposite — social renown overshadows inner substance. He also says: "We need rich hearts rather than rich purses. This is the spirit of democratic progress."

The heart is what matters most. Philosophical and spiri-

tual values that foster inner richness are the foundation for the development of democracy.

I thank you all for coming here today in this hot weather. With a sincere prayer for the health and happiness of cherished fellow members everywhere, I close my speech. Please give my best regards to all those who could not attend today. **WT**

## **TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS**

# **Sincerity Leads to Happiness**

From This Speech:

**Victors are always sincere. The arrogant, who betray others' sincerity, always come to a fall in the end, even though it may seem for a time that they have gained the upper hand. The happy are always sincere, and they possess inner strength. Such people shine as the ultimate victor... This is in complete accord with Nichiren Daishonin's teaching that "the Law does not spread by itself. Because people propagate it, both the people and the Law are respectable" (Gosho Zenshu, p. 856).**

1) SGI President Ikeda says: "Victors are always sincere. The arrogant, who betray others' sincerity, always come to a fall in the end, even though it may seem for a time that they have gained the upper hand." Can you think of some examples in *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* that show how sincere behavior leads to happiness and victory? Can you also think of examples from the Daishonin's writings or human history where the betrayal of others' sincerity created the betrayer's downfall? Do you have experiences in your own practice where your sincere behavior turned the tide to victory?

2) The Daishonin says: "The Law does not spread by itself. Because people propagate it, both the people and the Law are respectable" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 856). How does this passage express the immense importance and dignity of ordinary people? Do you think this passage conveys the egalitarian and democratic spirit of the Daishonin's Buddhism? If so, how? Based on this teaching, why is disparaging the noble sincerity of the Daishonin's believers such a serious offense? Do you think such betrayal must be countered? If so, why?

## **Read the WT E-mail Express**

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SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS

# D.C. Youth Score Community Victory

By DAVID JORAY, GARY KENT AND YVONNE MAPILY  
WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENTS

Despite heavy downpours and some of the worst flooding in years, more than 15,000 attendees celebrated Victory Over Violence in a ray of sunshine at the Create Peace Festival in Washington, D.C., on Aug. 11.

For exactly 10 hours, the weather cleared, while Washington, D.C., Region youth led discussions on peace, sponsored arts, music and sports exhibitions, and directed games and crafts for children on two blocks of U Street, N.W.—a corridor known for its violent riots following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. several decades ago.

“This festival promotes youth. It inspires them,” said Beverly Wheeler, executive director of Washington, D.C., Mayor Anthony Williams’s Office for Neighborhood Action. “This event is truly providing a venue for dialogue among the area’s teens. The fact that teens themselves put this event on speaks volumes, and we are really proud of their efforts and support them wholeheartedly.”

The District of Columbia Executive Office of the Mayor, which declared Aug. 11 “Create Peace and Victory Over Violence Day,” was just one of the supporters of the festival. Co-sponsors included the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute, Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, American University Center for Global Peace, University of the District of Columbia and others.

One highlight of the festival was the Dialogue Café, where throughout the day attendees could be seen huddled in groups of 20 to 30, intently discussing how to overcome violence in their communities. Before leading a discussion on finding one’s purpose in this lifetime, Rajeev R. Kassat of One Common Unity, an interfaith organization, had participants practice breathing exercises to open the mind. “We want to demonstrate that despite our differences, we all have similar interests in some form or another and that this can be a basis for creating peace,” he said.

Other areas on U Street were devoted to exchange ac-



Despite heavy downpours and flooding, participants fully enjoy the Washington, D.C., Region Family Youth Festival, Aug. 11.

tivities such as art exhibitions, where local artists could show their work and participants could view the Gandhi, King, Ikeda exhibition. Modell’s Sporting Goods, a national retail chain, donated a basketball hoop and supported a mini-basketball tournament.

On another block, The Syndicate, an east coast-based rave crew, played music throughout the day, in one instance playing side-by-side with traditional Korean dancers and drummers. “They were delighted to be able to play their music for adults, children and young people alike,” said SGI-USA member Mary Morris, The Syndicate’s festival liaison.

Washington, D.C., Region Young Men’s Leader Steve Wunder commented, “With this event, we hope to awaken young people to their potential as individuals, and help them realize the positive impact they can have in their communities.” Providing a place for all of D.C.’s diverse community to come together, he added, “guarantees an interesting and powerful first step towards a more peaceful Washington.”

Sponsoring a youth-led community event for people of all ages and cultures was a first for many SGI-USA members in the area, but even the younger children, who usually sit on the sidelines, enjoyed the day. “The festival was very cool,” said

Julie Takakuwa, 12, of Silver Spring, Md. “Everything was fun, no matter what you did.” Julie performed at a tree-planting ceremony for slain Metro Transit Officer Marlon Morales (see accompanying story).

The rains came late in the afternoon, but that didn’t stop Maiesha and the Hip Huggers, a local band and headlining artist, from finishing their set. “Rain, rain, go away,” they sang as the audience danced in the deluge.

Other artists and entertainers dazzled the audience throughout the day with music, dance and spoken-word performances. Al Afshar, owner of the Bohemian Caverns, a well-known jazz club, provided his

building for the artists to practice and relax in. “I wanted to do this because it supports a cause in trying to get the younger generation off the streets and onto the right track,” he said.

Latin Grammy Award nominee Nestor Torres was due to perform at the end of the day; however, because of the downpour, the sound crew had to pack up their equipment for safety and end the show. One member from the District commented, “Even though Nestor wasn’t able to go on, we couldn’t have attracted this many people and musicians without his support. This festival was far from a washout. We really created peace today.” **WT**



More than 15,000 people attend the 10-hour festival, celebrating Victory Over Violence.

Photographers: KATHY AIKEN, JOEL ARONFY, ROB HENDRY, GABE HOUGHTON, PETE HOWE, DANIELLE JORAY, ANN MARIE MCINTOSH, PHIL ROSENBERG and SHANTELLA SHERMAN



A group discussion on nonviolence is held in



A national sporting goods retailer sponsors a mini-basketball tournament, adding to the festival's diversity of events.



A peace quilt, created by young boys and girls, is displayed at the festival.



A young girl enjoys one of many activities for children.



The African Women Drummers perform to the delight of the crowd.

## Youth Honor Slain Police Officer

By SHANTELLA SHERMAN  
WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENT

The youth of Washington, D.C., were deeply affected when they heard of the slaying of Metro Transit Authority police officer Marlon Francisco Morales, who was shot over a fare dispute in June 2001 while on routine patrol on U Street.

SGI-USA youth decided to open their Create Peace festival on Aug. 11 with a tree-planting ceremony in honor of slain Officer Morales, who was well known in the community for the positive image he portrayed to the youth. By planting trees in his honor, the youth organizing the festival determined to create value out of such a tragedy for their community.

"Officer Morales was a good person and a dedicated peace officer. Many of us felt that his murder was the last straw," said Kiana Bridges, 16.

Spearheaded by Washington, D.C., Region Young Women's Leader Chelsea Honderich, the youth planted three crepe myrtle trees at the site of the U Street-Cardozo Metrorail station to pay tribute to the officer, his wife, Jennifer, and their three children, aged 11 years, 8 years, and 3 months. **WT**



Barry McDevitt, chief of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Police, speaks at a tree-planting ceremony honoring slain officer Marlon Francisco Morales.



the Dialogue Café, one of the highlights of the festival.

# the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

## 'JEWELLED SWORD'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 37-40

*'It was common knowledge that during World War II, Nichiren Shoshu had accepted the Shinto talisman out of fear of suppression by the military government. But the truth was that long before that time the priests of the school had been violating the fundamental doctrine of "strictly admonishing slander of the Buddhist law."'*

At the Soka Gakkai's Fujinomiya Community Center, Shin'ichi Yamamoto said to Shizuoka Headquarters Leader Ritsu Ohyama: "I am well aware that there are people within the Hokkeko who do not look kindly on the Soka Gakkai, but I want us to be tolerant and try to reach out to them. It is important at this point in our movement to encourage them to rise up and work together with us to achieve kosen-rufu."

"Most of the Hokkeko's criticism of the Soka Gakkai is because they don't fully understand the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin, nor do they appreciate what the Soka Gakkai is about. I have been talking with the president of the National Hokkeko Federation. I am sure

they will eventually see what a wonderful organization the Soka Gakkai is and will come to respect us.

"I know there will be times when you will feel angry, but please be patient a little while longer. Actually, there are some factions within the Hokkeko that oppose the federation's attempt at unification, and the federation itself is having a hard time of it right now."

Ohyama nodded, and then said gravely: "Sensei, I am more concerned about the priests than the Hokkeko members. Around here, the priests at the head temple have a pretty bad reputation. People call them the 'debauched priests.' Soka Gakkai members are really disappointed in them. They see priests frequenting

taverns or indulging in the entertainment of geisha. There are rumors of sexual affairs, too. There have been some instances where priests out drinking together have been overheard criticizing Soka Gakkai members, who after all are practicing their faith diligently.

"Although both you and President Toda have done your utmost to serve the priesthood in earnest, most

priests do not seem to feel any gratitude. They act as if it were expected. In Osaka there was a temple that refused to confer the Gohonzon on Soka Gakkai members. Here in Shizuoka, they do not refuse, but at some temples the priests make it very obvious that they are not happy about it.

"When they conduct the Gohonzon-conferral ceremony, they take on an unbelievably arrogant air and strictly order the new member to come every month to offer a *toba* tablet for

the repose of deceased family members [for which temples charged believers]. Sensei, we will do whatever is necessary to protect Nichiren Shoshu for the sake of kosen-rufu. No matter how difficult it may be financially, we are still willing to make offerings. In fact, this is exactly what we have done.

"But we do not want to donate one cent so that corrupt priests who malign the Soka Gakkai, the organization dedicated to widespread propagation, can spend it on pleasure seeking. This is not just my opinion — all the members feel this way."

As Ohyama spoke, his anger rose, and gradually his words burned with emotion: "I heard from a Soka Gakkai member who is on good terms with the priests that they think the Soka Gakkai has become too much of a nuisance," he reported. "They are worried that if things continue the way they are, the Soka Gakkai will take over everything, and they will be left out in the cold. They are talking about disbanding us after we have built them enough temples.

"If we object, they say they will take away our Gohonzons and bar us from visiting the head temple. That is why they have decided to increase the membership of the Hokkeko and to organize and strengthen it. There are priests who simply want to milk the Soka Gakkai

for all they can and then dissolve it. And they have no qualms about using the Gohonzon, the very foundation of our faith, as a tool to control practitioners and make them subservient. It's really frightening.

"The reason there are so many in the Hokkeko who see the Soka Gakkai as a threat is because that attitude is instigated by the priests. The priests declare that they are superior to lay believers. They look at Soka Gakkai members as little more than slaves or machines to bring them offerings. I don't think they have ever taken kosen-rufu seriously. All they think about is themselves. They have no faith and no compassion. They are corrupt." Tears filled Ohyama's eyes.

"This really is deplorable," Shin'ichi replied. "I understand how you feel. It is only natural for you to be angry. In fact, just the other day Soka Gakkai General Director Harayama strongly appealed to the school's administration to rectify the situation."

Shin'ichi then turned to Koichi Harayama at his side and asked, "Mr. Harayama, how did they respond?"

"Well, they said they would take care of it, but they have not given us a concrete answer yet. They say the same thing every time. It is a real problem."

When Ohyama heard this, his face flushed with anger, and he said: "Sensei, I can't put up with this any longer. Not just myself, but the entire Shizuoka

Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA



young men's division won't stand for it. Many of our members are exasperated and ask why we should remain faithful to priests who make no effort to realize kosen-rufu yet torment the Soka Gakkai members. If you will permit us, we would like to go to the head temple and lodge a serious protest."

Shin'ichi addressed Harayama: "Mr. Harayama, the members seem to have reached the limits of their patience. At this rate, we'll never get anywhere. I'm going to put in a call to the Nichiren Shoshu administration. Everyone is fed up. Next spring the Grand Reception Hall will be completed, and 3 million members will make a pilgrimage to the head temple. We are about to begin a new phase in the development of kosen-rufu. Now is the time for priests and laity to unite and make a fresh advance in the spirit of many in body and one in mind.

"Simply constructing a building like the Grand Reception Hall is not what is important—we must create a treasure tower of unity and pure faith aimed at the widespread propagation of the Daishonin's teachings. Isn't it compassion, therefore, to admonish that which must be admonished and thereby cut out the iniquity that is taking root within the priesthood?

"I am sure that there are people who will react against this and hate me for it, but I am prepared to bear the brunt of everything."

As Shin'ichi headed toward

the office, Harayama followed him and said, "Please let me try to talk to them first." With that, Harayama placed a call to a senior priest at the head temple. Listening to Harayama's side of the conversation, it was clear to Shin'ichi that no progress was being made. Shin'ichi then picked up the phone and asked point-blank what practical steps the Nichiren Shoshu administration intended to take to deal with all of the problems they were facing.

Flustered, the priest replied: "We are aware that these are serious problems that need addressing. I have spoken with the high priest about how regrettable these attacks on the Soka Gakkai are, as well as regarding the behavior of the priests that you are referring to."

It was a half-baked answer that skirted the issues. Irritated, Shin'ichi replied forcefully: "I have heard this over and over again. We have been waiting for your response for a long time, but you refuse to take any concrete action. All the while, Soka Gakkai members continue to suffer these attacks. This is utterly irresponsible!" Shin'ichi's sharp voice echoed throughout the room.

"As we near the completion of the Grand Reception Hall, it is of utmost importance that harmony is forged between the priesthood and the laity, and that the Hokkeko joins us in generating a great flow toward kosen-rufu. Why are you not treating this matter seriously? Why do you let evil go unchecked?"



"I want you to confer with the high priest and come to an immediate decision. We will not be satisfied with excuses or explanations any longer," Shin'ichi said as he hung up the telephone.

Afterward, he did gongyo with local members at the center and participated in the center's opening ceremony. He then traveled by car to the Fuji Community Center in neighboring Fuji City to attend the inaugural meeting of Shizuoka Headquarters. In the car, Shin'ichi could not help but think about why the priesthood had so easily fallen prey to corruption and licentiousness.

It was common knowledge that during World War II, Nichiren Shoshu had accepted the Shinto talisman out of fear of suppression by the military government. But the truth was that long before that time the priests of the school had been violating the fundamental doctrine of "strictly admonishing slander of the Buddhist law." There were numerous examples of such corruption, just counting the major ones from the early 20th century on. For example, in November 1914, representatives of all the Nichiren schools met at Hommonji temple of Nichiren Shu [the Minobu school], in Ikegami, Tokyo, and drew up a basic plan for unification.

Nissho Abe, the 57th high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, and Houn Abe [later Nichikai, the 60th high priest] attended this conference. Nichikai Abe was the father of 67th high priest Nikken. On that occasion, Nissho Abe signed a document stating his agreement to the unification of all the Nichiren schools, including the Minobu school. The plan for unification later collapsed, but Nissho Abe again cooperated with representatives of the other Nichiren denominations when they requested that the emperor bestow the honorific title Great Teacher Rissho on the Daishonin, which was granted in October 1922.

It was Nissho Honda, chief administrator of the Kempon Hokke school of Nichiren Buddhism, who started the drive to have the emperor confer the title of "Great Teacher" on the Daishonin, just as many

centuries earlier the title had been bestowed upon Dengyo and Kobo. Nissho Abe of Nichiren Shoshu signed the petition, and on the day it was granted, he joined other Nichiren school priests in reciting the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra and chanting daimoku led by the head of the Minobu school. The actions of these priests to ingratiate themselves with authority were absolutely contrary to the spirit of the Daishonin. In addition, the other Nichiren schools, while using the Daishonin's name, had completely gone against his spirit, revealing themselves to be like parasites that devour the mighty lion of the Daishonin's Buddhism from within.

Nissho Abe's act of reciting gongyo together with the head of the Minobu school was a clear violation of Nikko Shonin's admonition "You should not sit together with slanderers of the Law [at religious ceremonies] for fear of suffering the same punishment as they" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618). Such slander of the Law by high priests of Nichiren Shoshu continued.

In October 1931, just prior to the 650th memorial service commemorating the Daishonin's passing, the Minobu school was moving ahead with its plan to have the emperor inscribe on a plaque the Daishonin's new title, Rissho, to be kept at Kuonji, the head temple of the Minobu school.

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



# THE PURPOSE OF THE SGI

leaders for kosen-rufu, giving them the opportunity to gain fully from the two ways of practice — for oneself and others. Those of us that are or have been leaders know the joy of sharing a member's victory and the tremendous growth we undergo in our efforts to help another in faith.

It should be made clear that this idea of district expansion is not a mandate from the national organization, with a cookie-cutter district model and a deadline to meet. That would be like the orchard deciding that it knows best how to care for the individual fruit. Rather, in this case, the orchard is trying to get more nutrients to each tree, so they can care for the fruit in the best way possible.

Our SGI movement has been built around the idea that one person can help another achieve a revolution in their life. Our districts are the place where these relationships develop, where faith is deepened and courage is forged. Let's create districts that fit that idea, where each member gets the support in faith they deserve. In this way, the world will come to know the SGI as a group of caring, empowered people that really can change the world. **WT**

## EDITORIAL

By **JAMIE LIPTAN**  
STAFF WRITER

**'Our districts are the barometer of our movement. Only when the district leaders are able to care for each person, responding to their needs in faith and helping them create victories in their lives, can the SGI be said to be reaching its goals.'**



striving toward the goal of kosen-rufu in 90 percent of the world.

While these numbers are awe inspiring, they can be a bit overwhelming, perhaps causing us to feel like a very small part of a very big organization. But what is the SGI, fundamentally? What makes it the powerful movement for societal change that it has become?

Your district. That's right. SGI President Ikeda once compared the organization to an orchard, where the fruit trees are districts and the fruit is the membership.

The orchard itself has no power to care for the fruit, and can only be called a success if its constituent trees consistently produce healthy fruit.

Likewise, our districts are the barometer of our movement. Only when the district leaders are able to care for each person, responding to their needs in faith and helping them create victories in their lives, can the SGI be said to be reaching its goals. President Ikeda has continuously stressed that the sole purpose of the SGI is the happiness of one person, and it is the district leaders that make this a reality.

But often, despite tremendous effort and unshakable conviction to help every member, it can be easy to feel inundated, unable to accomplish everything we want to. Some of our districts are simply too big. How can we expect a team of four sincere district leaders to personally care for everyone on a list of 40 or 50? Even if we did not have jobs or school or a family to care for, would we

have the time to deepen our relationships with so many members, visiting them often and getting to know their struggles?

This is why the national leaders of SGI-USA are asking local organizations to consider the size of each district. If we can reduce the size of each district, the district leaders can create a truly warm, family environment, where every person can feel embraced and empowered to fulfill their mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth — and not exhaust themselves in the process.

Of course, sometimes it is invigorating to attend a meeting with a lot of people, where the gongyo is loud and the leaders are inspirational. But more often than not, people attending a discussion meeting at which each person has a chance to contribute feel they gain something more powerful to apply to their daily lives and win.

And when we create more districts, we need more district leaders. This is our opportunity to inspire a whole new generation of

The United Nations has 189 member nations across the globe. It was recently announced that there are SGI members in 177 countries and territories. That is a big number. People are now

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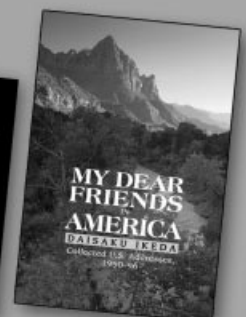
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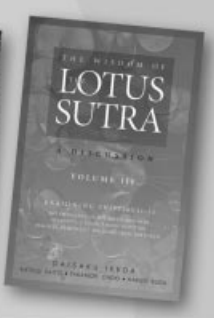
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# GKI Exhibit Continues Nonviolence Message

BY FLETCHER DALTON AND JACK SMITH  
CORRESPONDENTS

On Aug. 5, the "Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace" exhibition opened in Montgomery, Ala., at the invitation of Martin Luther King III, to coincide with the start of the 43rd Southern Christian Leadership Conference National Convention. Joining Mr. King in the ribbon-cutting ceremony was SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima, Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter, dean of the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College and Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, director of the International Center of Gandhian Studies and Research of New Delhi, India.

In remarks made at the ceremony, Mr. King, who is the eldest son of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., thanked Morehouse College and the SGI-USA for organizing the exhibition. By witnessing the display, visitors could "begin the process of embracing the principles that these three men embraced," he said.

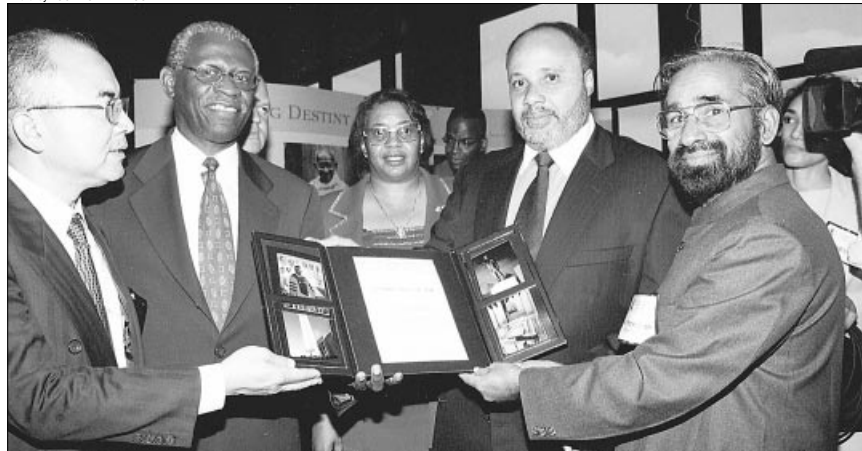
The SCLC was founded in 1957 by Dr. King to propel the civil rights movement after the bus boycotts, which took place in Montgomery two years earlier. Mrs. Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. King, joined her son in viewing the exhibition.

Next, the exhibition traveled to the 4th annual International Conference on Nonviolence, held Aug. 11-15. The conference, which took place at the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies at the University of Rhode Island, attracted representatives from all over the world.

Dr. Carter and Dr. Radhakrishnan were again on hand at the conference. The keynote speaker was former U.S. ambassador Andrew Young, advisor to presidents, author and former mayor of Atlanta. The exhibition was installed at the university's Multicultural Center. During the opening session of the conference it was announced that SGI President Ikeda was donating 100 books to the library of the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies.

Dr. Carter, in calling the representatives' attention to the exhibition, described the work and philosophy of the SGI. Visitors to the exhibition, including conference representatives who were associates of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., were fascinated by the depth of detail, and were quick to express their thanks for the efforts of the cosponsors. **WT**

Photo by LUCY ESTEPHANOS



(Above) Martin Luther King III (second from right) enjoys the opening of the 'Gandhi, King, Ikeda' exhibition at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference National Convention, Aug. 5. (Below) Invited dignitaries and exhibition organizers officially open the exhibition at the International Conference on Nonviolence, held Aug. 11-15.

Photo by JERILYN HUSKINS



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# Midwest Youth Gather in St. Louis

Photos by CHERYL UTLEY

By CHERYL UTLEY AND  
SHOKO ISHIMOTO

KANSAS CITY, MO., CORRESPONDENTS

Under the warm and sunny skies of the Midwest, more than 130 SGI-USA youth traveled from the states of Minnesota, Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri to celebrate their annual youth conference at the Millennium Student Center, University of Missouri-St. Louis. As members and guests entered the center, they were warmly welcomed by men's and women's division members and viewed panels from the Gandhi, King, Ikeda exhibition and selected posters of the SGI-USA's Victory Over Violence program.

The conference theme, "Soka Youth: Changing Our Lives Changes Our World" was the first Midwest Region Youth Conference of the 21st century. Haruko Nakamura, a conference coordinator, stated that "we wanted to focus on the young members' personal growth in the 21st century."

Following opening remarks, participants were involved in team building exercises that involved members getting to know youth from other areas. Throughout the two day event, each area shared experiences, presentations, skits, performances and their unique talent.

The Wichita, Kan., youth acted out a timeline of Nichiren Daishonin's persecutions and the Minnesota youth performed a dance illustrating the mentor and disciple relationship. Hour-long small group discussion sessions focused on the involvement of youth in their districts with suggestions on how to encourage themselves to attend and be a real part of the meetings.

On the second day, Howard Dunlavy, Midwest Region men's leader, encouraged the youth to "return back to our respective areas and do our best to visit our fellow members and support the upcoming family festivals." He also asked the youth to help create the "happiest region in the SGI-USA." **WT**



More than 130 youth gather from seven states for the Midwest Region's annual youth conference.



The youth participate in team-building exercises together at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

## SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS

# Youth Celebrate Detroit History

By LISBETH GANT-BRITTON

DETROIT CORRESPONDENT

More than 450 people witnessed the convergence of 300 years of Detroit history and 35 years of Buddhist activities in Michigan at the Detroit 300 Family Youth Festival, held at Wayne State University's Community Arts Auditorium on July 29. The festival's theme of "Detroit into the 21st Century Through Peace, Culture, and Education" was presented by SGI-USA, Wayne State University and the Value Creation Club student organization, along with the participation of the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development and Homes for Black Children.

The play "300 Years of Detroit's Hopes and Dreams" began with a chorus asking the musical question "Where are we going to be 300 years from now?" The story of Detroit's history ensued, with two bored students in a local museum van-

ishing into the mist of historical events, courtesy of a helpful security guard and his magic time-traveling watch. The duo's starting point was the founding of Detroit 300 years ago, and they continued with skits and performances about the Underground Railroad, the life and times of Henry Ford and the founding of Motown Records.

The riot in 1967 was a defining moment in Detroit history, and was illustrated by slides and first person accounts of those dark days. However, remembering that Detroit's misfortunes will change into fortune, Keiko Omans and Setsuko Jackson were recognized among the mothers of kosen-rufu in Michigan who were doing SGI activities a few blocks from the epicenter of the conflict.

Then, above the clouds of racial disharmony individuals representing the multitudinous ethnic heritages of Detroit arrived on the scene, their voices blending together in the song "What Can I Do," a theme

punctuated and underlined by the performance of the Homes for Black Children's African percussion group.

The time travelers returned to the present and were reminded that just like the protagonists of Detroit history, they have the potential to change the world. The auditorium joined them and the entire cast in the singing of "Ode to Joy." A proclamation from Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer commending SGI President Ikeda on his efforts supporting peace, culture and education was read, and Elaine Eason-Steele, co-founder of the Raymond and Rosa Parks Institute for Self-Development, led the crowd in a cheer.

As the audience exited, they were treated to 29 artistic collages prepared by the 29 SGI-USA districts of Michigan depicting their individual histories, and a collective history of the development of the SGI-USA in Michigan on 10 large tables. **WT**

Photos by MELISSA ANNE DETTLOFF



SGI-USA members in Detroit celebrate their city's history and future with a play they created themselves, '300 years of Detroit's Hopes and Dreams,' July 29, at Wayne State University's Community Arts Auditorium.

