

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 5 SPEECH—PART 1

## WE MUST FOSTER GLOBAL CITIZENS

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



SGI President Ikeda encourages SGI-USA Youth Leader James Herrmann, who stands beside the new SGI-USA youth division flag (see details in an upcoming 'Seize the Day'), at the 9th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, Sept. 5.

**'Unless there is a fundamental transformation within the lives of human beings themselves, we will never rid ourselves of war,' says SGI President Ikeda. 'To achieve that, we must foster global citizens, people who are more than merely Japanese, or American, or any other nationality.'**

*Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 9th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Tokyo, Sept. 5.*

The youth division is developing splendidly! The youth division leaders' speeches at this meeting also attest to the division's remarkable growth. A magnificent foundation has been laid for the development of the youth who will shoulder the Soka Gakkai in the future.

Welcome to all our overseas members! Among them are members from France. The French philosopher Alain (Émile-August Chartier) observed that persecution has always made religion stronger. This is one of the unchanging

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 6

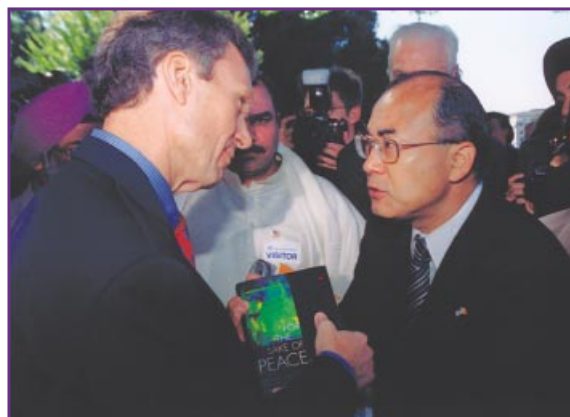
## SGI-USA JOINS CALL FOR TOLERANCE

Photos by PHIL ROSENBERG

By JEFF FARR  
MANAGING EDITOR

SGI-USA representatives participated in an interfaith press conference Sept. 26 at the U.S. Capitol with Democratic and Republican senate leaders. SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima and Bill Aiken, director of the SGI-USA Office of Public Affairs, were invited to join representatives of a variety of faiths in the U.S. Senate's call for religious tolerance in the face of hate crimes following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"In the last couple of weeks, hundreds of crimes in dozens of states have been reported against Muslims, Arab Americans, Sikhs and others," Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle stated. "Just as the terrorists betray the peaceful teaching of Islam, the people who com-



SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima presents Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle with SGI President Ikeda's book 'For the Sake of Peace,' Sept. 26.

mitted these hate crimes betray our ideals as a nation."

General Director Nagashima presented the senator with a copy of SGI President

Ikeda's book *For the Sake of Peace* and a statement from the SGI-USA. It reads in part: "It is our deepest hope that the determined efforts of our nation



General Director Nagashima and Bill Aiken, director of the SGI-USA Office of Public Affairs, talk with Sikh representatives at the U.S. Capitol.

be guided not by the understandable desire for retribution but by the more noble human qualities of wisdom and compassion.... We, the SGI-USA,

pledge our efforts to reach out to those in need of comfort and to promote the values of human solidarity and mutual respect for all." **WT**

# Mentor and Disciple: A Shared Struggle

**WORDS To WIN By**

By **RONNIE SMITH**  
MID-ATLANTIC ZONE LEADER

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

In the "Teacher of the Law" chapter, the Buddha states that he will magically conjure and send the four kinds of believers—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen—for the sake of the teachers of the Law. If the "laymen" mentioned here does not mean you, who does it refer to? You have not only heard the Law, but have taken faith in it and since then have



followed it without turning aside. How wondrous! How extraordinary! If that is the case, then can there be any doubt that I am the teacher of the Law of the Lotus Sutra? Perhaps I also resemble "the envoy of the Thus Come One," for I am carrying out "the Thus Come One's work." I have nearly spread the five characters of the daimoku that were entrusted to Bod-

hisattva Superior Practices when the two Buddhas were seated together within the treasure tower. Does this not mean that I am an envoy of Bodhisattva Superior Practices? Moreover, following me, you, as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, have told others of this Law. What else could this be but the transmission of the Law? (WND, 318–19)

Nichiren Daishonin here voices admiration for his courageous disciple, Shijo Kingo, and touches upon the purpose of his own advent. Kingo rushed to the scene when the Daishonin was facing execution at Tatsunokuchi, prepared to die at his mentor's side.

And during the Sado exile, he rallied the believers in Kamakura, communicating to them the guidance he received from the Daishonin, which encouraged them not to yield to any threats from the authorities

or to their own doubts.

Although the Daishonin propagated Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the essence of the Lotus Sutra, and fulfilled the sutra's predictions about the tribulations its votary would undergo, he nonetheless modestly refers to himself as merely "the envoy" of Bodhisattva Superior Practices, leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. However, a closer examination reveals that Bodhisattva Superior Practices, who makes an appearance in the Lotus Sutra's Ceremony in the Air, represents the Daishonin's transient status. Elsewhere, the Daishonin clarifies that "the Buddha eternally endowed with the three properties is the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 752).

The Daishonin goes on to tell Kingo that by faithfully following the votary of the sutra and by having taught others about Nam-myoho-enge-kyo,

Kingo has greatly contributed to "the transmission of the Law" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 850).

The tremendous compassion of the mentor for his disciple and the disciple's determination to practice in perfect accord with the mentor's teaching—it is here, in this shared struggle for the Law, that the path of the oneness of mentor and disciple lies. It is only because of the disciple's courageous battle to practice exactly as the mentor teaches that the mentor's true greatness can be proven.

As we continue to engrave the Daishonin's writings in our lives, we are striving to practice with the same mind and sense of responsibility for kosen-rufu as the Daishonin himself. Through such determination—acting as Bodhisattvas of the Earth—we cannot fail to enjoy a constant flow of wisdom and joy gushing forth from our innermost lives. **WT**

# Three Proofs: Documentary, Theoretical and Actual

**Back to the Basics**

By **DAVE McNEILL**  
WEST HILLS, CALIF.

The SGI stands accused of making outrageous claims about the benefits of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. We enter the courtroom at the climax of the proceedings:

**Prosecutor:** Your honor, SGI claims that simply by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, doing gongyo, studying and working to share these teachings with others that people can find health, happiness and prosperity. We ask that they prove their claims.

**SGI:** It is a simple matter to show the validity of our faith, using the time-honored principle of the three proofs.

**Prosecutor:** What are these so-called three proofs?

**SGI:** The first is documentary proof. Your honor, the SGI's claims are all based on the Buddhist sutras themselves.

**Prosecutor:** But your honor,



there are many other schools that revere and uphold the sutras but do not make the same outrageous claims.

**SGI:** We refer to Exhibit A, your honor—the many letters of the Daishonin, wherein he points out again and again that while other schools may seem to base themselves on the words of the Buddha, they actually base themselves on commentaries and treatises by others. Such writings often blur the true spirit of Buddhism, which is that all people are Buddhas. The Daishonin's writings clearly reflect the unadulterated essence of the Lotus Sutra, the heart of all Buddhist teachings. All who embrace the spirit of these writings find true happiness.

**Prosecutor:** Exhibit A is clear. But you said you had three proofs.

**SGI:** The second is theoretical proof. Nothing the Daishonin or the SGI teaches goes against reason.

**Prosecutor:** Your honor, everyone knows religion and reason have always been at odds.

**SGI:** It's true that reason is limited, and that the intellect alone cannot penetrate the depths of human life and religious faith, but a true religion doesn't contradict scientific fact or sound reasoning based on those facts. As the Daishonin says, "Buddhism is reason" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 839). As Exhibit B—praise from scholars and thinkers the world over—demonstrates, SGI's philosophy is gaining wider acceptance because its reasoned worldview not only accords with common sense but offers new and deeper insights about human happiness and the road to a peaceful society.

**Prosecutor:** What's your third proof?

**SGI:** "And even more valuable than reason and documentary

proof is the proof of actual fact," the Daishonin wrote (WND, 599). The true power of the Daishonin's teachings lie in their ability to affect the human condition, to nurture the spiritual, physical and material realms of an individual's life.

**Prosecutor:** Since when is religion concerned with material things, like how much money people make?

**SGI:** Certainly, spiritual fulfillment is among the foremost reasons people practice any religion. But as Buddhism teaches in its principle of the oneness of life and its environment, one's spiritual outlook is not divorced from the physical and material realms. A truly powerful philosophy embedded in a person's heart always finds expression in that person's daily life. Exhibit C—the testimonies of millions of practitioners worldwide—prove that faith, practice and study as taught in the SGI demonstrably improves peoples lives in every aspect. Through their "experiments" with the Daishonin's teachings people can see for themselves undeniable "proof of actual fact."

**Judge:** The three proofs leave no room for doubt that the Dai-

shonin's Buddhism can bring health, prosperity and happiness to all who practice it. Moreover, this principle of the three proofs, while specifically used to judge the validity of Buddhist doctrines, can be a powerful way to determine the relative merit of any teaching. I find the SGI not guilty of making outrageous claims and guilty of spreading a teaching so powerful and practical that anyone can prove to themselves just how great it is. **WT**

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EXPERIENCE — TRUDE AND MICHAEL LISAGOR, VIENNA, VA.

# A MAJOR SHOT OF HOPE

**Five years after Trude Lisagor was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, she and her husband, Michael, reflect on how they have used their Buddhist practice to deal with the disease and to continue advancing.**

**Trude Lisagor:** Last April, I walked six miles to raise money for multiple sclerosis research. What makes this noteworthy is that just five years ago, I could not walk at all.

**Mike Lisagor:** When we learned that Trude had MS, I was filled with a deep sense of loss for Trude, our two daughters and me. (I shared this experience in the Oct. 25, 1996, issue of the *World Tribune*.) Looking back five years later, I can hardly believe how many areas of our lives have positively developed as a result of this terrible illness.

**Trude:** In September 1996, MS entered my life like a tornado. In three days, my symptoms progressed from the tingling feeling of my feet falling asleep to an overwhelming numbness from my waist down. After a week in the hospital, slowly relearning how to walk, and reassuring my two daughters I was okay, the disturbing diagnosis of multiple



The Lisagors' Multiple Sclerosis Walk 2001 team raises more than \$5,000 for MS research.

sclerosis finally hit me. It caught me off guard and totally by surprise. It seemed as though everything—my family life, my career as a teacher, my practice with the SGI—would never be the same.

SGI President Ikeda once wrote: "No matter what happens, please continue to chant daimoku—both in good times and bad, irrespective of joys or sorrows, happiness or suffering. Then you will be able to seize victory in your daily life and in society" (*For Today & Tomorrow*, p. 319). After 27 rewarding years of Buddhist practice with Mike, I took President Ikeda's words to heart and put my full energy into chanting, studying and sharing with others.

**Mike:** I watched Trude challenge her recovery with astonishing determination both in terms of chanting daimoku for her spirit and physical therapy for her recalcitrant limbs. And something new for Ms. Solid as a Rock: She allowed herself to be helped by others. Fellow teachers took turns bringing over dinners while SGI members chanted with Trude for hours during the day. For my part, I discovered that when push came to shove, I was able to stand on my own and be strong for her. With the help of this remarkable practice and a compassionate therapist, I turned what could have been a devastating occurrence into the fuel to make changes that had continued to elude me, including being able to face and

overcome my childhood sadness and anger. Meanwhile, my love and admiration for Trude and my appreciation that I am able to chant each day continue to grow.

In her book, *Quiet Strength*, Rosa Parks gives some very simple advice: "I find that if I am thinking too much of my own problems and the fact that at times things are not just like I want them to be, I do not make any progress at all. But if I look around and see what I can do, and then I do it, I move on." With this in mind, and a refreshed resolve to fully support my wife, I did my best to move ahead every day.

**Trude:** Medical researchers recently confirmed that Avonex, a beta interferon drug, has shown dramatic results for patients with relapse-remitting multiple sclerosis. Of course, I didn't know this when I made the difficult decision to begin Avonex more than four years ago. Perhaps to a fault, I had always avoided taking medication—I would simply chant colds and headaches away. Now, my neurologist was proposing I take a weekly injection that was not a cure, but a way to increase the time between relapses. My long list of questions could not be adequately answered and ultimately the decision was mine. In an effort to clarify matters, I went for a second opinion but this doctor said he was "on the fence."

On the drive home, we called one of our seniors in

**Trude:** Now I am back in school working as a part-time reading teacher. My commitment to kosen-rufu is stronger than ever and, as the new leader of my district, I have taken on more responsibility than before I got sick. I have also found many other rewarding ways to challenge myself.

This April, Mike and I participated for the second time in the annual MS Walk in Reston, Va., walking six miles with 50 families, co-workers, clients, friends and some fellow SGI-USA members. Our team raised in excess of \$5,000 for MS research and was No. 14 out of more than 300 teams in the Washington, D.C., area. This was a great opportunity for us to take concrete action as Buddhists in our community. There were a lot of tears when I crossed the finish line.

It was a great warm-up for the month Mike and I just spent in the cooler climate of British Columbia. Thanks to the fortune I have received from my practice and the success of Mike's consulting business, I am able to avoid some of the hot and humid Virginia weather that is so punishing for people with MS. And, my appreciation for each moment of life continues to reveal itself through a new and unexpected creative pursuit: painting with watercolors.

It was up to me to transform this unexpected setback in my life into a source of personal growth and victory. Because of the support of my family, SGI members, friends and doctors, my life is much richer than ever before. This experience has deepened my compassion and understanding for others. As for the injections, my minor weekly stab of pain has become a major shot of hope.

*Mike and Trude Lisagor can be contacted at [lisagor@celerityworks.com](mailto:lisagor@celerityworks.com)*



Trude now regularly goes on hikes.



Trude expresses appreciation through a new pursuit: painting.

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

# Being Ever-victorious Each and Every Day

**‘Let us do all we can on this precious, irreplaceable day that is today, so that we have no regrets, and devote our lives to kosen-rufu and the happiness of humanity!’ SGI President Ikeda writes. ‘Being ever-victorious means winning resolutely in the present; it means winning today.’**

**S**GI members around the world are filled with admiration for Kansai—no, more than admiration, awe! Our Tokyo members are deeply grateful for the enthusiastic friendship and support of their fellow Kansai members.

Kansai is strong! Osaka is strong! Our great, Ever-victorious Kansai is an invincible domain of the people, an undefeated victor peerless in all the world.

The Kansai members possess the spirit of mentor and disciple. No one can ever sever the spiritual ties between the Kansai members and I, the shared commitment to fight passionately to realize kosen-rufu. Nor will we ever allow the sullied hands of authoritarian powers to touch this precious bond.

Everything begins and ends with the mentor-disciple relationship—this is the spirit that has built Ever-victorious Kansai.

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When Josei Toda became the second president of the Soka Gakkai 50 years ago, in 1951, one of the first things I said to him was “For the future development of kosen-rufu in Japan, we should give top priority to constructing a chapter in Osaka, the capital of the people.” President Toda replied on the spot: “All right. If that’s what you think, Daisaku, you go to Osaka and build the chapter there.”

The construction of our organization in Kansai began from this unity of spirit be-



New York members gather with the ‘ever-victorious spirit’ for a leaders meeting, Sept. 24, at the New York Culture Center. The ever-victorious spirit, which started with the Soka Gakkai organization in Kansai, Japan, has now spread throughout the world.

tween mentor and disciple. At the time, we had hardly any members in Osaka, and the top Soka Gakkai leaders never even dreamed of establishing a chapter there.

But President Toda had declared that he would achieve a membership of 750,000 households. [The total membership then was a little more than 3,000 people.] And I was President Toda’s disciple. As such, I thought long and hard, with the enthusiasm and idealism of youth, about what was necessary to realize the widespread propagation of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. And it was this that prompted me to make my suggestion of establishing a chapter in Kansai.

While Tokyo is Japan’s political and administrative capital, Osaka—indeed, all of Kansai—is its commercial capital. If we could establish a strong base for kosen-rufu there, I thought, the ripples of its forward momentum would undoubtedly spread to other areas such as Chugoku, Shikoku, Kyushu

and eventually all of Japan.

The following year, 1952, the beginnings of Osaka Chapter took form. I went to Osaka on Aug. 14 of that year, and President Toda followed the next day, to kick off our summer regional propagation campaign and take the first step toward the full-fledged development of our organization in Osaka. [There were only some 40 members in Osaka at the time.]

While reporting to President Toda day and night, I worked steadily to attain victory. The Kansai members united together in high spirits and threw themselves into the campaign. Their eyes sparkled with life, and their whole beings brimmed with hope and confidence.

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President Toda clearly stated his purpose for going to Osaka: “Let us rid Osaka of all sickness and poverty!” This was a solemn declaration to wipe the tears of unhappiness and suffering from the eyes of the Osaka people. I made his

vow my own. To achieve that goal, I would have to dedicate myself earnestly to propagating the Mystic Law and imparting courage to many people, so that they could lead happy lives.

The aim of a true religion is to free people from the chains of suffering. A living religion helps people transform misery into happiness. Religion should not function as a mere source of solace or sympathy, nor as an “opiate” that offers an escape from reality.

As a result of this determination, strong, courageous individuals, who had awakened to a new way of living and found a new social awareness, stood up to work for the reform and betterment of the society in which they lived. As citizens, they had every right to construct a humane society, a society that served their needs.

“We must build Osaka—a city of honest, industrious people—into a capital of happiness, overflowing with goodwill.” This was my determination as a young lion

of 28 who, from the start of 1956, began to take more leadership in the construction of Ever-victorious Kansai. Together with the Kansai members, I launched a concerted effort—a struggle of faith and kosen-rufu—to achieve that goal. [In January 1956, President Ikeda was dispatched by President Toda to lead activities in Osaka Chapter, centering on discussion meetings. In May 1956, he and the Osaka members achieved a monthly propagation record—11,111 households—unprecedented in the annals of kosen-rufu.]

An Upper House election was slated for July that year, and the Soka Gakkai Headquarters had decided to field its own candidate in the Osaka regional district.

Whether or not to field a candidate had been an extremely tough choice for the Headquarters. Everyone thought it was a race that could not be won. Both inside and outside the Soka Gakkai, many were saying that it was a rash move and doomed to failure.

Photo by MICHAEL ANTON

But I made a firm pledge to my mentor: "No matter what obstacles we may face, I promise you we will win. I will bring you a victory, Sensei!"

On President Toda's birthday (Feb. 11) that year, I composed a poem for him expressing my determination. And he responded with lightning speed. It was an exchange between mentor and disciple that I will never forget, as long as I live.

I want now to offer the poem I sent him to our members in Kansai, with renewed meaning.

*The golden citadel  
Now being built  
In Kansai*

*Will be eternally  
imperishable,  
Forever subduing the  
devilish forces.*

Allow me also to share with you the poem that President Toda responded with that day:

*The joy of looking up  
At the golden citadel  
Built  
By my disciple  
Through his propagation  
activities.*

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The first president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, offers this profound guidance: "Although there is a saying that even dust, when it accumulates, can form a mountain, there are in fact no mountains that have been made from accumulated dust.... Real mountains are formed by sudden, dramatic shifts in the earth's crust." President Makiguchi strictly teaches us here that we can only fundamentally transform ourselves and build an unshakable state of life by engaging in an earnest struggle of great good against great evil.

If we must fight, let it be a towering struggle! Let us win an explosive victory, an overwhelming victory!

I had only one mission — to build an undefeatable golden citadel in Kansai. To do so, I was determined to give my entire life and resolutely triumph.

But the sheer size of the goal that President Toda had set made it an undertaking physically impossible for a single individual to achieve alone. I therefore resolved to put 100-percent effort into meeting with the Kansai members, into encouraging them, into spurring them on and into raising them to be courageous champions of kosen-rufu who would work with me in this struggle.

And I translated this into action. I was certain that my burning determination — the passionate flame of the human spirit that could make the impossible possible, beyond imagination — would definitely spread and set alight the hearts of many others.

I wanted to win. I had to win. Winning and then reporting that victory to my mentor was my supreme mission as a disciple; it was the actual practice of the oneness of mentor and disciple.

I chanted sincerely day after day to have the strength to achieve my goal. I chanted continuously with the firm conviction that everyone I came in contact with would become an ally of our movement or would function as a protective force.

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Our propagation efforts in Osaka in 1956, which our members throughout Japan were watching expectantly, gained dynamic, explosive momentum, day by day, month by month.

The energy and tenacity of the leaders determine the organization's overall momentum. I boldly took the initiative, throwing my entire being into the struggle. I never hesitated, staying constantly on the go and speaking without rest. I spent every day, from early morning until late at night, encouraging our members in every corner of Osaka.

There were times when I attended 25 or 26 meetings in a single day, always on the move, always telling myself: "I have time for one more." "I can encourage more members." I was drenched with sweat, my voice was hoarse from speaking, and my legs felt like cement.

There were so many people I had to meet, so many people I wanted to see and encourage, so many people I wanted to contact within the limited time of each 24-hour day. If I let this moment, this opportunity, pass by, I might never be able to see this person again. That is why I was desperate to make the most of every second.

If someone pointed out a member's house to me, while I was traveling from one meeting place to another, I would always try to stop by, even if just for a minute. Whenever a

member came to the Kansai Headquarters, I would always try to make time to speak with him or her, even if just a word of greeting or encouragement. At times when I simply could not stop, I would wave or acknowledge people with my eyes, silently sending daimoku

## Human revolution is meeting with people. Kosen-rufu is talking with people. These actions embody courage, wisdom and compassion.

to them from my heart.

I knew that if our hearts touched for even a moment, we could forge a connection for Buddhism; if I just passed by without reaching out, nothing of value would be created.

Human revolution is meeting with people. Kosen-rufu is talking with people. These actions embody courage, wisdom and compassion.

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Wherever I went, exciting dramas of life-to-life inspiration and communion unfolded, giving rise to expanding waves of joy.

If I stopped by the home of a local leader but he or she happened to be out, I always left a message of encouragement with their family. And as I made the rounds of the local meeting places — usually the members' homes — I would take up my writing brush and present the members with pieces of calligraphy, hoping to encourage them in any way I could. I would write things like "Decisive Battle," "Courageous Struggle" and "Great Triumph."

In a flash, a wave of fellowship spread. And a ready, responsive fighting spirit to work together for the common cause of kosen-rufu was soon established. All my trusty fellow members in Osaka grasped my aims and determinations. They rose up and exerted themselves tirelessly alongside me, sharing both joys and sufferings.

I read countless passages from the Daishonin's writings together with the Kansai members. Among them was "One day of life is more valuable than all the treasures of the major world system" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 955).

Let us do all we can on this precious, irreplaceable day that is today, so that we have no regrets, and devote our lives to

kosen-rufu and the happiness of humanity! Being ever-victorious means winning resolutely in the present; it means winning today.

Making their way through arduous trials in perfect accord with this spirit of the Daishonin, the Kansai members finally triumphed! In May of that turbulent 1956, we realized the magnificent monthly record of enabling 11,111 new

households to receive the Gohonzon. This achievement firmly secured the foundation of the golden citadel of kosen-rufu in Kansai.

And in the Upper House election that July — the first Upper House election in which the Soka Gakkai fielded candidates — our Kansai members, working in close teamwork, won a tremendous victory [with their candidate in the Osaka regional district] that brought applause and cheers from their fellow members throughout Japan.

That victory would stir up a storm of persecution on the part of scheming, treacherous authorities in July 1957, in a manner just as the Daishonin warns. This was, of course, the Osaka Incident that I wrote an essay about recently (see "The SGI: A Construction Project of the People," Aug. 17 *World Tribune*).

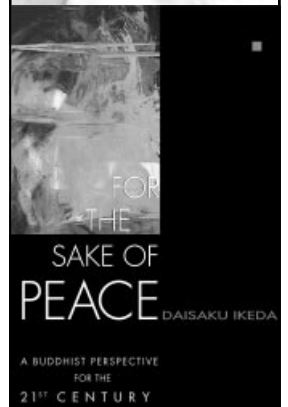
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My noble Kansai friends have reenacted that great struggle of 45 years ago time and time again, clearly establishing a brilliant history of continuous triumph. A new page of history of unending victory has once again begun in Kansai. Our victory in the very first year of this new century will become a lifeline for a succession of victories.

Great Kansai, be tenacious! Take one step of courage and integrity after another, until the very end! Ever-victorious Kansai, triumph in everything, never forgetting your honor and your mission — together with me!

This essay was published in the "Thoughts on *The New Human Revolution*" series in the July 14 *Seikyo Shim-bun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

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## FROM SPEECH, I

formulas of history.

The American thinker Henry David Thoreau said: "The best place for each is where he stands." In other words, there is no place like that where we are now.

Buddhism teaches that we all inherently possess the state of Buddhahood. Wherever we dwell, then, is in fact the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. It is the power of the Mystic Law that enables us to transform the place where we are now — the place where we struggle with the daily realities and problems of life — into a place of victory.

#### Religion without action becomes a sham.

The famous Russian author Leo Tolstoy wrote in his diary: "I'm still tormented by thirst...not for fame — I don't want fame and I despise it — but to have a big influence on people's happiness and usefulness." This is a perfect expression of the Soka Gakkai spirit. We have no selfish ambitions for personal fame or importance. We cherish the lofty desire to lead others to happiness, and we pray and rack our brains over how we can realize that goal. Tolstoy and other truly great philosophers of his ilk reveal a spirit that is very close to Buddhism.

The French novelist and thinker Romain Rolland wrote: "There can be no



At the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Tokyo, 450 SGI youth leaders from 50 countries attend the 9th Headquarters Leaders Meeting with SGI President Ikeda.

whole, vital and genuine philosophy without action." This is true of any philosophy or religion — without action, they are a sham. Buddhism is action; and action is joy. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood does not act for the sake of kosen-rufu; it is a sham religion, a dead religion.

The ancient Roman philosopher Seneca said: "That joy which springs wholly from oneself is true and sound; it increases and attends us to the last." Joy derived from things

obtained without effort, from things conferred out of flattery, from things that have been stolen or obtained dishonestly is a hollow, false joy that will not last. Such joy quickly fades.

Nichiren Daishonin states: "[Chanting] Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the greatest of all joys" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 788). As these words indicate, the supreme joy rises from unshakable faith. It wells up within our lives. The ultimate joy and victory come from living a life dedicated to faith.

In Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, Socrates says: "I awaken and persuade and reproach each one of you, and I do not stop settling down everywhere upon you the whole day." Socrates is willing to go anywhere to awaken the people. He sits down with them and makes every effort to persuade them and refute their erroneous views. For us, this is introducing Buddhism to others. It is pursuing dialogue to spread the cause of good and truth. We do not give up, even if we are criticized. For this is the most correct way of life and the most correct action we can take. It is also the ultimate model of humanity left to us by this great Greek philosopher.

We have had a very hot summer here in Japan this year. Now, we are beginning to move into autumn. This time of year the weather is very unpredictable — hot one day, cool the next — so it is easy to fall ill. I hope you will take every precaution to stay in good health.

When you are feeling unwell or are very tired, it's all right to simply do a short gongyo [parts A and C] or chant a few minutes' of daimoku. After all, what matters is your sincere commitment to faith and the dedicated efforts you make for kosen-rufu. I hope you will exercise wisdom and enjoy a happy, healthy life based on faith in the Mystic Law.

#### We have entered the second phase of worldwide kosen-rufu.

SGI members from 50 countries and territories, as well as divisional and group representatives from all over Japan, have assembled for this 9th Headquarters Leaders Meeting. I understand that our Mashiko Community Center in Tochigi Prefecture and our Mii Community Center in Fukuoka Prefecture will have access to satellite broadcasts of the Headquarters leaders meetings for the first time, starting from this month. Congratulations!

I would like to welcome the 450 outstanding young leaders from around the world who have joined us today! Thank you for traveling such long distances. I deeply appreciate all of your efforts. Your gathering together here under one roof attests to the fact that we have entered the second phase of worldwide kosen-rufu — an age when the SGI will move forward in earnest. I and everyone else here would like to give you a huge round of applause to signify our sincere respect and admiration for you and our very

warmest of welcomes!

And I am entirely certain that, more than anyone, Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, would shower you with words of praise, appreciation, and encouragement.

In a letter addressed to Shijo Kingo, who traveled all the way to Sado Island to visit him in exile, the Daishonin writes: "For you, a lay person pressed for time in your lord's service, to believe in the Lotus Sutra is itself very rare. Moreover, surmounting mountains and rivers and crossing the great blue sea, you came to visit me from afar. How could your resolve be inferior to that of the man who broke open his bones at the City of Fragrances, or of the boy who threw away his body on the Snow Mountains?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1069).

The Daishonin lavished the highest praise on Shijo Kingo for his seeking spirit in faith. This kind of seeking spirit manifests itself in lofty action. All of you have gathered from afar with such ardent aspiration for the sake of Buddhism. Your efforts are infinitely noble. You are all emissaries of the Buddha.

Please know that wholeheartedly treasuring and praising people such as yourselves who are working for kosen-rufu is the fundamental spirit of the Lotus Sutra and the heritage of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Should anyone forget this spirit and take your sincere efforts for kosen-rufu for granted or, worse, look down on you, they will be acting against everything the world of faith stands for. Buddhism is a realm of supreme compassion and humanity. High Priest Nikken Abe and his cohorts have trampled on that spirit and displayed incredible callousness and disregard for others, and we cannot permit this.

You have all come to Japan with profound seeking spirit to attend this first SGI youth training course of the 21st century. I will ensure that your names go down in the annals of kosen-rufu for all time. Thank you!

#### People around the world are placing great faith in the SGI youth.

Congratulations to the youth division in Japan, too, on your bright new departure! If the youth are strong, the Soka Gakkai will be rock-solid. The members of the youth division proved themselves admirable in our first major campaign of the 21st century. They have grown,

#### IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

## SGI-USA Members Continue To Respond to Sept. 11

**We will have more news, experiences and perspectives from New York, Washington, D.C., and across the country in response to the Sept. 11 tragedies in our Oct. 19 issue. We will also have more comments from SGI President Ikeda on the situation and a panel discussion by national leaders on what each of us can do in our SGI-USA activities for the sake of peace.**

and an alliance of awakened youth has been established.

Now, as a new century begins, the human race looks forward to the emergence of a new positive, hope-filled force. Those forces that have outlived their time will fade from the stage of history. In these circumstances, thoughtful, intelligent people around the world are placing great faith in the youth of the SGI, calling them the hope of the future. Some have written this to us in letters, and others state it in their books and speeches.

Dr. David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, with whom I published the dialogue *Choose Peace* [not yet available in English], expressed this sentiment to Masao Yokota, president of the SGI-affiliated Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, and I quote him verbatim: "I've met with several different youth groups from the Soka Gakkai and I've always been

impressed with their spirit. They have very bright eyes and very wide smiles. What that represents to me is their eagerness to learn.... I feel that they are young people who are searching for a way to do something worthwhile and something that's really positive in their lives, which is a very different approach from a lot of young people who are alienated and looking for ways to rebel against society."

I assert that this is absolutely true. To all the members of the youth division, I say: "I entrust the future of the SGI to you!" Please proudly continue your dedicated efforts. And please never forget that expanding the ranks of the youth division is expanding the hope of all humanity.

Raise the victory banner high with the conviction: "We are the Soka Gakkai youth division!" I hope you will build an ever-stronger, ever-larger force of SGI youth dedicated to

the cause of good who will earn the admiration of the entire world. I hope you will inspire and rally together many, many young people.

The foundation for kosen-rufu in Japan is solid. Next we must focus on the world. Let us build an unshakable alliance of people of integrity and conscience. That is the mission of the youth of the SGI.

Dr. Krieger also commented: "It's inevitable that the younger generation will come up to roles of leadership and therefore the future will depend upon how they are educated and what kind of choices they make about the future. One act of hope for us is to be good mentors and good educators of the next generation.... Hopefully, with education and examples like President Ikeda, the pendulum will swing back and the next generation will be more attuned to the Earth and human rights, and to creating a more decent world."

In spite of Dr. Krieger's overly generous reference to me, I wanted to introduce his remarks because of the trust they convey for the youth division and for the Soka Gakkai's efforts to raise capable people.

**SUA will foster many global citizens.**

Last month saw the opening of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo. Many U.S. newspapers and news organizations took note of this event. [The

first entrance ceremony of the new university was held on Aug. 24, the anniversary of the day that the university's founder, President Ikeda, joined the Soka Gakkai. The *New York Times*, one of the world's leading newspapers, ran a front-page article on SUA, while the Associated Press distributed a similar article. To date, more than 50 U.S. newspapers have carried articles on the university, introducing its aims and educational ideals to a wide readership.]

Dr. Krieger has suggested the reasons for this interest in SUA: "The goals and values of [SUA] deserve attention because they represent a different approach to education. It's an approach that says, 'We want to make world citizens. We're consciously setting out to create world citizens, young people who engage with the world and try to make a better world.' That's a model of education for the future. I'd like to see it be a model."

Leading thinkers around the world are looking expectantly to Soka University of America as an institution offering an ideal approach to education for the 21st century. Let us rejoice and take pride in this auspicious start of SUA!

There are many universities and educational institutions in Japan, but none of them has engaged in creating a university in the United States on such a scale. SUA represents the new

challenge of Soka Education in the 21st century. I would like to express my high esteem to the United States of America for embracing this new university and this new challenge.

It is human beings who cause the horror of war; it is the insidious, destructive tendency inherent in human life. Therefore, unless there is a fundamental transformation within the lives of human beings themselves, we will never rid ourselves of war.

To achieve that, we must foster global citizens, people who are more than merely Japanese, or American, or any other nationality. We must extend the network of global citizens who possess both a positive philosophy and true capability, and who are dedicated to joining hands with all people on this planet and advancing with them. This was the vision of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founder of Soka Education and the first president of the Soka Gakkai. It is also the grand objective of Soka University of America.

Here today in the Makiguchi Memorial Hall, with this profound shared ideal in mind, I would like to humbly report on the opening of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, to Mr. Makiguchi, our noble predecessor who gave his life for his beliefs.

*To be continued in an upcoming issue.*

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS**

# Human Beings Can Transform the Planet

From This Speech:

**It is human beings who cause the horror of war; it is the insidious, destructive tendency inherent in human life. Therefore, unless there is a fundamental transformation within the lives of human beings themselves, we will never rid ourselves of war. To achieve that, we must foster global citizens, people who are more than merely Japanese, or American, or any other nationality. We must extend the network of global citizens who possess both a positive philosophy and true capability, and who are dedicated to joining hands with all people on this planet and advancing with them.**

1) When SGI President Ikeda says "it is the insidious destructive tendency inherent in human life" that causes war, what exactly do you think he is talking about? Can you find examples in Nichiren Daishonin's writings where he talks about this destructive tendency inherent in human life? How can we prevent this destructive tendency from manifesting in our life and the lives of others?

2) President Ikeda continues: "We must extend the network of global citizens who possess both a positive philosophy and true capability, and who are dedicated to joining hands with all people on this planet and advancing with them." Based on your practice of faith can you think of actions you can take right now to bring about a fundamental transformation away from the destructive tendency toward war? Do you think it is so important to continue taking action to bring about a transformation in society? If so, why? What does the Daishonin say about the way to secure peace in the world?

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# the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

## 'PURE STREAM'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 3, PARTS 1-4

*In Japan, the people had given up thinking for themselves and abandoned speaking out to protect their human rights and dignity. Shin'ichi Yamamoto regarded restoring the power of words to the people as his mission.*

Writing and speech are the mark of humanity. They are forces capable of resisting violence and arms and building true and lasting peace. Kosen-rufu is a fresh, humanistic movement to enable the human spirit to triumph, to create happiness and peace for all people through the written and spoken word.

On July 28, 1963, Shin'ichi Yamamoto attended the first all-Japan general meeting of the Soka Gakkai's Writers Department at Kyoritsu Auditorium in Kanda, Tokyo. The Writers Department was founded two years earlier, on May 3, 1961, when the Culture Bureau was established. At that time, Youth Leader Eisuke Akizuki had been appointed as its head.

The Writers Department at

first consisted of two groups: The first, Group 1, was made up of young men's and young women's leaders, and the second, Group 2, was for professional writers. Later, at the request of the women's division, a third group was established primarily for women's division members. Its aim was to be a forum for women to voice their ideas toward building a new society. Group 2 subsequently became a men's division section of the Writers Department. Professional writers joined whichever of the three groups was appropriate to their circumstances.

The Writers Department established branches not only throughout the Tokyo metropolitan area but gradually across the country, and they became very active. In November



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

1962, the first issue of *Opinions*, the Writers Department monthly journal, was published. It provided a place where department members could express their ideas, and included articles on current issues as well as pointed rebuttals to criticisms of the Soka Gakkai in the mass media.

Shin'ichi contributed a short essay to the first issue. In it he declared that initiating a war of words dedicated to truth and justice could change the direction of the Cold War and the numerous armed conflicts around the world. It would be based on the conviction that "the pen is mightier than the sword." He also emphasized that Nichiren Daishonin's many letters and treatises, written out of a great desire to lead all people to happiness, were testimony to the "war of words" he had waged in accord with the fundamentals of democracy.

"The time has come for us to courageously speak out for truth and justice," he wrote, "and advance for the sake of kosen-rufu and the well-being of the people." It is the people who are responsible for sound speech and writing. In Japan, however, the people had given up thinking for themselves and abandoned speaking out to protect their human rights and dignity. Shin'ichi regarded restoring the power of words to the people as the mission of the Writers Department.

Words have tremendous power. They can change people's awareness and change the times.

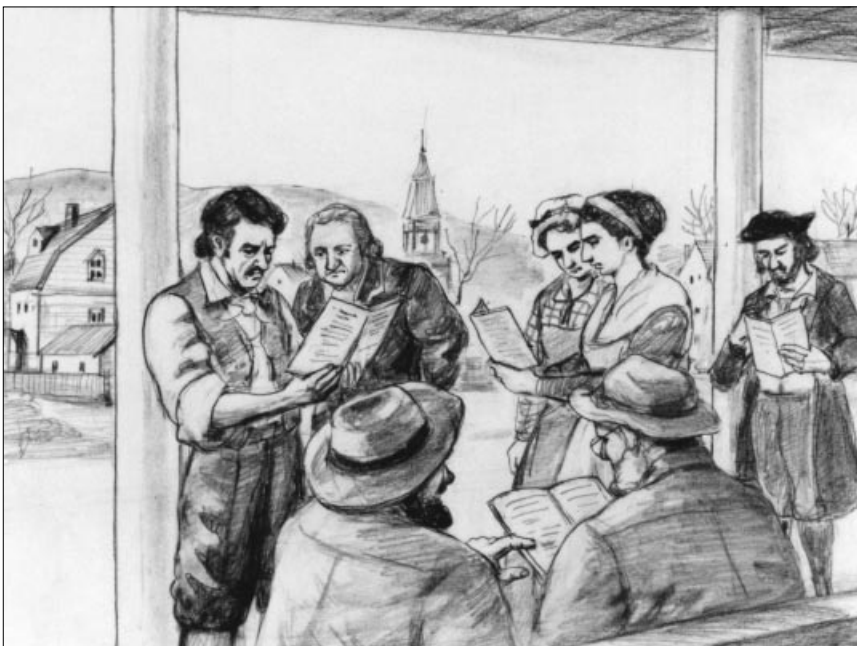
That is why authorities wishing to control the people have always tried to manipulate the power of words to socially annihilate those who seek to initiate reform. Such people use the mass media to spread lies, branding reformers as evil, deviant and insane, and trying to stir up hatred and fear.

The Soka Gakkai, dedicated to ensuring that the people are celebrated, has been consistently subjected to such perverted use of the media. Unless such wrongdoing is defeated and justice revealed, the truth will keep being distorted and trampled upon. If that is the case, the people will never win.

For this reason, Shin'ichi had put much energy into developing the Writers Department. Whenever he considered the power of words, he recalled the struggle for American independence.

In January 1776, a pamphlet titled *Common Sense* was published in Philadelphia. It appeared nine months after the battles of Lexington and Concord, where the first shots of the American Revolution were fired.

This small, 47-page pamphlet had a tremendous influence, and stirred people's desire for independence. At the



time, any public call for independence invited strict surveillance from the British colonial authorities. In addition, public opinion was divided on the issue. Only about one-third of the American people supported independence. Another third were loyalists who wanted to remain a colony of England, and another third were neutral. Many who were satisfied with having gained a degree of self-rule were skeptical about full independence, and so stood by silently to see what would happen.

Against this backdrop, one thin pamphlet cried out that independence from England was a natural conclusion of "common sense." It stated: "There is something very absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island." "O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth!" "Nothing can settle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined declaration for independence."

These were not complicated words. They were clear, simple, and understandable to all, words that advocated with passion and conviction the need for independence.

The author signed the pamphlet, "written by an Englishman."

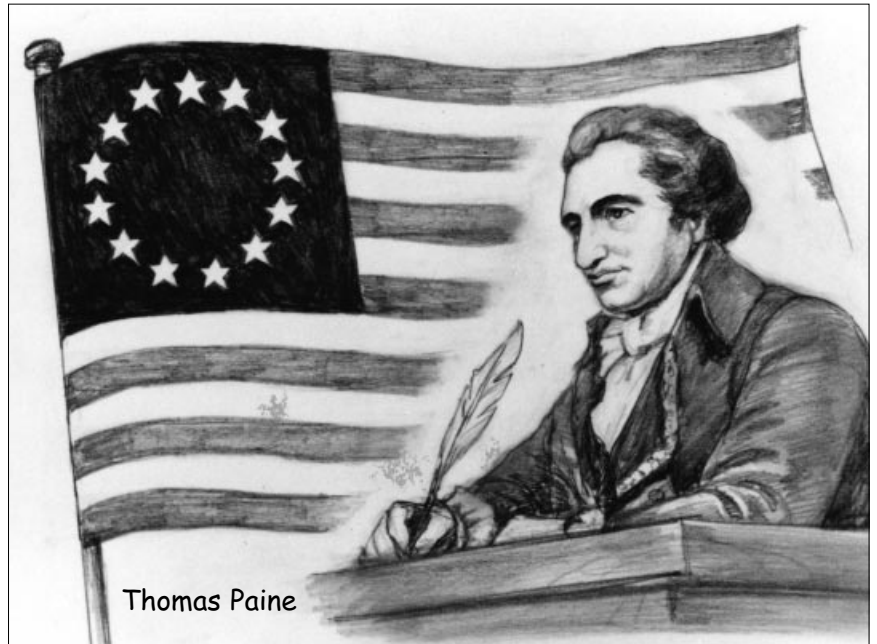
It eventually became known that the author of the pamphlet *Common Sense* was a 39-year-old editor named Thomas Paine. He had arrived in America from England only two years earlier and was a

complete unknown. Yet his small pamphlet garnered a stunning response, selling 120,000 copies in just three months, at a time when the population of the colonies was only about 2.5 million. While this was an astonishing figure in itself, in the end the pamphlet is said to have sold more than 500,000 copies.

Those who read *Common Sense* were struck deeply by its message and came to believe that independence was America's future. The old common sense they had believed in collapsed and was replaced by a new one. An English newspaper described the effectiveness of the pamphlet, saying, "As many as read [*Common Sense*], so many became converted." George Washington, later the first president of the United States, commented on the pamphlet's "sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning," remarking, "*Common Sense* will not leave numbers at a loss to decide upon the propriety of separation [from England]."

Farmers and poor city dwellers rushed to buy copies of *Common Sense* and soon joined the ranks of those who supported independence. One reader noted that "the public sentiment which a few weeks before [the publication of *Common Sense*] had shuddered at the tremendous obstacles, with which independence was environed, overleaped every barrier."

The pamphlet gave Americans confidence that independence could be won and



roused in them the courage to stand up and act. The power of a people determined to do something is tremendous. Nothing can stop them. Soon after, on July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was signed. Though the mood of the times called for independence, there can be no denying that this little pamphlet, written by an ordinary citizen, was instrumental in its realization.

Paine wrote, "Who the Author of this Production is, is wholly unnecessary to the Public, as the Object for Attention is the *Doctrine itself*, not the *Man*." The power of his

words changed history. It is the people who speak out for justice against the tyranny of authority and the inequities of society. That is the foundation of democracy.

Exposing and destroying the deceptions of injustice with the truth opens the way for a bright future.

To say boldly what must be said; to declare as right what is right and as wrong what is wrong—this is the true way of Buddhists. The early Buddhist teaching of the eightfold path, which outlines the way to enlightenment, exemplifies this with its inclusion of "right speech." Right speech is defined as refraining from lying, bad language, slander, and frivolous speech. In this way, Shakyamuni taught that we should only speak the truth.

When Shakyamuni began to preach in Rajagriha [capitol of the kingdom of Magadha in ancient India and the center of many new cultural and philosophical movements], people of excellent caliber flocked to him one after another and became his disciples. Envious and fearful of this rapid development, others in the city attacked Shakyamuni with a storm of abuse. This worried his disciples, but Shakyamuni remained unfazed. He taught them to respond to such attacks by saying, "The Buddha is inviting people by means of the true dharma. Who would be jealous of this?"

These words gave his disciples the courage to rise to action. From then on, whenever they heard people criticizing

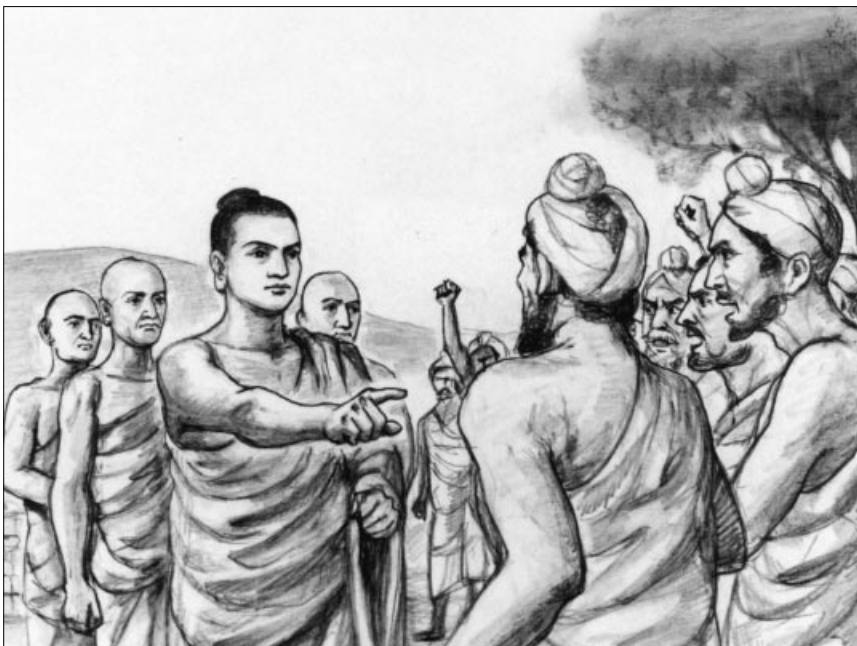
the Buddha, they would resolutely speak out. They talked and talked until they were able to convince their opponents of Shakyamuni's true intent. This is what it means to refute people's erroneous views and lead them to the correct teaching. Eventually, the slanderous remarks ceased completely.

When Devadatta revealed his real nature by trying to seize control of the Buddhist order, Shakyamuni immediately told Shariputra and his other disciples to go to Rajagriha and expose Devadatta for the scoundrel that he was. It was thus that Shakyamuni staunchly challenged all wrongdoing. He clearly distinguished right from wrong, his words piercing injustice like bullets.

The Daishonin's life was also a constant fierce struggle to communicate the truth. Establishing his teachings at the age of 32, he stood alone and pointed out the errors of all the Buddhist schools of Japan at the time. He was not a person of rank or status, but he had no fear of the powerful military government. He knew that enemies would set upon him from all over Japan, and was prepared for intense persecution.

His words were a lion's roar to relieve the people of suffering, bring them happiness, and build a peaceful and prosperous society. That is why his life was a series of endless persecutions.

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



EXPERIENCE — ROSE TRIPLETT, CHICAGO

# THE COURAGE TO DREAM

**Through her Buddhist practice, Rose Triplet accomplishes one impossible dream after another.**

I began practicing Buddhism 27 years ago after being told by doctors that I would never lead a normal life. My life's journey has finally proven them wrong.

I am the oldest girl in a once dysfunctional family of nine children. My father was an alcoholic who also suffered from mental disorders. As children, we experienced extreme fear and suffering as a result of his violent behavior. Our weekends were always total nightmares. My father's insecurities and raging jealousy toward my mother resulted in his constantly beating and torturing her. As the oldest girl, I felt petrified and hopeless because I could not protect my mother or my younger brothers and sisters. The pain and hellish conditions continued for many years, entrenching my life in fear, hopelessness and anger, until I no longer wanted to live.

In 1972, I began a journey that would continue for the next 21 years. At the age of 16, I was hospitalized and diagnosed as schizophrenic, psychotic and suicidal. My mental and physical states were so affected due to my childhood experiences that doctors felt a frontal lobotomy would be the only way to sever the traumatic effects. This operation would cause me to lose my memories for life and also leave me in a zombie-like state. Because of my mother's wisdom and compassion, she refused the surgery. Instead, I was administered many psychotropic drugs and told that I would never live a normal life.

Nonetheless, I was released from the hospital and returned to graduate from high school with honors. I also received an honorary and academic scholarship to North Central College, whereupon I was again hospitalized. Following this release, I was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.



Rose Triplet, SGI-USA Legal Arts Division leader, and her hero — her mother, Clarisa Triplet.

I was so surprised at the tremendous level of hope, courage and confidence exhibited by SGI members and felt as if I had entered a new dimension of my life. I immediately began to study everything about Buddhism and participate in SGI-USA youth activities. A major benefit that resulted was that the frequency of my trips to the hospital and my medication were greatly reduced.

As I studied, the particular passage from Nichiren Daishonin's writings that encouraged me most reads in part: "Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 412).

As a child, I deeply cherished a desire to become an attorney, but this dream had been totally lost due to my recurring illness. Now it was time for me to travel the path to accomplish my dreams for a loftier purpose. SGI President Ikeda encourages us that life is always a struggle and that we must never be de-

feated; that this attitude of faith is the key to living a life of supreme joy and happiness.

With these words and the encouragement of my seniors in faith to live a life without regrets, I enrolled at Chicago State University in 1978. However, my illness almost immediately returned and I was again hospitalized. For the next several years, I struggled with finances and mental illness, keeping alive the determination to finish college.

During this time, I re-connected to my family. Shortly before my father's death, I shared Buddhism with him. Two years later, my mother became very ill and I temporarily moved back home. This gave me the opportunity to encourage and forge deeper relationships with my siblings, three of whom I have lost over the past several years due to fatal illnesses.

Even amid these hardships, my practice of Buddhism stayed strong and after 16 years of determined efforts, I received my B.S. degree in September 1989.

Now I was ready to tackle

my impossible dream of going to law school. But this would prove no easy feat. I applied to and was rejected by more than 10 law schools. I chanted with the determination to accomplish my mission for kosen-rufu and, on July 16, 1990, I was accepted at Thurgood Marshall Law School in Houston.

Upon entering law school, I met my study partner, who is today my lifelong friend. Although she is not an SGI-USA member, she would always encourage me to chant when school became difficult and exhausting. And, in 1992, when my old familiar illness reappeared and I was again hospitalized, her husband, a hospital employee, protected and helped me so that this time my stay was only two days. I knew I had changed something deep within me.

While attending law school, the passage from the Daishonin that sustained me was: "A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous

in faith" (WND, 412).

On May 4, 1993, I was sworn in as an attorney at law. Finally, I had accomplished my lifelong dream of becoming an attorney for the justice and happiness of the common people. I immediately reported my determination to President Ikeda and received a warm and encouraging letter from his office in response, which stated in part, "How wonderful it is that you will take the oath of attorney on May 4, which is the day after President Ikeda himself departed on the great eternal voyage of kosen-rufu 33 years ago as the president of the Soka Gakkai."

Successfully completing one journey and beginning another, I was hired as assistant state's attorney for the Cook County State's Attorney's Office in the Child Support Enforcement Division. Although I was fired in 1994 after another hospitalization with my illness, this gave me the opportunity to realize an even more impossible dream of becoming a sole practitioner of law, with five employees and the purchase of two buildings.

Today, I embark on yet another impossible dream: to redevelop the area where I grew up in Chicago, once considered one of the most dangerous places to live. But this is the place where I grew up, where my mother literally saved my life and where today our family gathers every third Sunday at Mom's house for warm family dinners where we share our lives, hopes and dreams. This is where I choose to reply to President Ikeda and build a beautiful fortress for world peace filled with many happy families.

On Sept. 20, I accepted my new position as city planner for the city of Chicago. In fact, the interviewer stated, "Because Rose lives amongst the common people and because of her experience and deep concern for her neighborhood, she is the best candidate for the job."

I am determined to continue to live the phrase that "no prayer goes unanswered, and that nothing is impossible based on sincere faith in the Gohonzon." Although I am "filled with butterflies" at my new prospects, I am certain of one thing — the path I have chosen will sustain and fill my life and my environment with absolute happiness. Of this I am certain. **WT**

## CULTURE DEPARTMENT IN ACTION

EXPERIENCE — TAMARA FRASIER, JERSEY CITY, N.J.

# Defeating the Enemy From Within

Photo by McINTOSH EWELL

**Tamara Frazier overcomes doubt and fear in establishing her legal career.**

A quote from SGI President Ikeda adorned my grandmother's Buddhist altar for as long as I can remember: "Any person, before being defeated by an enemy is first defeated by himself and will be ultimately beaten by the traitor in his heart." My grandmother converted to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 1968, and since her passing in 1992, I have cherished this encouragement as a reminder of her strength. I have also used this passage to continuously fuel my determination to show the power of the Gohonzon.

Although I was born into this practice, it was not until my most recent experience that I had to challenge myself and my faith by undergoing severe struggles and hardships. This journey began when I graduated from law school in June 2000.

Upon graduation, I immediately started studying for the New York and New Jersey Bar exams, which I had decided to take simultaneously. Every day, I attacked my bar studies like I was training for a marathon. In the process, I also became disciplined in other areas of my life. My Buddhist practice became stronger than ever, and I even lost more than 60 pounds from the combined regimen of daily jogging and stress, which was so intense that my stomach was constantly upset.

The Saturday before I left to take the Bar, more than 20 SGI-USA members from the New Jersey region came to support my 13 hours of continuous chanting. I will never forget that when my study partners asked if I felt that I would pass the exam, I declared with confidence, "There is no other option."

After I took the bar, I was able to relax for the first time in months. However, my mind became overwhelmed with the harsh reality that I had no job and, even worse, I had no idea what I wanted to do with my law degree. This was devastating. I was 25 years old and had



Tamara Frazier holds her certificate of admittance to the New York Bar.

been in school all of my life. My desire to learn and my affinity to fight injustice had brought me this far, but I never envisioned myself post-school. I fell into a deep depression, and even further into debt since I now had to confront not only school loans, but also rent and bills.

For many weeks, I had the following routine: wake up, do morning gongyo, sit on the couch all day crying, drink rum-and-Cokes, watch TV talk shows, do evening gongyo, and go to bed. One day, I found myself on a train to Maryland in search of the comfort that only my mother could provide. While at home, I remember crying on my mother's shoulder shouting, "I did everything right, why is this happening to me! I've chanted so much and done so many SGI activities!" My mother simply responded: "You're right. You have created the fortune, now open your life to experience the benefit. Go out there and take the job that you know you are worthy of!"

At that moment, I realized that this practice consists of prayer plus action. I had only focused on the former thinking my job would miraculously appear. I went back to New Jersey, immediately began chanting

abundantly and spent my time during the day visiting fellow members, studying Buddhist literature and doing temporary assignments at law firms. I had a refreshed attitude toward my work. Instead of feeling demeaned by the assignments, I determined to do the best that I could even if that just meant filing. I felt confident that if I continued to make good causes, the best job would manifest.

On my third temp assignment, I was placed with one of the largest corporate law firms in New Jersey and instantly bonded with the partner who interviewed me. She hired me as a temp and, three weeks later, I was offered an associate position, which is almost unheard of in the legal community.

As soon as I accepted the position, it seemed as if everything fell apart. While all my efforts to pass the New York Bar had paid off, I was not so fortunate with the New Jersey bar, and in order to keep my job, I had to take the bar again in February. Also, I, like many others at the firm, began having severe conflicts with the boss. Her emotional mood swings, constant put-downs and tendency to aggressively blame others created a very unpleasant and humiliating work environ-

ment. I felt I was suffering from "battered wife syndrome," constantly questioning my own dignity and self-worth.

Again, I was devastated and felt that my whole world was crumbling. I had nothing to cling on to except my practice to the Gohonzon. I determined to stand up for myself and to show everyone at work how a practitioner of Buddhism responds to adversity.

As a result of my renewed determination, the firm supported me by paying for my taking the bar a second time. Even though I was working 12 to 14 hour days and had no time to study, a week prior to the exam, I had the fortune to study the very issues I would be given on the exam and was able to pass. Today, my relationship with my boss also continues to develop and grow. Although many employees under her supervision have quit, I have been able to survive longer than anyone.

I have come to realize that although I cannot control everything that happens to me, I can control how I respond to situations. I have also learned to utilize my practice to the Gohonzon as a tool to invoke my own strength to overcome any obstacle. The benefits I have received from my Buddhist practice are immense. I am a 26-year-old corporate immigration attorney admitted in New York and New Jersey, and practice law at one of the biggest law firms in New Jersey. My biggest benefit, however, is the freedom that I have gained from replacing fear with faith. As such, I face every day with a renewed resolve to show actual proof. I have come to appreciate my practice to the Gohonzon as the calm in any storm and place all of my confidence in that, which is my own Buddha nature. Finally, I continue to develop unshakeable confidence to stand up for myself in the workplace.

In the words of my deceased grandmother's favorite passage, "Any person, before being defeated by an enemy, is first defeated by himself." I will continue to win over myself and my environment, and realize all of my dreams no matter what! **WT**

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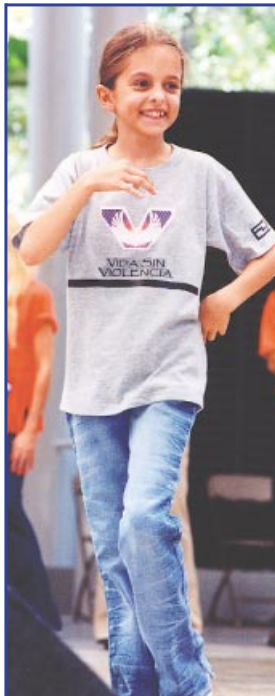
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SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS

# Puerto Rico Shows the 'Essence of Peace'



By  
**ANDY SANCHEZ**  
PUERTO RICO CORRESPONDENT

After two months of brainstorming, countless efforts and millions of daimoku, the "Family: Essence of Peace" festival was held at Luis Muñoz Rivera Park in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Sept. 2. The festival was sponsored by Puerto Rico's SGI-USA youth and Vida Sin Violencia (Life Without Violence), a nonprofit organization inspired by the SGI-USA's Victory Over Violence movement.

The central corridor of the beautiful Muñoz Rivera Park became temporarily set up with booths sponsored by artisans, government and educational organizations, as well as refreshment vendors. Facilities offering information about SGI and Vida Sin Violencia were also available.

A highlight of the program was the tribute paid by the Vida

Sin Violencia organization to distinguished painter Carmelo Sobrino, director of the Amigos del Parque (Friends of the Park) organization, for the fervor with which he and his group safeguard the park from deterioration.

The activities continued with a merry, singing, hand-clapping group parading down the park's central corridor, until arriving at the Peace Pavilion, an enormous, Victorian-like structure, where they were greeted by the thundering percussion of *Bomba* drums. *Bomba* is a Puerto Rican folkloric dance with roots in Africa.

The program began with the *Bomba* workshop. After an enlightening lecture about diverse aspects of this dance and its steps, the public was offered the opportunity to come on stage to dance. The second workshop consisted of *capoeira ayé* and samba classes and demonstrations by students from the Afro-Brazilian



Orlando Cepeda, baseball hall-of-famer and SGI-USA member, gives an interview on Puerto Rican radio promoting Victory Over Violence.

Caribbean Cultural Center.

The artistic spectacular began with numerous SGI members and guests performing. The acts were strikingly diverse—dance, song, rock 'n' roll, salsa, jazz—these genres were performed in myriad ways. The talent displayed was such that spectators not only felt gratified, but pleasantly surprised as well.

Cesar Reyes is a student at the Afro-Brazilian Caribbean Cultural Center. He commented that this type of activity was of great value because it fosters a violence-free environment. Fifi Bernard, the center's director, joined the conversation and said the activity was "marvelous," adding that it should be held once a month.

Ingmar Soto, SGI-USA Southern Zone youth leader, said: "The success of this event was made evident by the numerous non-SGI members in the audience. This demonstrates we share common goals. Festivals such as this help link the SGI

with the general community."

"Life is transformed through efforts," said Hector Rodríguez, the festival's logistics group leader. Recently arrived from Uruguay, Hector said he felt happy participating in the festival and stressed the fact that seeds planted through the organization grow and spread throughout the nation.

SGI-USA member Angie Willoughby, who supported many committees, declared, "It was a total success." She said she had a "blast," and felt pleased with the contacts that were established with different organizations. "Putting the festival together took a lot of hard work," said Angie, but she felt completely fulfilled by the results.

"I could see the members united and happy," declared Jose Luis Vargas, Puerto Rico Area young men's leader. "This joy permeated the members and was the key to success," he added with much enthusiasm. **WT**



Photos by VICTOR MERCED, MADELINE PETRI, ROSO SABALONES and FABIOLA SERRA