



**'Voices From New York':**  
four more  
Sept. 11  
experiences.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY ON SEPT. 11

## RENEWING OUR FAITH IN HUMANITY

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



Boys and Girls Group members perform a hip-hop version of Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' at an SGI-USA Family Youth Festival at the Los Angeles Sports Arena, Oct. 7 (see full story in an upcoming issue).

**'I am utterly convinced that we were not born into this world to hate and destroy each other,' writes SGI President Ikeda. 'We must restore and renew our faith in humanity and in each other. We must never lose sight of the fact that we can still make the 21st century an era free from the flames of war and violence—an era in which all people may live in peace.'**

*SGI President Ikeda wrote the following essay in response to the tragedy of Sept. 11.*

**I**n the aftermath of the terrible shock of the tragic events of Sept. 11, I extend my deepest sympathies to all those affected. From the bottom of my heart, I pray for the victims, and I pray that their families may find inner strength, healing and, eventu-

ally, renewed happiness.

It is impossible not to be outraged at the senseless loss of so many lives. And yet it is not the numbers that make this tragedy so horrific. Every single person lost was irreplace-

PLEASE SEE ESSAY, 9

## Moving Ahead With Nichiren Daishonin's Spirit

By **DANNY NAGASHIMA**  
SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR

**In the wake of all that has occurred since Sept. 11, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima reminds us that 'to live Nichiren Daishonin's great spirit to save humanity is to practice Buddhism on the path of the oneness of mentor and disciple.'**

**A**s a Buddhist, together with all the members of SGI-USA, I have been steadily offering my sincerest prayers for the peace and happiness of all those who have been affected by the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11. I cannot even begin to imagine the profound pain and sorrow of the families of those killed or missing.

Also, to all who attended memorial services held throughout the country for

those who perished in the terrorist attacks and prayed for their repose, I extend my heartfelt appreciation as general director.

Beginning Oct. 7, military action was undertaken by the United States in Afghanistan. I sincerely pray and hope that more innocent people are not killed.

On Sept. 23, 12 days after the attacks, I visited New York City and stood at Ground Zero, the ruins of the World Trade Center. There, where more than 6,000 precious lives were lost in a matter of moments, underground fires were still smoldering with plumes of smoke rising from beneath the massive mountain of rubble. Standing there, I felt something indescribable shaking the depths of my life. I heard—in the plumes of smoke slowly rising heavenward—the anguished cries of not only those who died there, but also of the countless lives lost in too many wars and terrorist attacks in the past.

How much longer must humanity continue to perpetuate such hatred and vio-

PLEASE SEE NAGASHIMA, 11

Photo by JEFF FARR



SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima (right) visits with members at the New Jersey Community Center, Sept. 23, on his trip to the East Coast.

# VOICES FROM NEW YORK

EXPERIENCE—LESLIE WINES, NEW YORK CITY

## THINGS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME

**When the recent attacks occurred in New York City, Leslie Wines had a profound realization of the need to fight for peace.**

Sept. 11 had all the makings of a truly fine day for me. The weather was beautiful and I was pursuing a personal project, as I was on a one-month sabbatical from my job at a news agency that had an office in the World Trade Center. Around 7:30 a.m., I went outdoors to sit by the marina near my home in Battery Park City, one block west of the twin towers, to enjoy the breeze and skim the newspapers. Shortly after 8:00 a.m., I returned home to begin my day.

Did I believe that my pleasant and convenient existence in my beautiful neighborhood was a sort of birthright, and that life would be a long string of perfect early fall days? Probably, but I was about to find out something very different.

I heard the first jet hit the first tower at 8:48 a.m., but didn't know what had produced the horrible, unearthly, high-decibel sound. I turned on the television and heard the news. Realizing that my colleagues were in our office on

the 52nd floor of 1 World Trade Center, I immediately ran out of my building and tried to approach the towers. I was told to go back, so I returned to my apartment, where I chanted for my colleagues' safety and received phone calls from SGI friends concerned about my safety. I could not reach my colleagues by phone.

About 15 minutes later, I saw a group of frightened children and shell-shocked adults, many of them completely covered in ash, run into my building. They had just seen the second jet hit. I went to the lobby to speak with them and then went back to my place to chant more daimoku. Then my phone and television went out of order, so I returned to the lobby, where an emergency worker told me that everyone in my building would have to evacuate immediately. A neighbor named Patricia and I became instant friends as we were led out a side exit. We were told to walk as quickly as we could along the promenade beside the Hudson River.

The air was black and foul, but the relief workers were calm and unbelievably solicitous as they helped us find isolated patches of clean air to breathe. Patricia turned to me and asked a poignant question, highlighting our surreal predicament: "Did you ever in your life think that you would be forced to evacuate your neighborhood by foreign terrorists?"

The relief workers told us not to look back at the burning towers but to look at the river and focus on breathing clean air, and I complied. I heard the towers collapse, but I did not turn around to look. Suddenly, as if from nowhere, a group of tug boats appeared to take us to safety in New Jersey. The first boat took children and their mothers, and the second boat took women, including Patricia and myself. We had to scale a high fence, but people in the crowd helped push us over. I am forever grateful for their help and the heroism of the clear-headed tug boat operators. These were truly modest men who would not accept a simple thank you.



After we arrived in New Jersey, we learned that, for our protection, we would not be allowed to return to our neighborhood for some time. I told Patricia I had no relatives in New Jersey. She invited me to stay with her brother and his family, who turned out to be wonderfully hospitable. Oddly enough, I fit into this family almost as if I belonged to it; Patricia's brother even looked like my brother. I stayed three days and made lifelong friends. While there, to my joy, I received word that my colleagues had all survived. I have received many marvelous benefits from my Buddhist practice in the extraordinary aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks, but the news that my colleagues and many other friends survived the events are obviously the most precious. However, I did lose a friend, a brilliant and kind man, who was a frequent source for my news stories, and I think about him often.

As I write this, my apartment building has not been reopened. Because my office burned down, I have been sent on a temporary basis to work out of our agency's offices in other cities, first in Washington, D.C., and then in London. I spend a lot of time looking at television images of my once beautiful neighborhood, now reduced to a hellish war zone. And you know what? I love it more than ever and so do a lot of people. Although the opportunities to work in Washington and London are great benefits, I can't wait to get back. To me, my neighborhood was always the greatest in the world, and I can't wait to see it get back to nor-

mal, a process which doubtless will prove long, difficult and painful.

Of course, when I finally am allowed to return, Battery Park City will not be the same. But then again, I won't be the same either. You see, I learned that you actually can be driven from your home by terrorists, and that peace and security, along with beautiful days off, are not givens in this world. It turns out that those who desire peace must work for it. As a Buddhist of the post-World War II generation, I have always given the concept of peace a lot of superficial praise, but I did not understand how precious it was until it was taken from me. Now that I understand something more about the fragility of peace, I yearn for it more, in much the same way that I yearn for my neighborhood because I can't return just yet.

These events have forced me to evaluate my priorities in life. There is a concept in Buddhism of introducing doubts in order to break people of their misguided attachments. For instance, the Sept. 11 attacks have caused many people to question how they wish to spend their time, leading to a general decline in enthusiasm for the more mindless forms of popular entertainment, especially those that

feature violence. Suddenly, entertainers and athletes seem less heroic than firefighters and tugboat operators.

If you had asked me on Sept. 10 if I would like to have my office burn down and be evacuated from my home, I would have answered "No!" My newfound awareness of the fragility of peace and life itself was not something I sought, but rather something that was literally forced upon me. This new understanding makes some of my former preoccupations seem a bit shallow and questionable, and is the source of tremendous, but not always pleasant, growth.

When I go home, I will be near the remains of the towers, now a mass underground grave for more than 6,000 persons, including some of the hijackers themselves. In the fifth prayer of gongyo, we pray first for the deceased and then for world peace, a sequence I never quite understood. But these thousands of deaths have helped me perceive a link between prayers for the departed and prayers for peace. I am forever indebted to the victims, and possibly even to the demented and perverted hijackers. If those people had not died in such a tragic, senseless, violent way, I doubt I would ever have fully grasped the need to defend peace. **WT**

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# VOICES FROM NEW YORK

EXPERIENCE—NED ROBINSON, LONG ISLAND, N.Y.

## A SEPT. 11 SURVIVOR'S TALE

**After surviving the attack on the World Trade Center, Ned Robinson has a refreshed resolve to work for a peaceful society.**

For the last few months, I have been doing software development for a financial services software company located at 2 World Trade Center on the 77th floor. Since I get in the office at 7:30 a.m., by 8:40 a.m., Sept. 11, I was already well into my day and thinking about getting a second cup of coffee. We heard the explosion but didn't know what it was.

Eight years ago, in 1993, I was working across the street from the World Trade Center when an explosion took place from a car bomb in the garage. My first reaction then was that the building's furnace had just kicked in. On Sept. 11, I heard a very similar sound and said to myself: "I guess today is going to be hotter than the past few days. They must have turned up the air conditioning."

My co-worker in the next cubicle and I went to the window and saw a large plume of fire shoot up and then debris fell down from the sky. This wasn't the sound of the air conditioner. Another co-worker said, "Let's just leave," and four of us grabbed what we could, heading down the fire escape within minutes.

When we got to the fire escape, people were already there. It was very calm, all the lights were on and there was no smoke. Nobody knew what had happened: we just kept walking down. I was chanting quietly the entire time. When we got down to the 50th floor, an announcement was made that our building was safe and that the problem was in Building 1. They also told us that we should return to our offices. I have chanted a lot of daimoku for the person who made the announcement to be safe and not to feel guilt. There is no way that anyone could have known that a plane was going to hit our building.



Photo by DEBRA KON

A co-worker and I decided that we would be better off outside the building, no matter what they said, even if it was just to get a cup of coffee. It is amazing how the split-second decisions you make have so many repercussions.

After the announcement, many people left the stairs to go to the elevators and return to their offices. With the stairs empty, we continued down at a pretty fast rate and had gotten to the 42nd floor when there was a loud boom and the stairs shook and swayed about six feet, like a pendulum. We thought there must have been another explosion in the first building. When the building stopped shaking, there was no damage, no cracks, nothing falling on us. The lights stayed on, and there was no smoke, just a faint smell of gas. The second plane had just hit our building.

I was told later by some co-workers who had remained until the second plane hit our building (out of 175 people in our office, 171 made it out safely) that the area where my desk was had been completely destroyed. My desk was on the southwest side, the side where the plane hit.

We continued down the

stairs, and I kept chanting. Eventually, more people entered the stairs and it took another 20 minutes to exit the building. When we got to the lobby, there were about a dozen or so police officers directing us out of the building. The lobby of the World Trade Center was quite extensive and it took another five minutes or so before we were outside.

I chanted the entire time. I think that the fact that we did not know what had happened helped us. We did not know about the planes, the fires, the people jumping out of the windows in a desperate attempt to save themselves. We had light and air. We stayed calm. We kept moving.

As we exited, the police told us not to look up. Well, I did peek for a second. I saw fire and a tremendous amount of smoke billowing out from about halfway up the tower. However, in my mind, I could not connect what I was looking at with where I had just been. We were out. My co-worker and I kept walking east. I wanted to get as far away from the building as possible.

As we made our way east and then north past the entrance to the Manhattan Bridge, every

intersection was jammed with cars and pedestrians, trying to catch a glimpse of what was happening. We didn't stop to look. We just kept walking. I did stop at one point to call my wife and family to let them know I was OK. My wife was not home, so I left a message that I was out of the building, safe and on my way to the SGI-USA New York Culture Center.

That morning, my wife, Cathy, who has been practicing Buddhism for more than 30 years, was chanting with a couple of friends. (Cathy and another member were visiting someone who was about to begin a round of chemotherapy and wanted to learn how to chant.) It was the daughter of one of her friends that told them that the World Trade Center had been bombed. After their initial shock, Cathy said that they decided to first chant 10 minutes of strong daimoku before doing anything else. This was right around the time when the plane hit my building and I was on the 42nd floor walking down the stairs.

After they were done chanting, Cathy, with one of her friends following in her car, drove home, where she was able to hear my message.

When I arrived at the Culture Center, I walked up to one of the staff members, Ethan Gelbaum, waiting outside, hugged him and began to cry. I felt like I had finally made it through this surreal ordeal to a safe haven.

I went up to the fourth-floor Gohonzon room and started to chant. I pulled out *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and opened to the selection "Questions and Answers about Embracing the Lotus Sutra." Two particular passages stayed with me: "Life lasts no longer than the time the exhaling of one breath awaits the drawing of another. At what time, what moment, should we ever allow ourselves to forget the compassionate vow of the Buddha, who declared, 'At all times I think to myself: [How can I cause living beings to gain entry into the unsurpassed way and quickly acquire the body of a Buddha]?' (WND, 62). "I pray that you will embrace the Mystic Law,

which guarantees that people 'will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences.' This is the only glory that you need seek in your present lifetime, and is the action that will draw you toward Buddhahood in your next existence. Single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world" (WND, 64).

Also, SGI President Ikeda recently wrote: "Peace is not something to be left to others in distant places. It is something we create day to day in our efforts to cultivate care and consideration for others, forging bonds of friendship and trust in our respective communities through our own actions and example" (*For the Sake of Peace*, p. 212). I have never found these words more true than now.

Having survived this horrific tragedy, and having had the chance to reflect on how many lives have been lost, I am determined to do whatever I can for the sake of creating a peaceful society here and now. **WT**

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# VOICES FROM NEW YORK

EXPERIENCE — DEBBIE GONZALEZ, NEW YORK CITY

## A Renewed Determination for Peace

**After her experience on Sept. 11, Debbie Gonzalez has determined to work even harder for peace.**

Before I started practicing Buddhism, I was an angry young woman. One day, riding the train to school, a woman invited me to a meeting. At the time, I was 19 years old and a real rock 'n' roller. People were afraid of me. Looking back, I realize I hid behind this angry image, because, in reality, I was afraid of getting close to people. That was 24 years ago and I can say confidently that, through chanting, I have changed my destructive anger into anger for justice. And the events I experienced on Sept. 11 renewed my dedication to creating peace on this planet.

I have been an educator for the past 17 years and a guidance counselor for the past six years in one of the most troubled high schools in Brooklyn, N.Y. When I started the job, the students were the most troubled I had ever seen. Worse, the administration and staff were negative and malicious. Every day there were gang-related incidents, major fights and many students dropping out. It seemed to me that the administration was afraid of the students, allowing them to continue their negative behavior. I decided I needed to take charge of my environment and began chanting three hours a day to change this situation. I dedicated my life to daimoku.

At the same time, I was in the middle of a very difficult situation at home. I had asked my husband to leave because his negative behavior was having a traumatic effect on my son. He refused, and my home life became as negative as my work life.

But the real turning point came when the students' parents started to complain about me. They felt I was being too strict. My supervisor approached me with the complaints and I soon realized I



Debbie Gonzalez and her son, Michael, who both witnessed the tragedy, stand in front of a forever altered New York skyline.

was at risk of losing my job.

I went home and chanted an entire weekend. On Monday, I approached my supervisor and told him about my Buddhist practice. I also told him if he let me work in my own way, I would deliver him a 100 percent graduation rate for the students I was counseling. He agreed to give me the chance, and I continued to chant three hours a day.

Everything began to change from there. The students began responding to me and made progress. My husband and I got an amicable divorce, and my financial and emotional life became better than I had ever dreamed. Most importantly, 100 percent of my students graduated.

I also brought the Victory Over Violence campaign to my school, and gang-related fights and violence have decreased significantly. I introduced many of the staff and students at this school to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, and many have started practicing. It was also a great honor for me to receive the Jackie Robinson Award for Outstanding Mentor and Educator for the year 2001. Most importantly to me, though, is my 12-year-old son, who has an incredible life-condition. He is proof of my human revolution and his happiness is my greatest pride.

On Sept. 11, I was speaking to a class of ninth-grade students. Suddenly, the principal came and told me to put the blinds down. I did not know what she was talking about, so

I went over to the window. It was then that I saw the World Trade Center tower burning and the second plane hit. We had no idea what had happened. A few minutes later, an announcement was made that both towers were on fire.

At that point, it seemed all the daimoku I had chanted welled up in my life. I really felt all my training from my SGI youth activities come to the surface. I began helping people, supporting everyone, moving into action quickly. All the years of struggling behind-the-scenes for festivals and activities seemed to have trained me for this moment.

As students realized their parents and relatives were in the trade center, they became hysterical. One girl began to shake and scream, and soon could not breathe. I was so scared because she wasn't breathing. I called for help but waiting felt endless, so I began chanting inside. After help arrived, I went to call her mother at work to see if she was safe. Everyone in the school office was staring out the window in awe and listening to the radio. Then the first tower fell.

At this point, students were crying and panic-stricken. Again, I felt years of daimoku come to my aid, and I walked from classroom to classroom gathering students whose parents were working in lower Manhattan. I did my best to calm them. The whole time I was thinking about my son and hoping that someone was taking care of him at his school.

Parents started arriving to

pick up their children. Some of them were covered in white soot from head to toe. Many were crying. I tried to comfort as many as I could and show them their children were safe. One by one, they took their children home.

As I stood outside the school, I met a physician covered in white ash. He was coming from Ground Zero to pick up his children. He told me through tears the horror of seeing bodies, pieces of bodies and personal objects lying all over. I started shaking and crying, and resolved at that moment to eradicate this kind of evil from the planet. Making that determination, I felt a force rise up within me. I had to keep fighting to encourage people. A former student of mine who had begun practicing Buddhism joined me, and we stayed the entire day encouraging students and parents one by one.

Later, I discovered my own son had witnessed the entire event from his classroom window. He cried as he told me he had seen thousands of people die at one time. I will never forget his tears or the tears and

pain of my students. They are embedded in my life forever. More than 20 students in my school lost mothers, fathers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts, cousins and friends.

Reflecting on the events, the SGI's struggle with the evil actions of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood against kosen-rufu, who have been distorting the Daishonin's teachings, came to my mind. I realized I have to eliminate my own fundamental darkness and become the kind of person who always encourages others; the kind of person who encourages people to stand up for justice. As a society, we all have to change the poison in our lives that causes such violence. We all have to take action for peace. This is a crucial moment. We are the ones to create peace. There can be no doubt about it.

From this experience, I have determined to continue pursuing my dream of responding to SGI President Ikeda's call and starting a high school that trains students to be global citizens. I am determined that every one of my students will become a pillar of peace. **W**

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# VOICES FROM NEW YORK

EXPERIENCE — DAVID BOGOSLAW, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

## Time To Become Community Builders

**David Bogoslaw and his fellow SGI-USA members in Brooklyn reach out to their Muslim neighbors and help rebuild their community's confidence.**



The going has been tough; I would be lying if I pretended otherwise. My initial determination to make sure our chapter members hadn't lost hope in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks gave way to a creeping despair: despair at how we as human beings, who at the dawn of a new century had intended to redress the carnage of the last, had arrived at such a juncture, and despair at the immensity of the task before us as global citizens committed to realizing a peaceful world.

At the same time, it has become clear that we, as SGI-USA members, have been prepared for the task ahead by studying SGI President Ikeda's guidance and by striving to translate our Buddhist practice into a growing awareness of social issues and the forging of alliances with like-minded people of other religious faiths. The Victory Over Violence project and our many interfaith activities are just two of the steps we have taken in this direction.

The events of recent weeks have galvanized the SGI-USA members in downtown Brooklyn to put the lessons we have learned into action — much more quickly than any of us would have thought.

I live and practice in a neighborhood in downtown Brooklyn that includes one of the largest and most vibrant Arabic communities in New York. In the days following the Sept. 11 tragedy, we started hearing of attacks against people who looked like they were from the Middle East, of Arab women shuttered in their homes for fear of walking the streets wearing the *hejab* (women's head covering) and children being harassed at school. The members of the SGI-USA's Brooklyn Water-

front Chapter understood what we needed to do.

The Sunday after the collapse of the towers, a group of us met to discuss how to create dialogue with our Muslim neighbors, to express our solidarity with them and work together to forge stronger community bonds. We are calling this the Community Builders Group. Among those we invited was a Syrian shopkeeper, Abdul, from around the corner and a community activist from an organization called People Protection Project, which began reaching out to Muslim communities throughout Brooklyn six months ago to diffuse hostility arising from the renewed tensions in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

We showed the video "Gandhi, King, Ikeda — Community Builders," explained a little about the SGI and asked our guests to introduce themselves.

One man shared his experience of reaching out to Arabs and Muslims prior to and after the terrorist attacks, explaining how he and his colleagues had been rebuffed by communities with which they had not already formed relationships. That was to be expected — nobody wants to feel they need protection from outside their own community.

One evening after work, I went out to follow up with people I had met at a peace march and vigil at the Brooklyn Heights Promenade. At Abdul's store, I met a restaurant owner who stressed he had lived in Brooklyn for more than 40 years, was as American as I, and had children who were born here. Moreover, he said there was no proof that the ter-

rorist attacks were carried out or masterminded by people of Arab descent. I kept to myself the thought that he was in denial; I was there to open a pathway to meaningful dialogue, not to cut it off before it had even begun through a pointless confrontation.

Further dialogue helped us clarify that Sept. 11 has forced us to act on what we have been talking about and trying for months to do: to become an integral presence in our neighborhood, trusted and valued members of the community.

We decided to broaden our gaze and work toward commemorating Nov. 18, Soka Gakkai founding day, with a community teach-in aimed at dispelling ignorance not only of Islam, but of Buddhism and other religions, too, along with educating people about Victory Over Violence.

As important as our commitment to helping protect people vulnerable to discriminatory attacks — and, in the months ahead, encroachments on their civil liberties — is the need to share our Buddhist perspective

on how to break the cycle of violence and cultivate mutual respect and understanding. It is an effort that extends to all the varied factions of our community, not only the Muslims.

We realized that the sense of empowerment we achieve by practicing for ourselves and others, through studying and putting our tenacious prayers into action, is something we could use to assuage the fears and insecurities of those around us.

In his speech on education for global citizens at Columbia University in 1996, President Ikeda noted the agreement between first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's vision of rooting the education of children in the particulars of their local geography, society and economy, and "philosopher John Dewey's observation that those who have not had the kinds of experiences that deepen understanding of neighborhood and neighbors will be unable to maintain regard for people of distant lands" (*My Dear Friends in America*, p. 438).

One of our members, who is currently studying peace education at Columbia University's Teachers College, underscored the need for SGI members to work toward a more pluralistic vision of world peace, one that recognizes and celebrates notions that all belief systems and cultures hold in common. This requires that we remind ourselves of the inherent dignity of all human beings and open our lives to learn from others, even as we continue to strive for our own personal change. To do that, I must be confident that my behavior as a human being will serve as a compelling example to inspire people. Buddhism teaches us that this human behavior is, after all, the significance of our emergence as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. **WT**

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 5 SPEECH—PART 2

# EXPANDING OUR LIVES FOR PEACE

**'For humanity in the 21st century to eliminate war and conflict, and establish genuine peace,' SGI President Ikeda says, 'it is vital that we open our hearts, broaden our intellectual capacities and expand our states of life, so they become as wide and all-encompassing as the cosmos itself.'**

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

Many of you have come from far away to be here today, and I am afraid a long story might have the same effect on you as a sleeping pill! [Laughter.] A short anecdote is easy for everyone to listen to—with that in mind, let me share several insightful quotes with you.

The Italian poet Dante cited the words of the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle, "Under a bad government a good man is a bad citizen." Under a corrupt, unscrupulous regime, virtuous people are treated as villains. The good are harassed and oppressed. That is why an alliance of wise, enlightened people is so important.

Reflecting on the struggles of her youth, the English novelist Charlotte Brontë proclaimed, "I had also to take my degree in the school of Adversity." Forging ourselves in the school of adversity is important. All of you are leading meaningful lives—you are dedicating yourselves for others and the sake of the Law. This is the greatest happiness. Please be assured of that.

The 19th-century Italian thinker and advocate of Italian independence, Giuseppe Mazzini, declared: "Youth lives on movement, grows great in enthusiasm and faith. Consecrate them with a lofty mission; inflame them with emulation and praise...." Enthusiasm and



SGI President Ikeda welcomes SGI youth from 50 countries to the 9th Headquarters Leaders Meeting at the Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Tokyo, Sept. 5.

faith are crucial. Without faith, especially, a young person cannot realize profound growth as a human being. It is also important for us to praise young people, to forge and train them in the midst of various struggles for kosen-rufu. Once they are awakened to a lofty mission, young people are consumed with enthusiasm and grow into great leaders.

Many people acquire master's and doctor's degrees, but the most respectable are those who earn "doctorates" in the school of adversity.

The Russian author Leo Tolstoy wrote in his diary: "Living is dying. To live well means to die well. Try to die well."

**We can never change this planet until we firmly embrace a correct view of the universe.**

I am presently carrying on a dialogue with the Russian cosmonaut Alexandr Serebrov about the wonders of the universe and philosophy in the space age. [As president of the All-Russian Youth Aerospace Society, Mr. Serebrov is dedicated to teaching children and youth about space.]

I believe that in order for humanity in the 21st century

to eliminate war and conflict, and establish genuine peace, it is vital that we open our hearts, broaden our intellectual capacities and expand our states of life, so they become as wide and all-encompassing as the cosmos itself. We can never rectify the folly of endless feuding, hatred and killing on this small planet of ours, making it a place where all can live in peace and happiness, until we firmly embrace a correct view of the universe, life and a philosophy based on a cosmic perspective. That is why I am conducting this dialogue with Mr. Serebrov. He is also devoting himself to our exchange in earnest.

I am pouring all of my energies into carrying on dialogues with people in every sphere of endeavor, all across the world, for the sake of peace and future generations.

The thoughts and opinions of Mr. Serebrov, who has gone into space four times and has traveled extensively around the globe, resonate perfectly with my own. He is also well-versed in religion, saying that among all the religions of the world, he feels the strongest affinity with Buddhism.

Why? Because, he says,

throughout its history Buddhism has never resorted to force to attack other cultures or people of other faiths. Buddhism, he feels, is the warmest, most accepting and tolerant of religions.

Buddhism is a great philosophy that stands at the forefront in its ability to meet the needs of the space age.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote, "It is the power of the Buddhist Law that enables the deities of the sun and moon to make their rounds of the four continents" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 685). The entire universe moves ceaselessly in rhythm with the Mystic Law.

The more scientific research advances, the more closely it accords with the wisdom of Buddhism.

While resonantly chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the fundamental rhythm of the universe, we work, speak and act for the development of society, world peace and the happiness of humanity. There is no more noble life than this. That is why thinking people around the world are strongly seeking Buddhism, the supreme law that permeates life and the universe.

The Daishonin wrote, "No phenomena—either heaven or earth, yin or yang, the sun or the moon, the five planets, or any of the worlds from hell to Buddhahood—are free from the two phases of life and death" (WND, 216). The heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon and the planets throughout the universe all go through an unending cycle of birth and death. It is the same with human beings.

No phenomenon or thing in the universe is exempt from these two phases. The stars in the vast universe also repeat this never-ending drama of birth and death.

**At every level of existence, when energy surges forth, something new is born.**

On Aug. 16, NASA released photographs taken by the Hubble Space Telescope of a galaxy some 50 million light-years from earth.

Speaking of NASA, the Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High School is participating in a remarkable educational program developed by the agency for students to study outer space. [NASA's EarthKAM program, which Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High School

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

began participating in last year, allows students to take photographs of Earth by using the Internet to direct a digital camera on the space shuttle during select space flights.]

The photos released by NASA are of galaxy NGC 3079 in the Ursa Major constellation. They show activity in the center of the galaxy's disk, where a bubble of hot gas rises from a veritable swirling cauldron. The bubble is more than 3,000 light-years in height and has a number of towering red columns of gaseous filaments.

We are talking of a phenomenon of incredible scale! The filaments whirl in a vortex and are expelled into space. Astronomers speculate that "eventually this gas will rain down upon the galaxy's disk where it may collide with gas clouds, compress them, and form a new generation of stars." Our own Sun was also born from such a grand drama of the universe, as was Earth.

The Lotus Sutra teaches a cosmology of staggering dimension. I have spoken of the dynamic drama of the birth of stars previously in such books as *Buddhism and the Cosmos*.

At every level of existence, when energy surges forth, something new is born. The same is true of our organization for kosen-rufu. When everyone's energy — starting with that of the leaders — burns brightly, new, talented people appear, and new development begins. A new horizon unfolds before us, and we can create a new history of victory.

What is that energy? It is the courage to face a challenge. It is the ability to act on one's own initiative. It is the compassion to protect others.

From a certain perspective, the sun, the moon and even the universe itself are entities that overflow with life-nurturing compassion.

The energy of which I speak is also the tenacious commitment to win without fail. It is the determination to achieve kosen-rufu in the place of one's mission — a determination like the fiery red columns expelled from the center of that galaxy. Where such determination exists, "shining stars" of talented people will appear and give rise to a beautiful unity and harmony that resembles a magnificent galaxy.

#### **Buddhism elucidates life's continuity across past, present and future.**

The Daishonin's Buddhism views the world from a cosmic



The opening session of the SGI youth training course was held at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Tokyo, Sept. 6.

dimension. The Daishonin does not merely look ahead one or two millennium — he speaks in terms of the "ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law" and of the "infinite future."

Life, together with the universe, is eternal. It is without beginning or end. Buddhism perfectly elucidates the eternity of life and its continuity across the three existences of past, present and future.

In the treatise "On Repaying Debts of Gratitude," the Daishonin wrote: "If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity" (WND, 736). And in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," he said: "The Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that I, Nichiren, now chant will enable all people throughout the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law to attain Buddhahood" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 720).

From the perspective of widely spreading the Mystic Law into the boundless future of the Latter Day, our struggle has just begun. Let us advance with that towering determination. And let us live out our lives with an eternally youthful spirit.

In closing, I want to share some more inspiring words of courage.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill offered reassurance to the people of France, who were fighting a

bitter battle against Hitler: "Remember we [the British] shall never stop, never weary, and never give in, and that our whole people and Empire have vowed themselves to the task of...saving the world from the new Dark Ages."

Do not stop fighting until you achieve victory! Even if you are tired, never give up, never give in! Never forget your vow! This was Churchill's personal determination not to be defeated.

This is also the Soka Gak-kai spirit.

I hope you will all devote your lives to the great struggle to achieve the mission of kosen-rufu with the same determination.

The French writer Victor Hugo spoke out to protect the people, "That which is not declared loudly often causes the greatest harm." Silence means defeat. It is wrong to stand by quietly in the face of injustice. We must speak out for the sake of truth and justice.

Earlier, the Soka Gloria Brass Band gave a wonderful performance of a piece from Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers* (Heaven and Hell). As a token of my appreciation, allow me to close today's speech with a quotation from Tolstoy: "Within you, firmly there within you, are all the joys of Heaven and all the sufferings of Hell."

Thank you for traveling such a long way to join us here today! Thank you! **WT**

#### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

## The Eternity of Life and the Universe

From This Speech:

**Life, together with the universe, is eternal. It is without beginning or end. Buddhism perfectly elucidates the eternity of life and its continuity across the three existences of past, present and future. In the treatise "On Repaying Debts of Gratitude," Nichiren Daishonin wrote: "If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 736). And in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," he said: "The Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that I, Nichiren, now chant will enable all people throughout the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law to attain Buddhahood" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 720).**

1) SGI President Ikeda says: "Life, together with the universe, is eternal. It is without beginning or end. Buddhism perfectly elucidates the eternity of life and its continuity across the three existences of past, present and future." Why do you think it is especially important now to move ahead steadily from the perspective of the eternity of life? Do you think that the concept of the eternity of "life together with the universe and its continuity across the three existences" expounded in Buddhism is important for global society? If so, why? Can you think of ways in your daily life that you can help make this philosophy the current of the 21st century?

2) Based on the spirit encompassed in the above passages from the Daishonin, do you have an idea as a Buddhist practitioner about how you want to respond to the tragedies of Sept. 11?

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S AUG. 7 SPEECH — PART 2

# Meeting Difficult Times With Strong Faith

Photo by KIRK CONDYLES

**‘During difficult times, we can overcome hardship through faith and renew our determination to dedicate our lives to kosen-rufu,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘That has been the spirit of the Soka Gakkai since the early days of our movement, and it accords with Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching.’**

*The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at a nationwide executive leaders conference, held at the Soka Gakkai Nagano Training Center in Karuizawa, Japan, Aug. 7.*

The German playwright Ernst Toller is well known as the first Jewish author to stand up to the Nazis. He wrote: “Beneath the yoke of barbarism one must not keep silence; one must fight. Whoever is silent at such a time is a traitor to humanity.”

I want to present these words to the youth in particular. One must not remain silent when confronted with acts of inhumanity. Silence amounts to tacit approval. If you are verbally attacked, then counter with 10 or 20 times the force. To manifest the blazing spirit to struggle like this is the proof of your youth.

The French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson observed that as long as we simply continue advancing, we will draw near our goal. In the process, moreover, we come to recognize that “the so-called obstacles were for the most part the effects of a mirage.”

The important thing is that we ever continue striving to realize our objective. It is true that not to advance is to backslide. When we challenge our circumstances with a strong determination, it suddenly dawns on us that things that had previously seemed onerous and difficult are in fact no big deal at all.

The mind is a wondrous thing. Everything changes completely depending simply on our frame of mind. That is the power and function of the Mystic Law of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

The Chinese poet Su Shih asked, “Even if someone occupies a lofty place, if his spirit is base, then what can he truly gain?” No matter how high someone’s station, what good will it do the person if in his heart he is craven and lowly? Su Shih was not only a poet but

a politician, and his words carry much weight.

This certainly goes for Soka Gakkai leaders. There is no need for leaders who have lost their spirit for kosen-rufu in the Soka Gakkai. I hope your hearts always overflow with a strong passion for kosen-rufu.

Also, I want you to be leaders of faith who sincerely respect their fellow members. Those who can respect their comrades in faith will in turn win their respect. This is cause and effect in Buddhism.

**When facing a strong enemy, youth should play a leading role in our efforts.**

This is the age of youth. Let us genuinely dedicate ourselves to raising fine young leaders. Let us do our best to develop the next generation.

By this, I do not mean that you should be doting or overly protective. The point is to offer steady training with due strictness and discipline. When new capable people are appointed to positions of leadership, new avenues open up.

At the same time, we need to treasure those who have worked hard for long years to construct the present foundation. When new leaders and old leaders unite in the spirit of mutual respect, the organization’s strength increases many times over.

When facing a strong enemy, youth should play a leading role in efforts to defeat that enemy. But while playing a pivotal role, they must not become arrogant and cause disharmony with the women’s division.

As always, our victory at the start of the 21st century was due to the victory of the women’s division. It is only natural that everyone should respect and appreciate the women’s division members, supporting them so that they



A New York City rescue worker emerges from a long day of work in the rubble at Ground Zero, Sept. 15.

can continue to freely, jubilantly carry out activities.

Just because someone has a high standing in the organization or status in society does not mean the person has faith. Someone who behaves arrogantly solely because he or she went to a prestigious school is the worst kind of person, utterly lacking in character. Some people are flashy, some are modest. Some people have advanced degrees, some do not. Some people are wealthy, some are poor. While all people are different, the important question is this — who is truly happy?

A person of conviction, who leads an upstanding life and demonstrates shining victory in society, is a true winner. More precisely put, a person who has faith is the ultimate victor. Buddhism exists to enable us to lead such a life. This is something that I want to clarify for the sake of the future.

**No matter how adverse our predicament, we need to live out our lives with steadfast faith.**

The Japanese economy continues to be mired in severe recession. And no doubt many members are facing difficult

circumstances on that account. I hope that as leaders you will show great sensitivity to people’s individual situations.

At the same time, I want to remind you that no matter how adverse our individual predicament, we need to live out our lives based on steadfast faith. Only then can we accumulate all kinds of treasures in life as true benefit.

The Daishonin encouraged one of his precious disciples, “You should be willing to offer your life for the Lotus Sutra” (WND, 1003). He advised another follower not to “allow concern for your parents, wife, or children to hold you back, or be worried about your property” (WND, 764). The Daishonin offered very strict guidance out of his profound compassion for his disciples. It is an expression of austere love.

Faith means limitless hope. Through faith, we can accumulate infinite benefit and create a life of boundless victory. A commentary by the Great Teacher Dengyo states, “To discard the shallow and seek the profound is the way of a person of courage” (WND, 402). During difficult times, we can overcome hardship

through faith and renew our determination to dedicate our lives to kosen-rufu. That has been the spirit of the Soka Gakkai since the early days of our movement, and it accords with the Daishonin’s teaching. Such tenacity of faith and conviction in the power of the Gohonzon generates the strength to overcome any obstacle.

The manner in which President Toda served, respected and protected President Makiguchi was awe-inspiring in every respect. When referring to President Makiguchi, President Toda was the image of solemnity itself.

The mentor-disciple spirit is the soul of the Soka Gakkai. It is the essential path of humanity.

Also, putting the members first is the eternal spirit of the Soka Gakkai. We must absolutely never forget this.

Please do everything you can to cause your place of mission to flourish, taking action as a hero of kosen-rufu surpassing even the heroes of the Chinese classic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [an epic saga of three rival kingdoms that fought for control of China in the 3rd century]. **WT**

# Kentucky Youth Hold Summer Fiesta

Photo by RICHARD TRIGG

By PAM YENOWINE  
KENTUCKY CORRESPONDENT

SGI-USA's Kentucky Area held a Summer Fiesta with the theme "Soka=Value Creation," at Founder's Hall on the Shelby, Ky., campus of the University of Louisville.

Activities took place on two floors of the complex. At the entrance level, there were SGI exhibitions and videos with information pamphlets and registration tables. The SGI bookstore sold some of the Middleway Press books sponsored by the local Hawley-Cooke Booksellers. Some women did flower arranging displays, origami and wrote names in Japanese calligraphy for members and guests for an interactive cultural event.

There was an array of special activities planned for the Boys and Girls Group members. Adults took turns leading groups ranging from arts and crafts projects, interactive storytelling and dance, to physical activities like relay races and playing ball. One room held a Culture Department arts exhibition from members and friends of the SGI, which included paintings, drawings and sculptures.



A youth chorus sings "What Can I Do?" at the SGI-USA Kentucky Area Summer Fiesta at the University of Louisville.

Inside the main auditorium, the morning began with a proclamation from the City of Louisville Board of Aldermen recognizing the SGI-USA youth division and Culture Department for their efforts to work for a healthy, cultural community.

The morning program focused on the theme "Educa-

tional and Cultural Vision for a New Era," beginning with a keynote speaker, Dr. Japa Buckner, and followed by three panel discussions with perspectives by parents, educators and students.

Next was a lively culture festival, entirely planned and executed by the youth. Joyful participation from all divi-

sions, along with invited SGI friends, sparked everyone's enthusiasm. There were Hawaiian dancers from Lexington, Ky., Korean women's and youth choruses and Mystic Rhythms African Drummers to name a few. The excitement built to the grand finale of singing "Ode to Joy."

More than 400 people en-

joyed the festival, with youth accounting for at least half of the attendees. Edward Hamada, SGI-USA Central Zone leader, congratulated all the members for their support of the youth, saying, "The lasting effects of your efforts to work together to achieve victory will continue on into the future." **WT**

## FROM ESSAY, I

able and immensely precious—a much-loved sister, father, son, mother or friend. Each individual's life contained infinite possibilities waiting to be realized. In the most terrible manner imaginable, we have been reminded of the immense value of human life.

In all its teachings Buddhism stresses how sacred and precious life—especially human life—is. One scripture reads: "A single day of life is worth more than all the treasures of the universe." Terrorism, which so cruelly robs people of life, can never be excused or justified by any reason or cause. It is an absolute evil. And when such acts are committed in the name of religion, it demonstrates the utter spiritual bankruptcy of the perpetrators.

As human beings sharing a common home, we have all been impacted by this terrible deed. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice

everywhere." We must unite across differences of nationality and faith in order to create a world free of injustice, violence and terror.

While it is vitally important that all efforts be made to identify responsibility for this heinous act and bring those involved to justice, international cooperation against terrorism cannot be limited to the short-term. At a deeper level, it requires a profound reexamination of the nature of human civilization. For much of our history, humanity has been trapped in vicious cycles of hatred and reprisal. We must redouble our efforts to break this cycle and transform distrust into trust. I believe that this is the most effective and fundamental antidote to terrorism and its repugnant worship of violence.

It is the function of evil to divide; to alienate people from each other and divide one country from another. The universe, this world and our own lives, are the stage for a ceaseless struggle between hatred and com-

passion, the destructive and constructive aspects of life. We must never let up, confronting evil at every turn.

This attack was an ultimate manifestation of evil and shows us the vilest depths to which human nature can sink.

In the end, the evil over which we must triumph is the impulse toward hatred and destruction that resides in us all.

Unless we can achieve a fundamental transformation within our own lives, so that we are able to perceive our intimate connection with all our fellow human beings and feel their sufferings as our own, we will never be free of conflict and war. In this sense, I feel that a "hard power" approach, one that relies on military might, will not lead to a long-term, fundamental resolution.

I believe that dialogue holds the key to any lasting solution. Now, more than ever, we must reach out in a further effort to understand each other and engage in genuine dialogue. Words spoken from the heart have the power to change a per-

son's life. They can even melt the icy walls of mistrust that separate peoples and nations. We must expand our efforts to promote dialogue between and among civilizations.

I am utterly convinced that we were not born into this world to hate and destroy each other. We must restore and renew our faith in humanity and in each other. We must never lose sight of the fact that we can still make the 21st century an era free from the flames of war and violence—an era in which all people may live in peace. To this end, we must strive to make a profound reverence for life the prevailing spirit of our times and our planet. I believe that this is the greatest and most enduring way to honor the memory of the victims of this enormous tragedy.

*This essay appears in From the Ashes: A Spiritual Response to the Attack on America from Rodale Press, a book providing perspectives and wisdom from a variety of spiritual and religious thinkers around the*

*world in the wake of Sept. 11. Contributors include Thich Nhat Hanh, Paul Ferrini, President Ikeda and others. For more information, please visit the publisher's Web site at [www.rodale.com](http://www.rodale.com).*

## 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).

# A REPUTATION FOR DEVOTION TO THE LOTUS SUTRA

## WORDS To WIN By

By GREG MARTIN  
ASSISTANT PUBLISHER

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

Carry through with your faith in the Lotus Sutra. You cannot strike fire from flint if you stop halfway. Bring forth the great power of faith, and be spoken of by all the people of Kamakura, both high and low, or by all the people of Japan, as "Shijo Kingo, Shijo Kingo of the Lotus school!" Even a bad reputation will spread far and wide. A good repu-



**Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. With a pair of wings, you will surely fly in an instant to the treasure land of Tranquil Light. (WND, 319)**

Having explained to Shijo Kingo a number of profound Buddhist principles in this letter, Nichiren Daishonin concludes with guidance about the spirit of practice. He illustrates in practical terms the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment.

First, he impresses upon Shijo Kingo the necessity of sustaining faith, even though his disciple had practiced for some 16 years at this point.

The life-tendency of Buddhahood is sustained through our continuous faith and practice. We never reach a state of perfection, in which we no longer need to exert ourselves. Rather, carrying through to

the end with our faith in the Gohonzon, no matter what the difficulties, is in itself the path of Buddhahood.

Were we to abandon our practice halfway, we would be unable to experience the great benefit of faith. As the Daishonin says, "To accept is easy; to continue is difficult. But Buddhahood lies in continuing faith" (WND, 471).

Second, the Daishonin urges Shijo Kingo to display the power of faith in society, encouraging him to develop "a reputation for devotion to the Lotus Sutra" (WND, 319).

The greatness of Buddhism is demonstrated through the lives we lead. We can manifest actual proof of faith in every aspect of our lives—from becoming healthy and deepening our relationships to creating new opportunities and experiencing an ever more rewarding life.

Third, the Daishonin says that to "bring forth the great

power of faith" we must practice with the determination to prove the greatness of Buddhism. In other words, we can best manifest the great power of our Buddhist practice when we recognize that the actual proof we receive is not only for ourselves but for others—we are demonstrating the power of faith in the Gohonzon to everyone.

Fourth, the Daishonin says that Shijo Kingo and his wife Nichigen-nyo should "work together" (WND, 319). Through such unity of purpose, a couple can continue to deepen their faith and enjoy its full benefit. This encouragement applies to all our other relationships, as well: The path to happiness is not walked alone. We get there together with others.

Thus, the Daishonin urges us to make earthly desires—all the frustrations, problems, challenges, sufferings, hopes and aspirations of daily living—our motivation to chant to the Gohonzon. We do so not simply to change our circumstances (ultimately relative happiness) but to awaken our innate Buddha nature—to transform our inner state of life where the foundations of lasting, absolute happiness are constructed. **W**

# DOES THE GOHONZON NEED AN 'EYE-OPENING' CEREMONY?

## SOKA SPIRIT Q & A

By KRYSSI STAIKIDIS  
NEW YORK CITY



**Q** Is it necessary for the Gohonzon to have an "eye-opening" ceremony by the high priest?

**A** The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood has made the claim that the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon that the SGI issues are "counterfeit," because the high priest has not performed an eye-opening ceremony upon them. How should we view this claim?

After excommunicating the

SGI in November 1991, the priesthood stopped issuing Gohonzon to SGI members. However, Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon for the purpose of saving all humanity. By using his authority to prevent conferral of the Gohonzon on sincere believers, High Priest Nikken Abe goes against the Daishonin's intent.

Therefore, Sendo Narita, the chief priest of Joen-ji, a temple

that severed its ties to High Priest Nikken and the head temple, Taiseki-ji, offered to make the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon available to SGI members in 1993. The Rev. Narita believed that making the Gohonzon available to the harmonious body of sincere practitioners was in accord with the Daishonin's will, since his purpose in propagating the Mystic Law was to enable all people to attain Buddhahood.

As to the question of the necessity of having the high priest's permission to distribute the Gohonzon, it is only recently that Nichiren Shoshu came up with this rule. It has been the norm, for instance, for local priests to bestow Gohonzon reproduced in their temples. Priests other than the high priest often reproduced and issued Gohonzon from their local temples.

Moreover, nowhere in his writings does the Daishonin in-

dicating that we need the high priest to empower the Gohonzon. Nichiren Shoshu claims that the high priest must perform an eye-opening ceremony on the Gohonzon; however, the Daishonin makes it clear that the "eye-opening" takes place nowhere but within our lives, when we open our own "eyes of the Buddha." He states, "Single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha" may be read as follows: single-mindedly observing the Buddha, concentrating one's mind on seeing the Buddha, and when looking at one's own mind, perceiving that it is the Buddha" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 389–90).

The Daishonin clarifies in his writings that the eye-opening ceremony was simply a formality passed down in provisional Buddhist teachings and is not part of the original spirit of Buddhism. When the Daishonin says "It is the power

of the Lotus Sutra that can infuse such paintings and statues with a 'soul' or spiritual property" (WND, 684), he is debunking the idea of such a formal ceremony that priests need to perform.

He tells us it is one's faith in the Lotus Sutra, the Gohonzon, that brings forth Buddhahood in our lives. As he states, "When we revere Myo-ho-reng-e-kyo inherent in our own life as the object of devotion, the Buddha nature within us is summoned forth and manifested by our chanting of Nam-myoho-reng-e-kyo" (WND, 887).

It is not a high priest, nor his sanction, nor his capacity to perform an "eye-opening ceremony" that gives a Gohonzon the power to work. As the Daishonin admonishes, "Even though you chant and believe in Myoho-reng-e-kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but an inferior teaching" (WND, 3).

The magnitude of tremendous benefit that SGI members have received from our practice to the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon is actual proof that we are putting these teachings into practice. **W**

# Children's Exhibit Visits Indiana

Photo by GLORIA VELASQUEZ

By AVRIL DUNCAN  
AND CHRIS JAFFE

INDIANAPOLIS CORRESPONDENTS

July in Indiana brought warm weather and a warm gathering of SGI members, friends and family to celebrate the "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" exhibition and the "Spirit of Youth" festival.

The week began with an opening ceremony for the exhibition on July 13. In attendance was SGI-USA General Director Emeritus Fred Zaitzu, who thanked the Indiana members for their great victory. Over the course of the week, hundreds of people viewed the exhibition.

On July 19, a symposium on children's rights was also held, including panel speakers Maniari Singh, Shardha Sabesan,

Jackie Bowie Sues and Gracia Valliant, leaders and experts in their respective fields on children's rights.

The culminating event for the week was the "Spirit of Youth" festival. Before the show, everyone was treated to carnival games, clowns and festivities for children. With members of the women's and men's divisions providing food, transportation and other support, the youth put together a dynamic show including three children reading their winning essays written in answer to the question, "What do you think is the most important right of a child?" The Oolation singers, Minyo Dancers and the Yu-Yu-Kai Dancers performed together with SGI-USA youth. Music and dance performances filled the stage



The Yu-Yu-Kai Dancers perform at the 'Spirit of Youth' festival, July 19.

interspersed with inspirational readings of authors such as Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and Daisaku Ikeda. The show ended with a rousing performance of "Ode to Joy."

By joining together to make

both the exhibition and the festival a success, SGI-USA in Indiana made a great, united leap forward in reaching out to the community and sharing the spirit of youth and the hope of a better world for children. **WT**

## FROM NAGASHIMA, I

lence? Can we ever sever the cycle of violence and hatred? Before I knew it, the pain I felt began to coalesce in my mind with the grief of the traveler described in the beginning of Nichiren Daishonin's treatise "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land." That work begins: "Once there was a traveler who spoke these words in sorrow to his host. . . . Over half the population has already been carried off by death, and there is hardly a single person who does not grieve" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 6). In this writing, the traveler represents the sovereign of the nation of Japan, but in a broader sense, it represents all of its people.

I then realized that the three calamities and seven disasters described in the Daishonin's treatise are not merely a tale about the state of ancient Japan. The spiral of terrorism and war, which has now touched American soil, is a manifestation in today's world of what the Buddhist sutras describe as the three calamities and seven disasters.

In "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land," the Daishonin quotes from the "Benevolent Kings Sutra": "When a nation becomes disordered, it is the spirits that first show signs of rampancy. Because the spirits become rampant, all the people of the nation become disordered" (WND, 8). The Daishonin here explains that calamities and disasters occur due to

the negative workings of "spirits," but he identified these with the spiritual or psychological condition of the people. SGI President Ikeda once commented that this rampancy of the spirits that causes the three calamities and seven disasters accords with erroneous beliefs and ideologies, and with their proponents. Their function is the opposite of Buddhism; that is, they disregard life and view people as a means to an end.

It is safe to say that no major religion in the world today justifies the slaughter of innocent people. Any teaching that gravely disrespects and threatens human life can only be termed a gross distortion of the tradition it claims as its source.

In this regard, simply because the perpetrators of the recent atrocity are thought to associate themselves with Islam, we must not mistakenly think that Islam is a teaching of terrorism. The vast majority of the more than 1 billion Islamic believers throughout the world are united with the believers of other faiths in their rejection of terrorism. As Buddhists we uphold the absolute dignity of life as our prime teaching and will never condone or tolerate any act of terrorism.

Behind the world's history of the repeated cycle of terrorism and revenge, most often, are insidious leaders who manipulate religion as a means to gain power and fulfill selfish desires. Religion, originally intended to save and aid the people, is thus used to enslave them or as a weapon against them.

This tendency can be defined as evil, in that its ultimate result is the degradation and destruction of the human spirit and of life itself. The Daishonin saw this self-serving manipulation of religion as the source of all unhappiness, as the workings of life's innate "fundamental darkness."

The Daishonin declared the struggle against this fundamental darkness as his most essential, eternal challenge, and he urged us in "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land" to take on this challenge as well. He says, "Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil" (WND, 15).

By "outlaw" he was not proposing legislation to ban erroneous teachings or teachers, but he strongly advocated withdrawing the popular and government support being afforded them.

In this writing, the Daishonin was specifically refuting the teaching of the Pure Land school. He was convinced that the escapist and apocalyptic teaching of the Pure Land school was exploiting people's reverence for Buddhism while surreptitiously undermining the Buddhist ideal of life's value and dignity. It sapped the people's strength and the vitality needed to transform their reality and reform society.

The Pure Land school enjoys little influence in today's world, but the ideologies of escapism combined with selfish materialism are becoming more per-

vasive, and the cycle of hatred, discrimination and religious conflict seems unending. Furthermore, the potential magnitude of murder and destruction by humans is only escalating.

Upon hearing about the recent tragedy, SGI President Ikeda immediately sent us the following message: "I extend my heartfelt sympathies to the people of the United States. Let us work for kosen-rufu in order to create peace in the United States and in the world." I hope we can all take these words to heart and together rise up like a phoenix from the abyss of sorrow and anger to refresh our pledge for kosen-rufu.

To live the Daishonin's great spirit to save humanity is to practice Buddhism on the path of the oneness of mentor and disciple. For each of us, what does it mean to "outlaw this one evil?" I think it is crucial that we deeply ponder this question today.

This coming Nov. 28 will mark the 10th anniversary of the SGI's "spiritual independence" — 10 years since we were freed from the grip of disingenuous authority that is the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood under High Priest Nikken Abe. Since that time we have been free to pursue our mission as a united body of common people dedicated to kosen-rufu, directly connected to the heart and spirit of the Daishonin. Taking this anniversary as an excellent opportunity, let us discuss, learn from and inspire one another through our mutual determination and action toward kosen-rufu! **WT**

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# MAKING SEPT. 11 A TURNING POINT IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

By ROBIN MEADER

WASHINGTON, D.C., BUREAU CHIEF

**S**GI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima met with Washington, D.C., Region and Virginia-Carolina Region leaders and youth members Sept. 26 at the SGI-USA's Washington, D.C., Community Center. This was his first visit to the area following the terrorist attack on the Pentagon on Sept. 11. The thoughtful, yet animated, gathering combined fresh local reports, on-the-spot faith testimonials and words of encouragement in faith.

Following a memorial service and evening prayer, Lisa Graves, a young women's district leader and a lawyer with the federal government, passed along points from the first youth training course of the 21st century, held in Japan and ending on Sept. 11. The participants' return flight was rerouted to Vancouver, British Columbia. Explaining that the

five-day layover, studying and having dialogues with other youth, deepened her commitment to peace, Ms. Graves articulated three key ideas gained on her trip: 1) Correct prayer is not to plead, ask or hope for peace, but to take concrete action for peace, in every aspect of one's life based on that prayer; 2) Every person is indispensable; the warm care by the Soka Gakkai members made her feel like a "rock star for peace"; all of us must value, appreciate and honor each other and each other's mission for peace; and 3) Peace is imperative.

Wen-Shing Ho and Alexis Gibson spoke of their initiating a dialogue in their apartment building, inviting residents and friends to an informal gathering which gave everyone attending the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings, concerns and ideas in wake of the events of Sept. 11. A total of 20 people, from at least 10 different countries around the

world, participated in this forum in one way or another. Many more offered their support behind-the-scenes. Wen-Shing and Alexis have scheduled a dialogue on SGI President Ikeda's book *For the Sake of Peace* at their local bookstore, and dream of holding such dialogues at all Washington, D.C., bookstores.

Reporting that the airplane crashed into Pentagon offices vacated only six weeks earlier, Diana Fleek, an SGI-USA member who works at the Pentagon, pointed out that although 25,000 people work there, the major impact of the plane struck the vacated portion of the building. After helping move people from the area that day, she sat down to chant for clarity and wisdom. As appreciation and compassion welled up within her for the many lives lost, she prayed to negate such deep evil.

At work the next day, she noticed that among the military leaders and politicians



The Washington Monument as seen from the Lincoln Memorial.

there was a trenchant determination to draw upon coalitions and cooperation, rather than brute force, in ridding the world of the "cancer" that could express itself in such outrageous acts. The following Monday, U.S. President George W. Bush visited the Pentagon for a briefing about the partial mobilization of military reserve forces and Diana, shaking his hand, said, "Mr. President, we're counting on you to dialogue first," to which he responded with a focused nod of acknowledgment.

In his speech, General Director Nagashima placed the events of Sept. 11 in historical context in relation to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. The Victory Over Violence campaign carried out throughout the SGI-USA over the previous two years has initiated dialogue at many levels of American society. Now, because of the tragic loss of friends, Americans can talk about peace from their hearts. He reminded the gathering that since 1966, SGI President

Ikeda has been calling the 21st century the Century of Life, and has suggested the importance of fostering people who perceive the interconnectedness of all life, who wisely embrace all cultures and extend their compassion to people in all places.

"Awakening to their destinies as Bodhisattvas of the Earth," the general director said, "SGI-USA members can make the events of Sept. 11 a turning point for world peace. Now is the time to go back to the basics of Buddhism — faith, practice and study — so as to communicate to others the dignity of life, the Buddhist conviction that life is greater than any treasure in the universe."

Mr. Nagashima concluded by urging the participants to live as humanists based on the idea that the essence of all life and the universe is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

—Diana Fleek, Alexis Gibson and Wen-Shing Ho contributed to this article.



Photo by JEFF FARR

Members listen to SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima at the Washington, D.C., Community Center, Sept. 26.