

TOWARD A VICTORIOUS CONCLUSION OF 2001

Generating Waves of Daimoku, Dialogue and Propagation Across the Country

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

‘Now more than ever, we must focus our efforts on daimoku, dialogue and propagation to bring about lasting change.’

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks have affected the whole world, ushering in a new phase of human history. This tragedy compels us to reflect on what needs to be done to establish indestructible peace on this planet. Now more than ever, we must focus our efforts on daimoku, dialogue and propagation to bring about lasting change.

In light of our focus on daimoku, I recall a quote from SGI President Ikeda: “Destruction comes about in a moment. Construction comes about only after desperate struggles.” We have learned that the destructive forces inherent in humanity can be extremely powerful. And now is the time for us, in response, to create colossal waves of daimoku across the country that generate the power of the Buddha—the power that can surmount the negative forces that were unleashed on Sept. 11.

The Daishonin states, “If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 24). In this passage, he teaches us that our great confidence and prayer are the cornerstones of peace. So many people are living passive lives, overcome with a deep sense of fear.

But I believe that we, as Buddhists, have the mission to change everything for the better with our prayer. Such a confident sense of mission to create peace is what all people need to establish within themselves at this time.

The great good of peace cannot be generated through mere idealism, but through the active pursuit of dialogue. I feel strongly that we, the members of the SGI-USA, should take responsibility for assuring that the 21st century does not become another century of war and destruction. The foundation of lasting peace will only be secured by our steady actions to engage in dialogue with people one by one. Through dialogue, we can move humanity on a profound level toward the pacifism of Buddhism.

The fact that evil forces have gained such influence over society

indicates that the time to propagate the Daishonin’s Buddhism widely has arrived. I hope that each district can accomplish the goal of introducing two new members by the end of this year. This is one concrete step we can take—a step we can carry out with joy and enthusiasm. The Daishonin states: “Great events never have minor omens. When great evil occurs, great good follows” (WND, 1119). The great good of introducing our friends to Buddhism, imparting joy and relieving their suffering, will ultimately lead to global peace.

The SGI-USA has begun a campaign of “10 Billion Daimoku and 1 Million Heart-to-Heart Dialogues” toward Jan. 2, 2002, President Ikeda’s 74th birthday (see the Oct. 26 *World Tribune*). By chanting at least 45 minutes a day for peace and engaging in two dia-

logues for peace each week with our friends to achieve this goal, we will be empowered by a fresh new energy with which we can confidently propagate Buddhism in America. Our efforts will become the driving force to create a lasting peace throughout the world, as each of us is a creator of peace.

This month, we will also be holding our district commemorative meetings throughout America. It has been announced that next year’s SGI theme will be the “Year of Expanding Dialogue” (see the Oct. 26 *World Tribune*).

We are messengers of peace. Our districts are oases of peace. With this awareness, let us joyfully and proudly engage in our daimoku, dialogue and propagation movement and hold joyful discussion meetings throughout November. **WT**

SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS

America Celebrates Nonviolence

Photo by CAROL DIMEFF



More than 110,000 Americans from all walks of life have joined together this year to celebrate nonviolence and make a pledge for peace at the SGI-USA’s Family Youth Festivals.

Since May, these festivals have been gathering SGI-USA members and friends to promote the Victory Over Violence message of valuing one’s own life, respect for all life and inspiring hope in others. With still more events to come this year, the original goal of gathering 100,000 people has already been exceeded.

In this issue, we bring you the pictures and stories of festivals in Denver, Los Angeles, Central Virginia, Kansas City, Mo., and Northern Ohio. Please see pages 6, 7, 11 and 12. **WT**

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 16 SPEECH

EDUCATION IS THE LONG-TERM SOLUTION

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

'To combat violence and terrorism, the only viable, fundamental, long-term solution is education,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'There is no other alternative but to educate people on the loftiest humanitarian values and views of life in order to establish a foundation of peace and stability for humankind in these times of tumultuous change.'

SGI President Ikeda's speech at the Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School's 21st Century Alumni Meeting, held at the school's gymnasium in Kodaira, Tokyo, Sept. 16.



SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda enjoy the Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School's 21st Century Alumni Meeting.

Congratulations on this Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School's 21st Century Alumni Meeting! Happy are those who have a "home of the heart" and a "citadel of intellect and mission." Returning there to refresh themselves, they once again start out on new challenges and journeys. Such people possess a great, ever-youthful spirit. Don't you agree? [Applause.]

Thank you all for coming back to your alma mater. Nothing makes the founder of a school happier than to see former students return to their alma mater, and today I am very happy indeed. I feel like a parent welcoming his or her children back home.

In anticipation of today's meeting, yesterday and again this morning I looked through your handsome graduation photographs. I must say, some of you seem to have changed a good deal since then! [Laughter.] Anyway, I deeply appreciate the tremendous efforts you have made to gather here today, from every corner of Japan and 16 countries and territories around the world.

Are there any alumni here from the United States? Thank you so much for coming. Let me offer my sincere condolences on the terrible tragedy that took place there on Sept. 11. I have received many reports on the situation. Thank you for joining us today under such difficult circumstances.

And is there anyone from Africa? Thank you for coming from so far away. Your travel expenses must have been considerable. Thank you!

In addition, we have many alumni from countries and territories in Europe, Asia and Oceania joining us today. I thank all the alumni here for

keeping your promise to celebrate this reunion! [On the occasion of the 2nd Glory Festival held at the Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School on July 17, 1969, President Ikeda proposed to the students of the 1st and 2nd graduating classes that they all meet again in the first year of the 21st century. Each successive class has made this commitment. Attending the Sept. 16 gathering were alumni from the 1st through 18th graduating classes.]

I am keenly aware of how earnestly you are all striving in your daily lives, undaunted by the difficulties encountered in the midst of society's turbulence. In praise of your vigorous efforts, I have decided that a record of the names of all in attendance today should be kept for posterity at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo.

As alumni, you share bonds pervaded by mission, joy and friendship unparalleled in the world. Please confidently advance with that pride.

Educators around the globe are now praising the Soka schools.

The famous Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi called the past graduates of the school he founded his friends, his brothers and sisters. He also called them the school's founders. The students of his school's first graduating classes had enrolled in a newly established, as-yet-unknown institution.

Studying hard under Pestalozzi's guidance, they joined with him in building the foundation of a school that would contribute to world peace. He therefore had a special fondness and regard for those graduates.

I understand his feelings very well. I say to the alumni of

the 1st and 2nd classes of the Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School, as well as those from the 3rd through 18th classes: While proudly upholding the school's founding spirit, you have boldly blazed new trails into the world, with sincerity and patience, for all those who follow after you.

It is a clear, indisputable fact that educators around the globe are now praising the Soka schools as some of the best and finest in the world. I want to address all of our alumni here today, with the highest respect and appreciation, as my friends, my brothers and sisters, and the great founders of our Soka schools!

Love for humanity is the noblest principle in life.

Distinguished guests from the Sakha Republic and Soka Ikeda College of Arts and Science for Women, as well as Sethu Bhaskara Matriculation Higher Secondary School in India: My wife and I, together with my precious successors, the Soka schools alumni, humbly accept these unsurpassed honors you have bestowed upon us. There could be no greater joy than this. Thank you very, very much. [Just prior to his speech, President Ikeda was awarded an

honorary citizenship from Khangalass District in the Sakha Republic and the Mahatma Award from Soka Ikeda College of Arts and Science for Women. In addition, Sethu Bhaskara Matriculation Higher Secondary School conferred the titles of honorary founder and honorary principal on Mr. and Mrs. Ikeda, respectively.]

Shortly before his death, the Russian literary giant Leo Tolstoy wrote a letter to India's spiritual leader, Mahatma Gandhi. In this letter, which could be read as an injunction for posterity, Tolstoy wrote powerfully of the absolute unacceptability of the use of violence, from the standpoint of the noblest principle in life—love for humanity.

He strongly encouraged the youthful Gandhi, stating that Gandhi's promotion of nonviolent action was the most important movement in the world, and that he foresaw a time when people all over the globe would join in this effort for peace.

We, too, have been walking that true, great path.

A beautiful song of Sakha that extols the importance of friendship for peace contains these lines:

The peoples of the world strain to hear, As if a hymn. When millions of hearts join together, Those who start wars of ruin will surely quiver.

Correction

On page 12 of our Oct. 12 issue, we incorrectly credited Alina Morrero as a co-author. The byline should have read: By ANDY SANCHEZ, Puerto Rico Correspondent. We apologize for the confusion.

CORRECTED ON CD-ROM

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Peace, a wonderful word,

Now is the time to rouse a broad consensus around the world for peace and dialogue.

Young leaders from Brazil, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Venezuela and Canada are here with us today as our guests. In addition, the members of the Central Executive Committee of SGI-Korea are in attendance, making our meeting a model of world peace. Where else can you find a school that can hold an alumni reunion of world citizens that is so international and wonderfully humanistic?

In an island-country like Japan, there still stubbornly persists a narrow-minded, self-centered way of thinking, embodied in the feeling that as long as the members of our group or country are safe, we need not worry about anyone else. I think it is therefore no exaggeration to say that, even from the perspective of this international school reunion, our Soka schools are spearheading an unprecedented revolution.

Our Soka alliance is so noble that there are bound to be malicious, foolish people who will be envious and heap unfounded abuse on us. But please remember that this is just an opportunity for us to grow stronger and greater as human beings.

We must bring about a century that upholds the dignity of life.

I have received many earnest messages and keen analyses from thinking people around the world concerning the recent terrorist attacks in the United States. What is the point on which they all agree? There are a number of short-term measures that may be implemented to combat violence and terrorism, but the only viable, fundamental, long-term solution is education. There is no other alternative but to educate people on the loftiest humanitarian values and views of life in order to establish a foundation of peace and stability for humankind in these times of tumultuous change. We must strive to bring about a century upholding the dignity of life, a century predicated upon humanistic education.

Mr. Sethu Bhaskaran and the faculty members of India's Soka Ikeda College of Arts and Science for Women, who are here with us today, have dedicated their lives to the sacred undertaking of education, establishing a school committed to bringing together all the peoples of the world through the poetic spirit, philosophy and



SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda are honored by visiting educators from India, Sept. 16.

wisdom. The flowering of the ideals of Soka Education in India, timeless land of the spirit, through the efforts of these noble educators is a source of unrivaled inspiration, hope and joy. My profound gratitude to them once again.

I remember Sakha's President Mikhail Nikolaev telling me proudly during our meeting three years ago that one-third of the country's budget was allocated to education. I told President Nikolaev that I was confident that, over the course of history, Sakha—a nation committed to basing its development on education—was sure to flourish with a new brilliance as a land renowned for its talented people. One of the youthful leaders destined to shoulder Sakha's promising future is Nicolai Baramygin, first deputy head of administration of Khangalass District, who is with us today. Mr. Baramygin, incidentally, also attended my meeting with President Nikolaev.

SUA students have determined to create world peace for the sake of the Sept. 11 victims.

Classes have started with the students' great enthusiasm at SUA. What is currently the most popular spot on campus? It is the library's 24-hour Study Room, open to students at any hour of the day or night. Students are studying arduously there, encouraging one another based on profound friendship.

On the night of the shocking Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the students decided on their own initiative to hold a special candlelight vigil by the Peace Fountain on campus. I heard that many people from the local community joined them

for this occasion.

At that time, the students declared their determination to become people who would contribute to world peace, for the sake of the many victims of the tragedy. The event provided an opportunity for members of both the SUA and local community to share their grief, sorrow and hope with one another.

Articles on the vigil appeared in a major regional newspaper on two successive days. SGI-USA members have kindly sent copies to me.

Each verse of the Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School's song, which you have sung so many times, asks a question: "Why do we cultivate wisdom?" "Why do we cherish the people?" "Why do we strive for world peace?" These are crucial questions that all of you have asked yourselves in your youth and throughout your lives.

I want to affirm the proud fact that the SUA students are carrying on this tradition. The noble spirit to ask oneself these fundamental questions is also powerfully stirring the hearts of the American people. Your alma mater, Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School here in Kodaira, is the eternal starting point of Soka Education, which is spreading throughout the world and will bloom and develop for a thousand—no, 10,000—years.

Worldly pretensions, celebrity and fame are but fleeting illusions.

I am happy to announce that we now have 111 doctorates among our Soka schools alumni. And there are reports that this number will be increasing.

In addition, as of this autumn, I have received 111 honorary doctorates and honorary professorships from educational institutions around the world. Including those that have been announced but not yet presented, the number rises to 132. All of these academic honors are due to you, the outstanding Soka schools alumni. Thank you so much!

We can also count among our Soka schools alumni 140 physicians, 58 university instructors at both Soka University and other universities, 462 teachers at the elementary and secondary levels, seven members of national parliament, 20 members of regional government assemblies, 60 attorneys and lawyers, 60 certified public accountants, 21 licensed tax accountants, 21 journalists, 16 bank branch managers, 3 airplane pilots and 14 Soka Gakkai vice presidents. In addition, our present national young men's and young women's leaders in Japan are both Soka schools graduates.

In every field of society, our Soka schools alumni are striving with determination and courage—they are winning in their lives. As the founder of the Soka schools, nothing could make me happier. And I am certain that they will continue to live noble lives of earnest endeavor.

With respect to the depth of the vow of mentor and disciple, the strength of one's commitment to justice and one's inherent greatness as a human being, it is clear that worldly pretensions, celebrity and fame are but fleeting illusions.

The members of the Hoeikai, a group of business managers who are Soka schools graduates, while bravely bat-

ting in these difficult economic times, have continued to nobly, sincerely support their alma mater and SUA for the sake of the students who are their successors. Filled with deep appreciation and respect for your selfless generosity, my wife and I press our palms together in reverence toward all of you.

Living a great life means moving forward, no matter what happens.

Rabindranath Tagore, the eminent Indian poet who also founded his own school, wrote, "Man's freedom is never in being saved troubles, but it is the freedom to take trouble for his own good, to make the trouble an element in his joy." To make trouble an element of joy—this is the spirit of a lion.

I heard that in Sakha's Khangalass District, which today made me an honorary citizen, there is a street named after a hero, Konstantin Neustroev-Ursik. He was a young champion who gave his life in a revolution to liberate the people some 120 years ago. Tolstoy depicted him in one of his novels.

I think that Neustroev-Ursik's last words have much in common with the Soka schools spirit: "I was an ordinary worker. But I never betrayed my banner. I believe in this banner. And I raise the banner of victory on high!"

The refusal to betray—this is the difference between a virtuous person and an unscrupulous, base person.

Come then, let us summon again the eternal youthful passion with which we will forever sing our school song and lead victorious lives free of all regret! Let us live with courage and determination, like lions!

Retreat is defeat. To always advance, to continue moving forward, no matter what happens—that is a great life.

I sincerely pray for the eternal peace and prosperity of the honorable Republic of Sakha and for the infinite glory and development of the Soka Ikeda College of Arts and Science for Women, and Sethu Bhaskara Matriculation Higher Secondary School, both of which are precious members of our Soka family in India.

Let us promise to meet again in September 2005, the 75th anniversary of Soka Education, in as high spirits, good health and triumph as we have today.

Until then, I hope you and your families will stay in good health. I will wholeheartedly pray for you. Thank you all very much. **WT**

BERMUDA DISTRICT — BERMUDA

New District Blossoms in Bermuda



By GARRY W. LIGHTBOURNE
BERMUDA CORRESPONDENT

On Sept. 23, the residents of the beautiful island of Bermuda in the North Atlantic Ocean awoke to the sound of raindrops falling on the white rooftops, the flora, the fauna, the trees, the sands and the seas. Throughout the early morning hours, the rain became torrential at times and left some roads and byways impassable.

However, at 10:00 a.m., the first SGI-USA members and



Members of the newly formed SGI-USA district in Bermuda celebrate their first meeting, Sept. 23.

guests began to arrive at 35 Valley Road in the parish of Paget. This was the day of the first-ever district discussion meeting and Gohonzon conferral ceremony in Bermuda. These were the people who will

be known in the future as the pioneer members of Bermuda—three of whom joined the SGI family that day. The rain seemed to represent a cleansing away of negativity. These 15 pioneers would not be stopped by

the drizzly, dreary skies that brightened as the day passed.

The meeting began with everyone chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo and reciting portions of the Lotus Sutra. Some of the guests immedi-

ately started to chant and do gongyo as if they had done it many times before. There was lively discussion and explanations of Buddhist practice. Betty Smith gave her experience. Thomas Dunn, New York's Brooklyn Downtown Chapter young men's leader, brought greetings from the members and his co-leaders of the chapter that will support Bermuda District. Gary Smith, the husband of Betty Smith, became the first new member of Bermuda District and received his membership certificate from Brooklyn North Area Leader Garry W. Lightbourne.

The first member to receive the Gohonzon was Raymonde Dill, who first chanted Nam-myoho-rence-kyo two years ago at a meeting in Aruba. The third member to join and receive a membership certifi-

cate was a young man named Milton Darrell.

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima sent a message to the new district, in which he states: "Today's meeting is just the beginning for the growth of Bermuda. I know your organization may seem small now, but don't worry. As the Goshu states: 'At first only Nichiren chanted Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, but then two, three, and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Propagation will unfold this way in the future as well. Does this not signify 'emerging from the earth'?" (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 385).

After the meeting, the members and guests were treated to a scrumptious meal and gathered in small groups to learn more about the Daishonin's Buddhism. Sept. 23, 2001, will be a day that goes down in the hearts and memories of everyone present as a most auspicious day; a day that marked a truly new beginning for Bermuda. **WT**

World Tribune MAILBOX

VOV Is Working

I was very moved by SGI President Ikeda's comments on terrorism in the Sept. 28 *World Tribune*, "Importance of Dialogue Cannot Be Overstated" (p. 1). After the disasters in the Eastern United States, it is very tempting for Americans to dismiss dialogue as inappropriate for an event that has been compared with the Pearl Harbor attack. To be honest, for a considerable time I did.

On Sept. 11, the religious firestorm that has raged in the Middle East leaped across the Atlantic Ocean and struck the United States. Since then, none of us has slept very well, have we? On Sept. 15, I sent an e-mail to the United Arab Emirates embassy in Islamabad about valuing human life. Other e-mails followed to the Saudi Arabian Embassy in London and the Iraqi Mission to the U.N. I also e-mailed the Chief of Police in Karachi. Today I wrote e-mails to the *New York Times* and *Newsweek* proposing that Sept. 11 be called Faith Day, a new national holiday celebrating our freedom of religion in the United States. On a television news report, the faces of Islamic students in New York City told me

that our Victory Over Violence campaign is really working.

Let's keep up the good work.

—RICHARD GUISE LYONS, Ph.D.
Saitama, Japan

A Solution To Be Proud Of

Regarding a quote in Linda Johnson's article "What I Know for Sure": "Second, killing in response to killing only perpetuates the karmic cycle" (Oct. 5 *World Tribune*, p. 9)—I believe that defense is moral and therefore does not create negative karma.

I feel it is in fact positive to save an innocent life by killing a murderer so as to avoid further loss of innocent life. Of course, we do what we can to use appropriate force, with the least loss of life on both sides. I believe it is a right of an individual to defend his life and liberty. The only time I believe force or fraud is justified is to defend against violence.

I differentiate between murder and defensive killing. I would agree with the statement above if the word *killing* were substituted with the word *murder*. The best victory over violence is prevention. Therefore, using all means available, not just dialogue, we must take beneficial actions of social and economic intercourse amongst all peoples of the world.

I am praying for a solution to

the attack we have suffered at the hands of malicious murderers. A solution that we the people of the world will all be proud of. One of justice, compassion and wisdom that leaves the world in a much stronger position than before this terrible act of war. One that creates the most value for all.

—NEAL LEIMAN
Costa Mesa, Calif.

True Martydom

Thank you for your thought-provoking coverage of this issue. I really enjoyed Shin Yatomi's article, "Violence Is Weakness, Prayer Is Power" (Oct. 5 *World Tribune*, p. 2). His comments about sacrifice dovetail nicely with President Ikeda's recent guidance that "martyrdom" in its true sense, a term misused by religious extremists, means sacrifice with the intent to save and bring happiness to others lives, not to destroy them.

Until the recent terrorist crisis, I was unaware to what extent Buddhism expounds nonviolence, even in response to wanton destruction. In reviewing the SGI Charter, I could not find the word nonviolence anywhere. Perhaps it's time to revise it.

—ANDY BRUCK
Jacksonville, Fla.

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EXPERIENCE — DEBORAH LYONS, FORT KNOX, KY.

WHAT MY MOTHER GAVE ME

After suffering the loss of both her parents, Deborah Lyons uses Buddhism to stay strong and full of hope.

When I was 18, I lost my father to a heart attack. My mother, my brother and I were left to face the world by ourselves. This was the first time I had to face the death of someone so close to me.

Over the next year, my mother began attending SGI-USA meetings and not long thereafter, joined. Up until this time, I was brought up to believe in God and that any other belief would surely send me to Hell. So when I witnessed my mother's change of faith, I not only thought she was being brainwashed, I was sure we were all damned for eternity. Nevertheless, my mother continued to practice Buddhism faithfully.

Then, almost overnight, she became sick. The doctors told us that she had advanced cancer in both lungs; there was nothing that could be done. The cancer had spread too far for too long.

Still, with all of her hair gone and her body swollen, she continued to chant in front of the Gohonzon. A lot of people I didn't know began coming over continuously to chant for my mother. I found myself chanting and praying to God at the same time.

I remember very vividly when she became so sick that we had to put her in the hospital. At one point, I was looking at her wonderful face and crying. She asked me, "Daughter, why do you cry?" I said, "I'm afraid." She smiled, hugged me and told me she loved me. She said that I should not be afraid because she was not afraid. All she asked of me was to always be there for my brother no matter what happened.

When she died, she was so at peace; she looked like she had just taken a nap.

Unfortunately, I did not deal with her death very well. Less than a year later, I found myself in a marriage that was going nowhere fast. My brother was struggling as well. I was drinking and using drugs, and my



Deborah Lyons (center) with her family, (clockwise) Aaron Larimore, Michael Lyons, Tim Larimore and Angel Lyons.

husband, an alcoholic, was sometimes violent. Life for me and my two sons was a continual hell. I learned the hard way that you cannot acquire true happiness from someone else.

After two years, my sons and I finally left to begin life anew, moving to a domestic violence shelter. It was hard, but we managed. It was shortly after this that I met Michael. Slowly, but surely, we became very close. He accepted me and my two boys, Aaron and Timothy, without hesitation, even introducing us to his family.

Shortly thereafter, Michael and I had a baby girl, Angel, and decided to get married. I was happy and scared at the same time. Throughout this period, I was still in contact with members in my mother's district. They were always there for me with constant encouragement and support. It was also the district members who suggested that I receive the Gohonzon. My practice was tentative at best, yet I still had my mother's altar, so I somewhat reluctantly agreed.

However, I continued going to church; I thought it would

through rough financial times. With our backs up against the wall and no other options, I began to take my practice more seriously. I started attending meetings regularly and doing gongyo more often. I was continually encouraged by other members in the chapter never to lose hope. No matter what the situation, they never abandoned me. I cannot begin to thank them enough for their love and support.

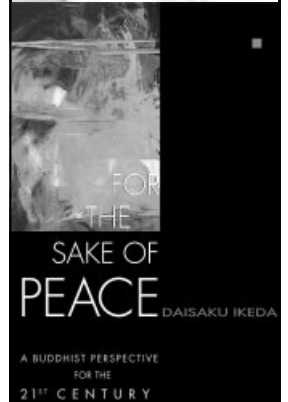
Michael had been wanting to change jobs so I asked members of Fort Knox Chapter if they would chant with me. Soon my husband found a job closer to home that he enjoys, and now we both have fulfilling jobs and good benefits. When looking for a dependable family car, Michael said to me, "If we do end up getting this car, I will believe your chanting is working." I continued to chant and receive support from fellow members. Within the week, we ended up with a nice car at a good price. Michael now chants every day.

Throughout my practice, so many obstacles have arisen, be it losing my mother, surviving my first marriage or struggling to support my children. Yet, through it all, things have continued improving. SGI President Ikeda once wrote: "Having problems, making mistakes or feeling regrets is only natural. What's important is to be undefeated by them. In the midst of worries and struggles, always look forward and advance" (*Discussions on Youth*, vol. 1, p. 15). With the support of fellow SGI-USA members and President Ikeda's guidance, I have been able to carry on in the face of difficulties. I now have a consistent practice, am involved in district activities and our home is open for various meetings. My brother has begun chanting and seeing his life change as well.

When I saw my mother slowly dying, I was afraid. But because of what she gave me, I can construct a better life. A life where every challenge is an opportunity to grow and not a promise of defeat.

What my mother gave me is something I hope I can give to my children: strong faith and peace of mind. Buddhism has brought joy and happiness to my family, and I will do my best to share this gift with others. **WT**

NEW FROM
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PRESS



Based on more than 20 years of peace proposals and university lectures, *For the Sake of Peace* expresses SGI President Ikeda's passionate yet practical vision of the way to achieve peace in the new millennium.

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—David Krieger,
President, Nuclear Age
Peace Foundation

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SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS

SPIRIT OF THE ROCKIES RISES A MILE HIGH

By LEISA MILLS
WESTERN VICE BUREAU CHIEF

On Sept. 30, the SGI-USA's Rocky Mountain Region held a Peace Festival at glorious City Park in Denver. With nearly 4,000 people attending, this family youth festival was a tremendous success.

Guests and SGI-USA members alike quickly relaxed into the exciting atmosphere. The performances began at 1:00 p.m. at the City Park pavilion that resides in front of a beautiful lake—a location photographed in the past by SGI President Ikeda.

“Let the word *peace* be heard...” were the words from a poem by Dr. Ramon Del Castillo, who also led a prayer: “Through peace and love we can destroy hate and violence.” Dr. Del Castillo is a longtime activist who assisted Caesar Chavez in his United Farm Workers Campaign and is an award winning poet committed to peace.

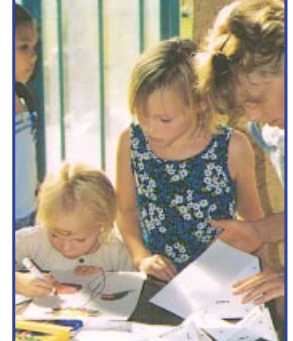
Also setting the tone was the poem “The Road to World Peace, a Garden for All Humanity” by President Ikeda. The poem and other quotes read by many different youth members were woven between 16 performance acts. These performances by SGI-USA members and friends encompassed all types of dance and music. De to Je, an African dance group, as well as the Peli Aloha Dancers could not believe that the festival attracted so many diverse people. Also included among the dance pieces were Skidoo and Wango Tango, Murphy Reper-

tory and an amazing performance from Sariah Shulthess of the Colorado Ballet.

Third Wind Ensemble, the first music group to play, let the audience know that they were in for some serious tunes. Rammboie Ltd. sang “Changes” by David Bowie. And Chronophonics, a synergistic funk band, sent a message through their lyrics. Miranda Calhoun summed up the vibe outside when she said: “Everyone seems so happy and the performances are amazing. It’s a great day!”

Master of Ceremonies Christian Martinez broke out by reciting a powerful original poem before heading inside to the concessions building, where not far away the children were having a blast making noodle people and necklaces at the Boys and Girls Group arts and crafts table. On the opposite side, many tables were set with information from both SGI and community groups. Represented there were Soka University of America, Victory Over Violence, the Earth Charter, the Natural Museum of History, various community youth groups and so many more.

Before leaving, most everyone received red, white and blue ribbon pins with the Victory Over Violence globe attached. 5,000 of these ribbons were made by hand. Many participants noticed this warmth and generosity of the SGI-USA members in Denver. They were amazed that so many different people came together to share a beautiful day of sunshine, joyfully creating a culture of peace. **WT**



Photos by CAROL DIMEFF, CHRIS MAGGARD and PETER NELLHAUS



SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS

Los Angeles Takes a Stand For Nonviolence

By JAMIE LIPTAN
STAFF WRITER

On Oct. 7, more than 9,000 people gathered at the Los Angeles Sports Arena for a Victory Over Violence Family Youth Festival. The daylong event included performances, speeches and informational exhibitions from the SGI-USA and dozens of community and faith-based organizations.

Throughout the festival, young people shared their personal experiences of intense suffering resulting from domestic violence, gang violence, bullying or war. One young man, Pedro Viraca, gave a tearful account of growing up with violence as a way of life and his journey to take back his life. "At times, the violence in our world seems unstoppable," he said. "But we can stop it, and it starts with each one of us here. Just like one violent act leads to another, one person committed to nonviolence will lead to another."

After months of intense preparation, youth of the SGI-USA gathered from all over Los Angeles county to perform an original show titled "A Mission of Peace," which explored the lives of Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and SGI President Ikeda. Through the examples of these "mentors of nonviolence," the show expressed the conviction that humanity

will undoubtedly achieve peace.

Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas presented a certificate from the Los Angeles City Council to the SGI-USA youth proclaiming a "VOV Week" in the city. "Victory over violence—that's our cry," declared the councilman to the roar of the crowd. "And we won't stop until we have achieved it!"

Also performing at the festival were popular recording artists Duncan Sheik and Crazy Town, a hometown, seven-member band, who all strongly endorse the VOV message. Dozens of organizations contributed to the festival's success, including the local Red Cross, the Los Angeles Police Department, the United Nations Association, and many Muslim, Christian, Jewish and other faith-based organizations.

"I hope that today is not a one-time event," said Los Angeles Police Chief Bernard Parks, on hand to lend his support for the event, "but that all of you here today are committed to achieving victory over violence. We can win this battle."

Summing up the spirit of the day, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima said, "Together with our many community partners, we want to send the message to the world that the people of Los Angeles are united across all religions and cultures to take a stand against violence." **WT**



Photos by DON HODGSON, JIMMY MORGAN and GREGORY NAKASUJI

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'PURE STREAM'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 3, PARTS 5-8

'The purpose of faith is to receive benefit. The Soka Gakkai organization and its leadership exist to ensure that each member receives benefit. If we lose sight of this, our organization will lose its vigor, stagnate and become idle.'

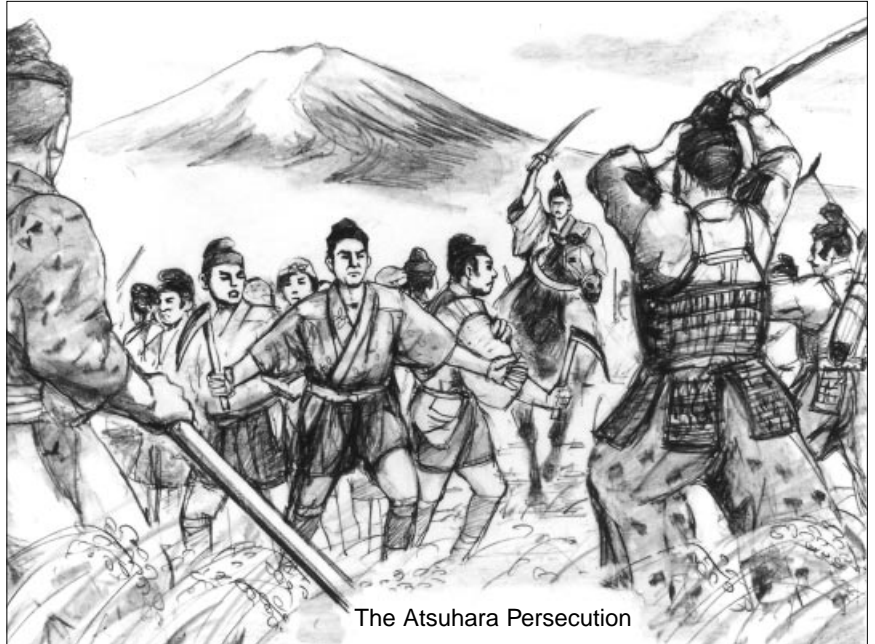
N ichiren Daishonin remonstrated with Hojo Tokiyori, the de facto ruler of Japan in his day, and harshly rebuked the slanderous behavior of Ryokan [a Shingon-Ritsu priest] of Gokuraku-ji temple, a powerful religious figure. The Daishonin's struggle was one of swift words and actions. He always responded immediately to attacks from his enemies, as well as to reports from his disciples. In particular, the Daishonin's response when his disciples were in trouble or some incident had occurred was astonishingly rapid, on the mark, and detailed.

In June 1277, Shijo Kingo fell into disfavor with his lord and was being pressed to sign a vow to give up his faith in the Lotus Sutra. The source of the problem was a trumped-up report that Shijo Kingo along with others had disrupted the preaching of a priest named Ryuzo of the Tendai school.

Reading the document Kingo urgently sent to him explaining the incident, the Daishonin immediately discerned the reality of the situation and took up his brush to write a letter to Kingo's lord on Kingo's behalf called the "Letter of Petition from Yorimoto." [Yorimoto is part of Shijo Kingo's full name.] In it, the Daishonin came boldly to Kingo's defense, declaring, "That is a groundless falsehood" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 803).

Silence allows the darkness of falsehood to spread. Communicating the truth is the light that breaks through that darkness. To stand by and watch as people suffer shows an utter lack of compassion. Failing to speak out for truth and justice when dark clouds of iniquity threaten to obscure the skies of truth is cowardice.

During the Atsuhara Persecution in October 1279, the Daishonin wrote letter after letter,



The Atsuhara Persecution

including "On Persecutions Befalling the Sage," "Reply to Reverend Hoki [Nikko Shonin] and Others," "Petition of Ryusen-ji" and "Reply to Sages." Some of them are encouragement to his farmer disciples who were being persecuted, while one is a petition declaring their innocence that the Daishonin wrote the authorities on behalf of his disciples. In another, he gives detailed instructions to Nikko Shonin and

other priests regarding a court appeal in the Atsuhara case. In this way, the Daishonin took control of the situation and responded swiftly to the rapidly changing circumstances.

It is crucial to always obtain correct information and respond to it quickly. In a battle with one's enemies, speed can make the difference between life and death. Furthermore, for words to be truly powerful and effective, they must expose the very nature and essence of injustice.

The Daishonin identified Ryokan, who had the support of the military government and was looked up to by many as a "living Buddha," as the third of the three powerful enemies described in the Lotus Sutra. He denounced Ryokan for pretending to be a sage but in reality caring only for fame and profit, and for deceiving the people. Ryokan hated the Daishonin for this, and so made false statements about him to the authorities and plotted his destruction.

cause of the fires was Ryokan's slander of the correct teaching. When the Daishonin learned of these incidents, he referred to Ryokan as "Priest Two Fires." [In a play on words, the Daishonin refers to Ryokan-bo (Priest Ryokan) as Ryoka-bo, Priest Two Fires, to show that the burning of Gokuraku-ji and the government's palace stemmed from Ryokan's slander of the Lotus Sutra.] And he strongly rebuked him, saying that Gokuraku-ji [Paradise Temple] had been reduced to Jigoku-ji [Hell Temple] (see WND, 488). He also warned that the fires not only "ravaged the country in this existence," but foretold that the "teacher and his disciples throughout Japan will in their next life fall into the hell of incessant suffering, where they will burn in the Avichi flames" (WND, 488). By calling Ryokan "Priest Two Fires," the Daishonin was exposing him flat-out as a false sage.

These words were much more than mere insults. They were a relentless bombardment of truths based on the scriptures and clear reasoning. If wrongdoing is not stopped, good will be lost forever. If the truth is not declared, lies will spread unchecked. If the correct teaching perishes and erroneous teachings reign, it is the people



who will suffer.

The Daishonin's fierce and tireless volley of words came from his deep commitment to the correct teaching (see WND, 302). Achieving victory for the people through the power of words is no easy feat. There will be all sorts of difficulties and obstacles along the path of kosen-rufu, just as there were during the Daishonin's lifetime.

However, like the Daishonin who said, "But still I am not discouraged" (WND, 748), what is important is to continue speaking out for justice. Such an invincible cry of the spirit moves the hearts of others. A true warrior of words is a person with indomitable conviction. Shin'ichi Yamamoto hoped that the Writers Department would comprise such people.

The Kyoritsu Auditorium in Kanda, Tokyo, where the first all-Japan general meeting of the Writers Department was being held, teemed with the excitement of such "warriors" from across the nation. At the meeting, Vice General Director Kazumasa Morikawa announced that a fourth group of the Writers Department was being established specifically for members of the young women's division, who had been in Group 1 with the young men. With this change, each of the four divisions now had a group in the Writers Department.

This announcement was followed by activity reports and two speeches denouncing corruption in the mass media titled "Critique of Modern Journalism" and "The Distorted Mass Media."

Following words from several leaders, President Yamamoto took the podium. Praising what the Writers Department had accomplished over the last two years, he spoke of the importance of the written word in achieving kosen-rufu: "Using the power of words to change society is fundamental to democracy. Writing about the truth is a weapon to protect the people and to create a world in which the people come first and are triumphant. This is the movement of kosen-rufu."

Emphasizing that freedom of expression must never be compromised, he pointed to the abuse that can occur in the name of free speech. This was evident, he said, in the proliferation of irresponsible and arbitrary journalism, as well as of the kind that distorted the truth and deceived the people.

Freedom of speech does not mean a license to spread lies and rumors. "What will happen," asked Shin'ichi, "if Japan falls under the control of a small group of ill-intentioned journalists or leaders who are able to agitate and influence the people?"

"The mission of the Writers Department is to challenge such malicious reporting, to expose lies, and to forge a fresh climate of public opinion in which true peace and happiness can develop. I declare that the age when the freedom of speech can be exploited by a handful of critics or so-called important people is over. Freedom of speech must never be the exclusive right of the privileged few. Let us raise the curtain on a new age through a passionate



war of words waged by an alliance of good!"

True freedom of speech will only be realized when the people boldly speak out for truth and justice. Every abusive and unfounded statement must be met with ten declarations of the truth. It is just such effort that gives life to the Daishonin's teaching "The voice does the Buddha's work."

In closing, Shin'ichi called on the members of the Writers Department to always be allies of the people and to be courageous champions in the great struggle of words who move people's hearts with their passion, ideals and penetrating logic.

Many analysts in Japan believed that the strength of the Soka Gakkai lay in its gathering and organizing of ordinary people. However, it wasn't being organized in itself that gave the Soka Gakkai its strength. As members of the organization, ordinary people were able to foster a spirit of independence as well as proudly voice their opinions. As a result, they were able to contribute to society. This is what gave rise to such a solid alliance of the people's power, a force that would not bow to authority.

On July 30, Shin'ichi visited Nagano City to attend the Chubu No. 2 Headquarters Leaders Meeting at the Nagano Civic Hall. At the time, the headquarters included chapters from the Koshin and Hokuriku regions. When the meeting was first announced, the members of Chubu No. 2 Headquarters began a serious effort to introduce many people to the Daishonin's Buddhism in order to welcome President Yamamoto amid the joy of triumph.

Tremendous progress was made in July. In particular, Koshin General Chapter, which encompassed the area where the meeting was to be held, achieved the top results, beating general chapters in Tokyo and Osaka that were known for their strength in propagation.

Located in a basin, Nagano is very hot in the summer. On the day of the meeting the temperature continued to rise from the morning, until it reached 99 degrees inside the auditorium before the meeting began at 2:30 in the afternoon. Many members from Kanazawa and

Toyama in central Honshu had left home by bus the previous evening, arriving in Nagano at 6:00 a.m. Shin'ichi was worried that everyone would be exhausted, but the participants were all in high spirits.

Shin'ichi sensed in their hearty applause the joy that came from living their lives dedicated to kosen-rufu. People who work for kosen-rufu experience great joy and benefit. At the meeting, Shin'ichi said: "Nothing makes me happier than seeing you all so full of energy. Since you are all so vigorous, may I assume that each of you is receiving great benefit?"

The members applauded in response. Shin'ichi asked another question: "How many of you have experienced benefit since becoming a member? Please raise your hands."

"I have!" came the thunderous reply as they all raised their hands.

"That's wonderful," Shin'ichi said. "You can lower your hands now. Since that's the case, I can end my speech here. The purpose of faith, after all, is to obtain benefit." Laughter filled the auditorium.

The purpose of faith is to receive benefit. That is also the purpose of Buddhist practice and Soka Gakkai activities. The Soka Gakkai organization and its leadership exist to ensure that each member receives benefit. If we lose sight of this, our organization will lose its vigor, stagnate and become idle.

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





NOV. 28: THE DAY OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIBERATION

Spiritual Independence Requires Continuous Efforts

SIGNIFICANT DATES

ON MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM AND THE SGI

By JASON HENNINGER

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BUREAU CHIEF



The word *independence* is full of intense meaning. It conjures images of self-reliance, freedom, confidence and the capability to exercise solid judgment and wisdom. The lofty philosophy of independence in the hearts of America's founders was brought into being only after the determination was made to sever ties with England. Had the colonies remained under British rule, the impetus to create such documents as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights would never have occurred. Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson and the rest of the founding fathers' idealism

would have remained beautiful theory. And if, in lacking conviction they had given up and decided to return to British rule, the freedoms for which they had fought would have been lost.

Ten years ago, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood under the leadership of High Priest Nikken Abe excommunicated the SGI. Evidently the priesthood suspected that under such unusual circumstances, the leadership of the SGI would

panic and the general membership would be confused enough for the organization to fracture and collapse. This is, of course, far from what happened. Over the last 10 years, the Soka Gakkai International has become a Buddhist organization unparalleled in history. It is because of our response to the excommunication, rather than despite it, that we have seen such growth.

Just as this country has July 4, Independence Day, we in the SGI have Nov. 28, our Day of Spiritual Independence. This Spiritual Independence has brought us to a new dimension in our history. Now we are both global and local. We have continued to expand on an international level spearheaded by SGI President Ikeda's groundbreaking dialogues with a wide variety of leaders the world over. Through traveling exhibitions on diverse topics such as the arts, the rights of children and

nonviolence, we have communicated the concepts of peace, culture and education to every part of the world. On the local level, the SGI-USA is more neighborhood-oriented than ever before, engaging in interfaith dialogues, parades, festivals and other community events for peace and human rights. Because of our Spiritual Independence, we have the latitude to develop these creative avenues for spreading Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and for actively working toward world peace.

It was certainly not the intention of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood to give us this wonderful gift. However, as Shin Yatomi recently wrote in his article "Buddhism in a New Light": "Power derived from subjugating others is merely a fancy because it requires others and is dependent on them. On the other hand, power from within is genuine because it is independent and free" (Oct. 5 *World Tribune*, p. 2).

It is because SGI members responded positively, realizing the significance of the obstacles that arose, that we were able so dynamically to advance. By utilizing our "power from within," we were able to change the divisive into the expansive. Confronted with people awakened to their spiritual

independence, authoritarianism loses all its ability to truly influence or control. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Whenever men and women straighten their backs up, they are going somewhere because a man can't ride your back unless it is bent."

Along with independence from past authoritarianism comes the responsibility to maintain independence within our lives through honest, searching and open dialogue. It is not enough just to attain independence at one point in time; it must be kept eternally alive. Later in the same article, Shin Yatomi emphasized the importance of learning that "the absence of a priesthood does not necessarily mean the end of authoritarianism, and that each of us is responsible to understand and practice the Daishonin's Buddhism as the humanistic teaching it is intended to be."

The history of the Daishonin's Buddhism has been one of human revolution. What better result from such a revolution than creating an era of Spiritual Independence, where ordinary people reveal their incredible power? Let's see how much more we can accomplish in 2002, the "Year of Expanding Dialogue," and the next 10 years. **WT**

A Mind of Perfect Faith

WORDS TO WIN BY

By DORIS McCLOSKEY

GREAT LAKES REGION WOMEN'S LEADER

From "Letter to Akimoto," The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 1014-22.

If a vessel is free of these four faults of overturning, leaking, being defiled, and being mixed, then it can be called a perfect vessel. If the embankments around a moat do not leak, then the water will never escape from the moat. And if the mind of faith is perfect, then the water of wisdom, the great impartial wisdom, will never dry up. (WND, 1015)



In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin employs an analogy explaining that a vessel free of the above mentioned four faults is a "perfect vessel," which can hold pure water without losing a drop. The Daishonin's definition of perfect faith, is not something distant and unattainable. President Ikeda has indicated the

four conditions of strong faith. The first is consistent practice and study of the Daishonin's Buddhism. The second is to develop a humanistic character. The third is to never quit our practice, and the fourth is to demonstrate the validity of our practice in our lives. By striving in this way we become vessels of "perfect faith," filled with the Buddha's overflowing wisdom.

Shakyamuni Buddha challenged individuals to consistently question their own understanding: "Do not accept what you hear by report, do not accept tradition, do not accept a statement because it is found in our books, nor because it is in accord with your belief, nor because it is the saying of your teacher. Be lamps unto yourselves" (Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*, p. 93). Faith is some-

thing we acquire through our own efforts. It is not something bestowed on us from the outside. It develops through life experience based on our consistent practice and study of Buddhism. Through this tenacious process, we are able to dispel doubt and maintain a "perfect vessel."

On the other hand, if we slacken in our efforts to grow in faith, the water of the Buddha's great impartial wisdom will then cease to flow. As our life grows weak, it becomes susceptible to the four faults that the Daishonin outlines above. Weak faith and lack of wisdom eventually lead to arrogance and self-righteousness, bringing misery and suffering upon not only ourselves but others as well. We are encouraged in this letter to strive against such stagnation through a seeking mind and continuous self-reflection.

The Buddha's great impartial wisdom is the wisdom to perceive that all phenomena are manifestations of the Mystic

Law — Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The Buddha regards all people as equal and infinitely precious and relentlessly exerts himself or herself to help them overcome suffering and achieve eternal happiness. Through our strong faith and practice for kosen-rufu, we develop the awareness that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is our life itself. Through such exertion for the happiness of others, the boundless water of the Buddha's life force flows forth endlessly from the depths of our lives. **WT**

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Dialogue Is the Heart of Religion

EDITORIAL

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

‘Our organization has grown into what it is today because of thoroughgoing dialogue. Without dialogue, religion is dead—this was the founding spirit of our organization.’

People’s happiness is the purpose the founding Soka Gakkai presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, had in mind on Nov. 18, 1930, when they began our movement.

At the time, however, the Dai-

shonin’s Buddhism was hidden away at the Nichiren Shoshu head temple, cut off from the people. Makiguchi and Toda, awakened to the profundity of the Daishonin’s teachings, knew that the situation had to be corrected—that this great Buddhism of the supremacy of ordinary people must be spread throughout society.

Makiguchi and Toda had taken to heart the Daishonin’s injunction that “You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 386). Those “others” now include all of us who practice the Daishonin’s Buddhism in the United States and the SGI members in 177 countries and territories around the world.

Our organization has grown into what it is today because of thoroughgoing dialogue based on this teaching. Without dia-

logue, religion is dead—this was the founding spirit of our organization.

Without dialogue, how can religion help people? How can it bring about change in the world? Dialogue is the very heart of religion.

Thus, sharing their conviction in the Daishonin’s teachings with as many people as they could, Makiguchi and Toda listened to people’s sufferings with the spirit to both share their pain and provide the means to overcome it. The humanity, confidence and passion beginning with these two pioneers first spread to tens, hundreds, then thousands and eventually millions of people who discovered a new way to live.

There were people whose hearts had been broken and who had given up on caring about anyone else. People who were depressed about the

unchecked egoism and brutality that they saw all around them. And people who were so intimidated by the darkness of the times—the wars that they saw destroying innocent people’s lives—that they just wanted to hide. But one by one, they found hope and revitalization in the movement for peace started by Makiguchi and Toda.

Over these 71 years of the Soka Gakkai’s history, the world has witnessed dramatic change. But the SGI, under the leadership of SGI President Ikeda, has always kept alive this spirit to give people hope through sincere dialogue, as is evidenced by next year’s SGI theme, the “Year of Expanding Dialogue.” In an age when the three poisons—greed, anger and foolishness—have seeped into every aspect of human life, the SGI has countered them with a Buddhist practice that

empowers ordinary people to rise above poisonous times, transforming them into a new age where hope for genuine peace is born.

Such people, Buddhism teaches, are essentially Buddhas. Each district in the SGI-USA is ultimately a gathering of Buddhas—a gathering of people who can change the world.

As we commemorate Nov. 18 this month with our district general meetings, we can celebrate who we are: people who follow in the footsteps of Makiguchi and Toda, people of courageous dialogue, people who have appeared in a most fearful time to teach others how to move beyond fear.

Precisely because the world has taken a turn for the worse since Sept. 11, the activities of each district of the SGI-USA, each district meeting and each district member’s role are more important than ever. The world’s future, Makiguchi and Toda call to us, depends on the dialogue each of us initiates with others. **WT**

SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS

Virginia Festival Is a Turning Point

By NOELLE PRINCE SHEAR
AND TAMYRA TURNER
VIRGINIA CORRESPONDENTS

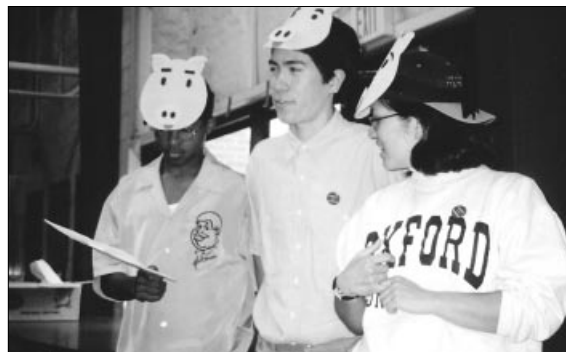
On a sunny hillside below Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, the SGI-USA’s Blue Ridge Chapter in central Virginia celebrated “A Fall Festival of Culture and Colors” at Piedmont Virginia Community College, Sept. 30.

The event followed an SGI book donation to the college in appreciation for the use of its facilities over the past decade. SGI-USA Virginia/Carolina Region Leader Steve Doty asserted that the activities at the college have “enabled us to explore lasting solutions to the social issues of our day.” Head Librarian Linda Cahill responded with excitement to the donation of nearly 40 books on

Buddhist philosophy and peace, saying that the college would definitely use them.

The festival represented the collective efforts of many members, some of whom drove three hours to contribute to the event. The youth played a key role in developing and staging the program. Music Coordinator Tara Kabir chanted and took action toward this goal every day for two months, overcoming numerous obstacles and introducing many, many youth to Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism along the way.

The results of the members’ efforts were reflected in the contributions of an array of talented musicians, both SGI-USA members and friends, who shared their hearts in performances of many styles. In addition, singers and artists of



The youth of Blue Ridge Chapter perform a skit, Sept. 30.

diverse cultures and several languages performed and contributed their work to the festival. In a poem composed especially for the festival, PVCC student Shawn Quarles proclaimed: “This is our op-

portunity to show love, respect, understanding/... [to] trumpet life and control the wind.”

The youth prepared a wide variety of children’s activities, from origami to kite flying. Young women’s leader Sylvia Yonchic

wrote and directed a Victory Over Violence skit, which delighted and encouraged the audience. During brief interludes between musical performances, there was dancing and delicious food organized by members of the women’s and young women’s divisions, giving members and guests sustenance of both body and mind as well as the opportunity for dialogue.

Virginia/Carolina Region Culture Department Leader Mike Curtis remarked that this festival was a “turning point for Blue Ridge Chapter.” The members felt a particular significance in hosting the hope-filled event at this time of uncertainty and collective grief. The festival concluded with a rousing rendition of “Ode to Joy.”

As the shadows grew longer, friends departed with a strengthened conviction in the innate power and value of their lives and the confidence that the members of Blue Ridge Chapter are making a difference in their community. **WT**



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SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS

FESTIVAL EMBRACES KANSAS CITY COMMUNITY

By **CHERYL A. UTLEY**
KANSAS CITY, MO., CORRESPONDENT

On Oct. 6, SGI-USA members, family and friends in the Westside Hispanic and African American community in Kansas City, Mo., attended the Victory Over Violence Family Youth Culture Festival titled "Protecting Our Children, Securing Our Future." The event was held at the Tony Aguirre Community Center, a place committed to providing a safe, comfortable and caring place for children in the neighborhood.

The specific goals of the festival were aligned with the goals of the VOV pledge to "Value my own life, respect all life and inspire hope in others." The uniqueness of the event evolved as many great ideas and suggestions were brought to a series of planning meetings about how to engage in community outreach activities. To support the campaign, a beautiful multi-col-



Photo by CHERYL UTLEY

Young festival-goers enjoy the arts and crafts table at the Victory Over Violence Family Youth Festival in Kansas City, Mo., Oct. 6.

ored wall of lotus flowers, lily ponds, butterflies and dragon flies representing the members' hours of prayer emerged at the SGI-USA's Kansas City Community Center.

In reflecting upon the event, Kansas City Area Young Women's Leader Lisa Honn said that "a major challenge was being conscientious of cultural

and language diversity issues in the Hispanic and African American community." For example, flyers were printed in both English and Spanish and the media campaign included advertisements about the festival in predominately Hispanic and African American community organizations, newspapers, radio stations, restaurants,

bookstores, and businesses.

Twenty community organizations lent their support to the festival, including Kansas City Harmony, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Kansas City, Headstart, Domestic Violence Network, the National Conference for Community and many more. As plans were finalized, volunteers from each organization worked hard and used their talents to make the event successful.

The festival itself, the first of its kind sponsored by the SGI-USA in Kansas City, featured songs by Mary Moore and St. Monica's Choir, jazz music, skits dealing with drugs and addiction and musical performances by the Chameleon Theater and the Prairie Wind Dance Ensemble which sparked shouts of joy, dancing in the streets and lively conversation.

There was never a dull moment. Children and adults sat in a revved-up D.A.R.E. car brought to the event by the Kansas City police department.

They had opportunities to learn origami and how to play taiko drums. A raffle drawing of games and prizes excited the children, and the many activities were enthusiastically embraced by the neighborhood.

Alvin Brooks, mayor protem of Kansas City, congratulated the SGI-USA and all individuals and organizations working to bring an end to violence and proclaimed Oct. 6, 2001, as Victory Over Violence Day in Kansas City. Rey Chavez, director of the Tony Aguirre Community Center, expressed his appreciation and admiration not only for the hard work, but for creating such a wonderful event that touched many people. He expressed the desire to do more activities throughout the year with SGI-USA members.

For more information about the Kansas City Victory Over Violence Family Youth Festival, please visit the festival Web site at <http://pages.prodigy.net/sgi-kc>.

SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS

Northern Ohio Creating Bonds of Friendship

By **MARK JENKINS AND M. LAVORA PERRY**
NO. OHIO CORRESPONDENTS

On a sunny Saturday, Aug. 25, an unprecedented 600-plus SGI-USA members, relatives and friends joined civic leaders, educators and local residents at the SGI-USA Northern Ohio Community Center on Cleveland's west side for a "Community Festival of Peace: Creating Bonds of Friendship." The "Gandhi, King, Ikeda: Building a Legacy of Peace" and Victory Over Violence exhibitions and their accompanying videos were viewed during the festival.

During her keynote address in the morning, anthropologist Rachael Chapman from Case Western Reserve University envisioned a society in which systems are in place that support the flourishing of each person's life. She remarked that SGI President Ikeda "teaches us the sacredness of human bonds that make us one family, our sacred potential for human harmony and the sacredness of our place in the universe."

The morning's second featured speaker was Cleveland and Congressman Dennis Kucinich, who stressed how important it is for each person to "think peace, speak peace and act peacefully" in every moment toward creating a non-violent world. Referring to the community center, a former school building that has been beautifully renovated by SGI-USA members, the congressman asked everyone to "thank [the] SGI for reclaiming this center for the community."

Rep. Kucinich then held a question-and-answer session on his proposed bill, H.R.2459, to establish a United States Department of Peace. If the bill is approved, Rep. Kucinich said, then a U.S. Secretary of Peace, a person who is an expert in the field of nonviolent conflict-resolution, would be "at the table whenever there is a [national level] discussion about using force to deal with violence."

During the Q-and-A session, 15-year-old Sean Eddy and 10-year-old Kyle Sutton, both SGI-USA youth members, shared their insights. Eddy com-



Photo by T. DARRYL POLK

World Peace Rhythm Project, a multiethnic, African-style percussion group, performs at the opening of the 'Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace' exhibition, which accompanied the SGI-USA Northern Ohio Area community festival, Aug. 25.

mented on his attempt to "analyze" all sides of a conflict, and Sutton expressed his belief that "people can solve a problem any other way than just shooting someone, yelling at them or calling them stupid."

A youth-only dialogue was then held for 12-17 year olds. More than 40 youth participated in six small groups facilitated by young people who had received special training on

conducting dialogue sessions. They discussed the impact of passive and aggressive violence on their lives, focusing on how they could make a difference.

The day then blossomed into a fun-filled celebration complete with food, games and performances by and for all ages. Fifteen Boys and Girls Group members held two lively dance performances. Festivities included face painting, origami, a

Japanese tea ceremony, balloon races, the World Peace Rhythm Project (multiethnic, African-style percussionists) and lots of singing and dancing.

Cleveland Mayor Michael R. White and U.S. Senator George V. Voinovich of Ohio each officially recognized the events. The City of Cleveland proclamation from Mayor White read in part, "I...extend our best wishes to Daisaku Ikeda and all the young people in our community and around the world who continue to share the values of peace, culture and education." In his commendation, Senator Voinovich praised the SGI-USA for the Gandhi, King, Ikeda exhibition, which he said chronicles "the lives of...three of the 20th century's most compelling leaders for justice and nonviolent social change."

A local TV station aired a news segment on the festival events. At day's end, many SGI-USA members reported returning home with a renewed sense of the interconnectedness of all life and a deeper understanding of their own unique mission to create a better world. **WT**