

## **International Student Promotes Global Understanding**

**By Yuki Chen**

**Pasadena, California**

AS a student, I feel strongly about planting seeds toward global understanding. The better we understand the world, the more we can appreciate the differences and embrace ourselves. It is truly an advantage to cultivate a global vision in people as young as possible and nurture it throughout their lives.

As a first-year MBA (master of business administration) student at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles (USC), I recently traveled with forty-nine other students to Shanghai, China—from April 26 to May 4—through a Pacific Rim program sponsored by USC; it was mandatory that first-year MBA students visit a Pacific Rim city to conduct an analysis of the business prospects of specific industries. With its strong economic growth, companies all around the world are rushing into China to grasp the best opportunities, bidding on long-term business contracts. Shanghai, one of China's leading ports and a major commercial and manufacturing center, is said to become the most important center of finance, commerce and trade in the Far East and the Pacific Rim for the next century. While there I also had the great opportunity to visit Fudan University where we attended lectures on Chinese management style. (SGI President Ikeda lectured at Fudan University in June 1984; his lecture was titled "History Is Made by Human Beings." In it he said that the question "How should life be lived?" is a primary consideration for the Chinese when studying history.)

After sixteen hours flying over the Pacific Ocean, our group landed in Shanghai. On the way to the hotel, which took about an hour and a half, I was stunned by the endless row of skyscrapers on both sides of the beautiful, wide freeways. I also learned that construction of Shanghai's new indoor baseball stadium that seats 100,000 people is nearing completion. The density of the populace is even more amazing; masses of people crossed the streets like busy bees swarming around a beehive and crowded the escalators in what seemed to be an endless chain of department stores.

The city has even more charm at night. My friends and I enjoyed the delicious Shanghai cuisine, the Hard Rock Cafe and, along the Huangpu River—one of the major branches of the Yangtze River—the magnificent buildings whose architecture is reminiscent of buildings in London, Berlin and Chicago. It was amazing to see the clubs filled with the local citizens who paid for tickets that cost the same as those in Los Angeles. The young people wear the latest fashions and use the most expensive foreign cosmetics. Each household has at least one color TV and two phone lines. Among college students, the Internet is popular—the world is becoming smaller and smaller.

It was truly exciting to see China turning around at the dawn of a new millennium and to walk on the land of unlimited potential and prosperity. Most important, I believe that with President Ikeda's vision and hope for China's future, I am thrilled to be on the pulse of exciting moments at the turn of the century of the Pacific Rim.

### **Involvement With AIESEC, an International Student Organization**

IN my junior and senior years in college, I was intensively involved with AIESEC (Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales),

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Subject: Living Buddhism 07/97 v.1 n.7 p.28 LB9707p28 Pasadena, California

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Keywords: California Education Educational Experiences Features Global International Pasadena Promotes Student Understanding

which is the biggest international student organization in the world today. To join this organization, I had to pass a written test on international affairs; my skill in the English language and knowledge of the AIESEC organization and its history were also tested. I learned that AIESEC was formed in Europe after World War II when there was a crucial need for youth committed to rebuild the continent—a student from Prague, Czechoslovakia, initiated an international student exchange program to promote understanding of other countries and their cultures. Later, in 1949, students from seven countries—Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Finland, France, Holland and Norway—gathered in Stockholm, Sweden, for the first AIESEC International Congress and determined their guidelines to build a peaceful world.

In 1992 while living in Taiwan, I was invited by the AIESEC committee of Nagoya University (Japan) to attend a weeklong conference. I made many new friends with students from twelve countries. One friend from Zimbabwe told me that she can walk with the giraffes at sunset and see the elephants walking around close to her house. My Turkish friends really stunned me with how friendly and fun they are. So many people shared their uniqueness and made the international group fun, fun, fun! Then I participated in another exchange at Kobe University with AIESEC representatives from Moscow University.

In 1994, I had an opportunity to attend Braunschweig University in Germany as an exchange student and do an internship at a big firm, Brodde Trading GmbH. At the same time, I exchanged ideas with students from France, Switzerland, Mexico, Japan, Hong Kong and other parts of the world. Our discussions ranged from problems in education and social welfare to women's status and role in the next century; we also discussed how we spend our leisure time and how the European Union is going to work. It was truly exciting to see problems from different perspectives; those that I thought were so crucial were not of concern to other students. It seems that each country gives different educational models that stimulate students to think in their unique ways.

What inspires me the most is that AIESEC is an all-student-run, non-profit, non-political, independent, educational association composed of students and recent graduates of institutions of higher education who are interested in economics and management. Believing in the mutual respect for cultures and equality of all people, its purpose lies in contributing to the development of countries and their people with a commitment to international understanding and cooperation. Thus it creates opportunities for exposure and interaction among young people of different cultures and nations, and offers people the opportunity to interact with their social and economic environment and assist them in acquiring skills and knowledge through management education and practical experience. AIESEC also has a seat in the United Nations, and has local university committees in seventy countries (every three weeks it acquires a new member-university).

In a world full of cynicism and resignation, we truly need the fire to ignite the future with peace ambassadors and strong action-takers. At the dawn of the new century, I want to cheer everyone on, especially the young people, to bring peace and fulfillment to the world. The century is ours! □

### Yuki Chen: My Greatest Treasure

I AM fortunate to be the third generation in our family that practices Nichiren

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Daishonin's Buddhism. My mother and I left Taiwan when I was 5 years old to visit my mother's family in Osaka, Japan. I would watch my grandmother doing gongyo every day. She has been very devoted to her practice, which helped her in raising seven children through World War II and facing the early death of my grandfather.

My mother also practiced alongside my grandmother, although she struggled with it when she got married in Taiwan. But in 1983, when my two sisters and I moved to San Diego from Taiwan with my mother, we were reintroduced to the practice when two SGI members—one from Italy and the other from Japan—knocked on our door one day and shared their experiences in faith with us.

My greatest treasure since I started practicing this Buddhism is how I changed my outlook toward everything in life; I know I have developed a greater degree of compassionate and broad-mindedness. Also, I truly believe that everyone has the power to conquer each day with happiness and turn all hardship into nourishment and growth. Nothing can stop me from living a fulfilling life.

My practice helps me to understand other people, love them and learn from them; everyone is so unique. My interest in people extends beyond any other interests.

As I look over writings authored by SGI President Ikeda, I am always inspired by his poem "To the Shining Queens of Youth," which he dedicated to the young women's division.

His 1997 peace proposal also stands out. What I have learned from it is that human beings turn a land of peace into tragedy due to misunderstandings, greed, hatred and fear. That is why human revolution is so necessary, to change from within—so that we can better understand one another, have the courage to communicate what we feel and learn from our differences.

For me, President Ikeda is the most influential person to plant the seed for a global vision in my life. His world is so big with his compassion transcending the universe. The more I travel, the more I appreciate the world and the more I understand people.

To me, global understanding is not only exciting but fulfilling. Once on a bus ride from France to Germany, I remember a French-Canadian lady who sat next to me. She told me that because of her passion for African culture, she had attended a school in France for two years to learn an African language. "Seeing is believing"—thus the firsthand experience of travel and making new friends on each journey stimulates me. □