

## Diversity

People often express their amazement at the diversity of the SGI-USA membership. African, white, Asian, Latino, men, women, young and old people practicing side by side inspire hope that people of diverse backgrounds and lifestyles can get along, that justice and harmony for all is possible.

Indeed, diversity strengthens our organization. And it also presents challenges. While we all share the same “primordial roots,” as SGI President Ikeda says, we each blossom uniquely in this present existence, like the “cherry, plum, pear and damson.”

Being human, our differences can present problems in understanding. Each of us sometimes lets our prejudices get in the way. And being Americans, our turbulent history of relations among diverse peoples can make open discussion about past and present injustices too emotional for constructive dialogue.

Nevertheless, we must forge ahead. First we must admit that problems exist within the organization when it comes to diversity issues. Only when we see the problem can we fix it in the spirit of changing poison into medicine. As someone once wrote: “Don’t fear [racism]; discover it; uncover it; even stir it up if necessary. Then we can begin to deal with it. If we don’t do that, then we’ll soon be right back at the same old place... ‘we have no problem’ ...again!”

This is also the spirit General Director Zaitzu expresses in the January *Living Buddhism*: He writes of the importance of facing up to reality and praying for mutual understanding and respect, ending with a call to action. “Let’s be the first to practice what we preach,” he writes.

As a practical step, a special committee on diversity was formed last year, which plans to meet monthly with Mr. Zaitzu and the other national leaders. If you’d like to give your input to the committee, please write to: Diversity Committee, c/o Greg Martin, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401 (Fax: 310-260-8917).

And to support dialogue in each area, we are providing here excerpts from President Ikeda and Mr. Zaitzu on the subject of diversity. The talks may be long and sometimes painful, but the future of our country and the world depends on our success.

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