

## EDITORIAL: 'Live Your Own Life'

Why do you do what you do? To live up to your beliefs or the expectations of others? To strive for your ideals or to seek society's approval?

These are important questions. The danger of living to please society becomes apparent when that society itself goes mad. Without our own foundational beliefs, our own sense of right and wrong, we won't be able to stand alone for justice.

SGI President Ikeda reiterated this point of being true to yourself in his new year's poem:

*My mentor, Josei Toda, left his words,  
"Live your own life."  
Shakyamuni Buddha also told us to live after his death  
true to ourselves and the Law he taught us.  
"Rather one lion than a thousand sheep,"  
said Makiguchi.  
Like a lone rock, unyielding, jutting out from the sea,  
meet the turbulent vortices of the world  
and pierce them through, living as you believe,  
polishing that which is most truly you.*

We all may want to live this way, but day to day it's not so easy. It takes enormous courage. Think of Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, Nelson Mandela, Rigoberta Menchu and others who've stood up for human rights and been persecuted.

Or George L. "Lee" Butler, the retired air force general who once was commander of the U.S. nuclear forces. Recently, he stirred a growing debate when he came out strongly against nuclear weapons, asserting that the nation would be more secure without its nuclear arsenal than with it.

Or Craig Keilburger, the 13-year-old Canadian activist for children. His adamant and emotional appeals against child labor are striking a chord with labor unions and forcing the Canadian government to deal with the issue. Kielburger's inspiration in part was Iqbal Masih, the boy in Pakistan who spoke out against bonded child labor in the rug trade and was assassinated for his stand. The SGI-USA Youth Peace Conference's "Children's Rights" exhibit, which begins a two-year tour of the country this year, is unofficially dedicated to him.

Being true to yourself means not simply doing your own thing but cherishing an ideal and having the character to live up to it, to speak out at any cost in any situation — whether it be on the world stage like those above or when a friend utters a racial or sexual slur.

Day to day, it also means to trust yourself, your intuitions, your choices. Peace of mind can never be found if you let others make your decisions for you. Many of us worry about our daily decisions. What should my major be? Which job should I take? Where should I live? Should I get married? Should I have children?

The important thing is to follow your heart. With faith in the Gohonzon, ultimately no decision is wrong. We should be convinced that every decision is the right one if it is our own decision. For even if it turns out not to be the right decision at first, it can be an opportunity to change poison into medicine through the power of faith in the Mystic Law.

On the deepest level, to be true to yourself you must, naturally, find out who your true

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self is, your greater self, your self that “discovers one’s happiness in the happiness of others,” as Mr. Ikeda writes. As practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, we are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth. We are here to prove the power of this practice by solving problems, problems we have chosen to take on. Just to recognize this can give us a profoundly positive change of attitude.

When we base ourselves on this true identity, we can find strength and courage. “Rely on a solid ‘self’ as unmovable as an island,” Mr. Ikeda writes in *The New Human Revolution*. “This is the very heart of Shakyamuni’s lifelong teachings.”

With such a solid self, we can find all the courage we need to live our own lives.

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