

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

The Men Are Ready To Help

I must comment on the "Editorial" in the Feb. 28 *World Tribune*, "A Bold Degree of Trust." While there was much to be admired in the piece, I find parts of it objectionable and not true to my experience.

The writer stated, "It is the tendency of the older generation to look down on or exclude those younger or less experienced." I strongly disagree. I know of no one in the SGI that looks down on the youth or is "patronizing to young people." What I do see is a society and a youth culture that devalues elders. While the pursuit of profit has distorted the values of some adults, there are still many who enjoy any opportunity to work with young people. We know that only through encouraging the younger generation can we fulfill our mission. My life is full of elders who helped me find my path, and I see no lack of men who now want to serve as mentors.

Actually, there are more opportunities for men to work with youth in society than in the SGI. Due to the divisional structure a strange arbitrary line has been drawn between the senior and youth divisions. Now most activities are planned solely by the youth division, with men's division participation only at the joint territory level. While there is some opportunity for working with youth in the district, most of the youth receive encouragement and guidance from youth division leaders. There are many men's division members who have over 20 years experience with little chance to share it with younger people.

The author talked of the importance of trust. I agree. Michael Meade said, "A man who has never felt he was protected by another man will not trust other men and will not be trustworthy." But trust is a two-way street! Do the youth trust and look to elders for encouragement or do they look sideways to their peers? It has been wisely observed you can't learn anything from your peers because they know the same nothing.

I would like to quote Robert Bly: "One problem with the sibling society is that, in its desire to get away from hierarchy it intentionally avoids all vertical longing. What is asked of adults now is that they stop going forward to retirement...and turn to face the young siblings and adolescents. The hope lies in the longing we have to be adults." Well, men's division members have the longing to be adults. My question is, do the young have the longing to trust the elders, and do we have an organizational structure that makes this possible?

As SGI President Ikeda stated: "The present is an age lacking in discipline. For precisely this reason, one must voluntarily receive training and forge oneself." So before fingers are pointed at "the older generation," saying they "look down" on the young, maybe we should facilitate more opportunities for the senior divisions to work with youth. And maybe we should speak of what a great asset we have in those pioneers who are ceaselessly fighting for kosen-rufu.

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