

PERSPECTIVE: No Need for Revenge

By GAIL EDMONDS-BUNN

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Dear Diary: It has been so long since I wrote to you. For some time now I have been trying to figure out what happens next. Where does my life go from here?

Last night I started thinking about all the people I hated and why. The list was long, and I began to realize since I was 18 I had lived my life trying to prove something to these people. They had all slighted me or abused me or made me feel I was worthless. Each time they did, I filed them away under the heading of "I'll show you one day." And there they sat and there I sat, trying desperately to prove them wrong.

For 29 years I ran — chasing fame, chasing stardom, chasing wealth — with the determination to prove them wrong. Never realizing these were not my dreams, not my goals, but my way of getting revenge.

I never quite succeeded in my goals. I was this far from being a star, and it drifted out of sight. Along the way, I had only my revenge. My life was dedicated to proving them wrong.

Through daimoku, I realized that all my personal power laid in the hands of people whom I remembered and hated, but who really didn't know or care if I was even alive.

I now realize power exists in the moment, this moment we are living right now. It is the most important moment of our lives. It is what we do with this moment that determines who we are, what we will be, and what we want. Unless your past is a source of wisdom, it is not a source of benefit.

For the past seven years, I have been studying the Gosho "Letter to Misawa." My headquarters leader gave it to me the night my husband left me and explained that within this Gosho was the key to understanding obstacles, mission and why bad things happen to good people. One passage reads, "Although one studies Buddhism, it is difficult to practice it correctly because of the foolishness of his mind..." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 251).

For two years my sister Delores was on my list of those I had to prove something to. In my eyes, she became this mean, evil person who looked down on me. Then, after my mother came to California and saw a production of my play, *An African American Tale*, and loved it, I decided I had accomplished something good enough to warrant passage back home.

Around the same time, my uncle died. I looked for phone numbers to call my family, and realized I had none. It made me realize how distant I was from my family. I got my sister's phone number and called home in tears and made up.

Six months later, I went to visit her. We hugged, and from that moment on, she became my best friend and supporter. She told me she had always admired me, believed in me and loved me. Watching her life and the enjoyment she got out of living clearly showed me how much time I had wasted. I had spent so many years of my life and my practice choosing the wrong road. I had spent very little time enjoying my present or building the future.

While I had been out conquering the world, my sister had been at home creating a life worth living. She had all the things I wanted — a nice home, a good job, a husband who loved her and two wonderful children.

Today, I am halfway to fulfilling my dream. I have three wonderful children who love me to death. Now I just have to create a future and a legacy to pass on to them. I appreciate that they have tolerated and supported me as I have wandered aimlessly through life — and

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now I have found the right road.

On May 18, I graduated from the State University of New York at Albany with a 3.9 grade point average. In addition, I received five academic awards, was inducted into a national honor society, received a scholarship and a fellowship, and was admitted into a master's program for educational technology.

I have finally gone back to complete what should have been the first building block in my mission to build a happy life. I never would have had the courage to go back and finish what I started without the Gohonzon. Standing on the edge of tomorrow, facing forward, diploma in hand, I am determined that as of today I am going to live my life, enjoy my life and do the things I want to do. Not pursue dreams just to spite others, but redefine my dreams based on who I am and what I want to be.

Don't worry, be happy: I think that is what Nichiren Daishonin is saying. Enjoy your life and others will follow. This alone will affect the world. This is my one life, the one I know about, the one I can enjoy. I want to spend it well and savor each moment in time.

From this moment on.

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