

WOW! Buddhas Have Real Feelings
By M. LAVORA PERRY
East Cleveland, Ohio

It doesn't seem real to me [that he has died], and so I do not feel inclined to continue. I will write you again later" (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 157–58). The Daishonin wrote this letter to Nanjo Tokimitsu after Tokimitsu's younger brother, a teenager, died unexpectedly. When I first read it, I was deeply moved that Nichiren Daishonin himself, faced with the death of someone he dearly cared for, grieved so profoundly that he — one who wrote as easily as other people breathe — had to put down his pen because the event seemed so unreal.

I know what that dream-like state feels like. In 1991, while I was still living in New York City, I received a phone call from my mother. "LaVora," she said, "Little Rudy's dead." Killed by a drunk driver. He was my oldest brother's 15 year-old son, Rudolph Perry III. I went numb. It really felt like I was in some weird dream riding the subway to work, doing SGI-USA activities, flying home wanting to be "strong" to show my Southern Baptist family how joyful Buddhists can be at funerals.

I remember being so grateful that an SGI-USA Cleveland member agreed to join me at the funeral for support. I remember feeling disappointed in myself for sobbing uncontrollably right along with everyone else at the service. But that member didn't seem disappointed in me. He cried, too. That may be one of the reasons why I married him.

When I read this letter to Nanjo Tokimitsu, I felt that the Daishonin was telling me, it's OK to love, laugh, and cry your eyes out when you need to, because, being people, Buddhas have real feelings. If not, how could we ever understand another's pain, pray for them as if for ourselves, and encourage them to deepen their faith in the Mystic Law to change their suffering into fuel for enlightenment? The Daishonin didn't ignore or hide his feelings. He felt and expressed them. I want to be like him.