

In My Life: Hitting the Wall
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To put this simply, if one strikes at the air, his fist will not hurt, but when he hits a rock, he feels pain. (“Letter to the Brothers,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 133)

Committing a serious misdeed is like striking at thin air, Nichiren Daishonin says. But abandoning your faith in the Lotus Sutra is like hitting a rock. This passage has personal significance for me.... For the past six years, I’ve been struggling with a mortgage. For me, condo ownership has involved a fire, a lawsuit, a stint in tax default, a discovery that my deed was invalid and more — one battle after another. In January, when my new job brought with it a steep drop in my income, my first impulse was to sell everything and go live in a tent. But I pledged, “I will fight to keep my home.”

About a month ago, I started to refinance the place. Nothing related to the word *finance* goes smoothly for me, despite my years of chanting about it. This re-fi stirred up all my anxieties and amplified my years of financial frustration. I was convinced: “I’ll never win! I’m actual proof of failure!” Then I punched one of my walls. (I was desperate to break through *something*.) The wall was fine. The knuckles of my right pinkie and ring finger, however, swelled up like blue walnut shells. As I cradled my throbbing hand, I realized that my biggest problem was that I had no faith that my prayers would ever be answered.

But prayers, like punches, aren’t ethereal. Rather, each Nam-myoho-renge-kyo I chant has a solid impact, and, eventually, a visible consequence. As the days passed, streaks of purple and blue seeped up my fingers and across the back of my hand. My bruise turned red, pink, then yellow, like a sunrise, as it healed. I came to see it as the mark of a hard-won lesson in faith: Don’t flip yourself out with worry. Just continue chanting wholeheartedly to fulfill your great expectations.

Otherwise, well.... It hurts. Anyway, my re-fi was subsequently approved without further trauma.

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