

## WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

### **Festival Idea**

I think the idea of a culture festival is great (July 24 *World Tribune*)! I have two suggestions: First, how about giving it a theme, “Break Forth With Joy!”? That happens to be the title of a movement from Handel’s *Messiah*. Since we are working with like-minded people of other faiths to create world peace, I think nothing could be more appropriate. Could that musical movement be sung at the festival by a chorus of members? “Break” could mean breaking the evil of the Nikken sect, breaking through our own personal problems, breaking through another person’s suffering, breaking through to create positive connections with others who are different from us, etc.....

My second suggestion is, how about a live, moderated Culture Festival Web Site, like the Democrats and Republicans had at their most recent conventions? That model could be studied closely to provide a guideline. It would really help house-bound members, members with small incomes, members with schedule conflicts and interested friends of the SGI to participate also.

— GERALD T. AITKEN, Goshen, N.Y.

### **Full Expression**

I greatly appreciated Cathy Robinson’s comment “Too Repressed” in the July 10 *World Tribune* (“Mailbox”). Ms. Robinson suggested that the SGI organization needs to appreciate the healthy view of people expressing their feelings and emotions. I was particularly provoked by this comment because on the opposite page was a “Perspective” by Chrys Cohen, who wrote of children as emissaries of the future who would change their parents’ lives by bestowing on them an undaunted love.

Ms. Cohen writes that “no matter how much we [children] are shushed, sent to the back of the room, made to feel unwelcome or likened to devilish functions, we will continue undaunted, because we understand that anger comes from the pain of their past.” This comment speaks directly to the amazing and pristine resilience that children maintain as they live through the early years of their lives. I have often been amazed at how this innocence is maintained amidst the most tragic circumstances of physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

However, the unfortunate part of this common story is that the child who prevails against these circumstances and remains resilient throughout his or her life is rare. Neglect and anger from one’s parents usually manifest in an abused child’s later relationships, because patterns set in the child’s early years were so innocently received that they become hard to recognize from a critical perspective in the future....

Perhaps parents also need to understand the sadness, anger and fear that they created in the lives of their children who undyingly return feelings of love and joy to them. I believe that healing the wounds of our parents and ourselves involves pioneering a new kind of “enlightened relationship” where all those involved in the relationship take full responsibility for their feelings and express them openly and freely so that each of us becomes aware of how our actions in the past hurt the people we loved.

While the expression of undying love is one important feeling, it is only one feeling that deserves the right to expression. Without understanding and experiencing the other feeling that we have toward our parents, we suppress them, and often despite our awareness of these feelings, they are then more likely to emerge in our relationships with our own children in the future.

— BREENA HOLLAND, Chicago

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### **Thanks for the ‘Chance’**

Thank you very much for your article “The Chance To Enjoy Life,” which appeared on the front page of the July 17 issue.

I’ve been incarcerated since Oct. 29, 1993, with a 15–life sentence. I was introduced to this practice by my mother, a practitioner of 11 years. It was in early 1994 when facing 50 years in prison that I embraced the Gohonzon and chanted sincerely for the first time. Since then, the benefits have been many and the obstacles few. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo has helped me over many a rocky road.

My mom is always giving me guidance to write you with my story, but I always thought being where I’m at is not a suitable place to tell it from. The article about Murray Singer has shown me, though, that the SGI-USA has respect for all its members and has given me new hope for the future. I cannot begin to tell you how vast the amount of benefits have been so far, but I can say receiving the World Tribune weekly is one of them. Hopefully, one day I will build up the confidence to tell my story. For now I will content myself in knowing I finally made a first step in that direction....

— SEAN ANDRE, Auburn, N.Y.

### **Robeson’s Legacy**

I second Mark Anton’s response (July 10 “Mailbox”) to Stan Klemanowicz’s perspective (June 19 “Mailbox”) on Paul Robeson and offer these additional comments. The superlative and collective talent of Mr. Robeson has yet to be duplicated. He excelled as a dramatist, vocalist, actor, scholar and athlete despite the social and legal constraints placed upon him as an African American, being treated as a second-class citizen. Robeson’s involvement in communism must be examined from multiple angles: first, as a part of his unquestionable passionate pursuit of the ideal and second, as a relevant response to the irritating issues of his generation.

Eric J. Sundquist’s 1995 literary criticism *Cultural Contexts for Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man* explains that “[f]rom the 1920s through the 1940s, many black political leaders placed their faith in communism because it often seemed the only predominantly white organization willing to fight for racial equality.” The shortcomings of the Communist Party were revealed soon enough for many leaders to sever any allegiance; however, many also bore the brunt of economic and social sanctions, as did Robeson, for this short test of an alternative system to achieve a better daily life.

The number of current commentaries suggests that there is a resurgent interest in Paul Robeson. In addition to the recent *World Tribune* article, the triumphs and tragedies of Robeson’s life are recounted in “The Stormy Life of Paul Robeson,” published in the quarterly magazine *American Legacy* (Summer 1998, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 32f.). The following extract from President Ikeda’s poetic guidance “The Sun of *Jiyu* Over a New Land,” also explains the spirit of Robeson’s philosophical pursuits.

*First you must break the hard shell of the lesser self.  
This you must absolutely do.  
Then direct your lucid gaze toward your friends, fellow members.*

In my opinion, Robeson’s legacy demands that we ask this question: To what have I made a serious commitment in which I will achieve personal excellence and make an incremental contribution toward the elimination of ignorance, injustice and inequality. There is now a stronger tool, human revolution, that was unavailable to Mr. Robeson. We who pursue human revolution should have a firmer grasp of this question and be on the forefront, like Robeson, in trying to pass the baton of his unfinished quest for the happiness of the common people.

— JOYCE LAW, Augusta, Ga.

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