

**Of the People, by the People and for Each Living Being**  
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**What is it like to participate in an Earth Charter consultation? Andy Bruck found it an exciting process that made him reexamine his values.**

What would drive a child to kill another?" an SGI member recently asked following a murder in Jacksonville. Later, the member said that without Buddhism, his life would be limited, closed off from the values he embraces.

Obviously, a child murderer lacks essential values that might keep him or her out of trouble. SGI President Ikeda says, "By conversing on a profound level, people can awaken to a more valuable way of life and find inspiration to seek even higher value."

Carrying my friend's question further, could people's abuse of Earth also be based on ignorance of key values? The Earth Charter aspires to identify values that every world citizen can embrace. Since the EC is a democratic, worldwide creation in progress, any person or group may participate in or sponsor a consultation through most of 1999 and give feedback to an international drafting committee. (See [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org) for more.). I was so impressed by participating in this activity that I have since attended other EC events and want to draw in my friends, neighbors, family members and work colleagues.

In his 1998 peace proposal, President Ikeda says: "The building of a world community, a global civilization of justice, compassion and hope must begin by...cultivating...a shared ethos of cooperation and interdependence.... In this regard, I want to propose the concept of shared or mutual value-creation as a behavioral norm for the new era...." If we can mold a truly common value system as President Ikeda suggests, perhaps we can find our way through the muddy swamp of today's problems.

I found it refreshing how these consultations enable participants to reflect on both the Charter's values as well as their own. Psychology teaches that our perception is selective. A rare plant I might not notice could immediately attract a botanist's attention. Because we each notice different things, we can expand our own perspective through dialogue like this. Since joining the EC process, I have been modifying the governing values I have developed, aspiring to be a more responsible citizen and consumer, to be more attuned to global economic inequities. It's also amazing how much the SGI Charter correlates with the EC, also championing the values of the sanctity of life, human rights, global citizenship, religious freedom, tolerance, inter-religious cooperation, cultural diversity, symbiosis with the environment, and education.

In a youth division discussion, we discovered that the wording is difficult for youth to understand. If the EC is to be studied the world over, that problem will need addressing, so I have been developing an EC brochure for young people. At various consultations, it has been encouraging to encounter members of numerous religious faiths, environmentalists, civil rights experts, a spiritual leader of an Indian tribe, professors, housewives, and a woman who moved from the United States to the Amazon forest years ago. I want to see you there, too!