

KRT

It's always young people who must take responsibility for the creation of a peaceful world. In this essay on Kosen-rufu Day, March 16, Deborah Goodwin talks about the history of the SGI peace movement and looks toward a future of peace.



By DEBORAH GOODWIN
LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT

A World Without War IS IT POSSIBLE?

"If not now, then when...?" These words have been echoed by songwriters, poets and philosophers of every generation in America and throughout the world. If a time of peace has not yet come, then when? And when has a concerted world peace movement been more needed than at our present time in history?

Peacetime is defined in Webster's dictionary as a time when a nation is not at war. A strangely transient definition, which communicates the uneasy reality that a time for war still looms in the future.

By contrast, the definition of the Buddhist term *kosen-rufu* is to widely declare and spread Buddhism, to secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind through its propagation. The single phrase *lasting peace* denotes an incredible commitment that permeates both the present and the future. Lasting peace is the core mission of the SGI and its practicing members in 128 countries worldwide. On March 16, 1958, young people took responsibility for this peace movement, and their lasting commitment fuels all the efforts and activities of our organization.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, addressing a gathering in Honolulu several years ago, spoke of humankind's common desire for lasting peace: "Whatever country I visited, I found people yearning for lasting peace in the world. We [in the SGI] are working toward the eternal goal of global peace from a religious standpoint, specifically through Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism...it is my earnest desire to contribute to the realization of peace, culture and education based on true Buddhism."

March 16 is a celebration of our resolve as an organization, and as global citizens, to carry out this legacy

PLEASE SEE LASTING PEACE, 2

Congratulations on your March commemorative meetings!

SGI USA
Soka Gakkai International-USA

The *World Tribune* is the weekly newspaper of the SGI-USA.

OUR ORGANIZATION

SGI-USA (Soka Gakkai International-USA) is an American Buddhist organization based on the philosophy of the Nichiren school of Mahayana Buddhism. The SGI exists in 128 countries and has its international center in Japan, where the organization was founded in 1930. In the *World Tribune*, you'll see news of our organization both in America and internationally.

OUR PURPOSE

The SGI-USA promotes peace and individual happiness based on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Our position is that peace in the community — whether it be in a neighborhood or the world — is inseparably linked with individuals' happiness. SGI-USA members, through their faith, are seeking to become happier and contribute positively to society. In the *World Tribune*, you'll see experiences from members about this process, which we call human revolution.

OUR PRACTICE

Our basic practice is chanting the phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon, our object of devotion. According to Nichiren Daishonin, the workings of the universe are an expression of the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. So chanting it allows us to be in tune with our environment and create the most value. The *World Tribune* carries many study articles to explain the practice in detail.

OUR HERITAGE

Myoho-renge-kyo is the title of the Lotus Sutra, which is the foundation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha's highest teaching, sets forth that the Buddha nature is inherent in all living things — all people have the potential to become Buddhas. Nichiren Daishonin, a Japanese priest who lived in the 13th century, championed the Lotus Sutra and introduced the concrete way of putting it into practice, the chanting and sharing of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. In keeping with the sutra's teaching that people are Buddhas, the SGI teaches that the heritage of this Buddhism is passed from generation to generation of the people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the SGI-USA community center nearest you — there are more than 60 across the country. (You can look in the phone book or call our national headquarters at (310) 451-8811.) The community center can direct you to SGI-USA members in your town, so you can ask questions and find out more.

THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF KOSEN-RUFU DAY

A New Day in the History of Humanity

Every March 16 is a celebration of youth for the SGI organization. On this day in 1958, our second president, Josei Toda, held a meeting with 6,000 youth in Japan, passing to them the responsibility for securing lasting peace through the sharing of Buddhism (kosen-rufu). Over the last 40 years, our organization has maintained its commitment to supporting youth in their Buddhist practice and awakening their sense of mission. Over the years, our current president, Daisaku Ikeda, has often spoken on the significance of March 16, Kosen-rufu Day.



Josei Toda (c) and Daisaku Ikeda (l) celebrating March 16, 1958.

March 16, 1958, was the day our mentor, President Toda, revealed for us the outline of kosen-rufu, letting us participate in a dress rehearsal for that time so that we would know in what direction to strive. A top government leader [the prime minister] had promised to attend that day but in the end couldn't make it. President Toda declared that all of a nation's citizens, including its prime minister, are equal in front of the Gohonzon [the object of devotion in this Buddhism]. He showed us a vision of kosen-rufu in which the light of the Mystic Law would shine equally on all people.

After the ceremony and just before returning to his lodging, President Toda called out to us, "Let us fight!" I think these words are profoundly meaningful. I feel certain he was referring to the whole spectrum of struggles we must grapple with: to help those suffering become happy, to challenge erroneous teachings, to fight against

abuses and injustices committed by those in positions of power and our individual struggle against our own weaknesses.

In any case, when I heard him call out, "Let us fight!" — his eyes sharp and radiant, his voice strong and vibrant despite his terrible gauntness — I was electrified. At that time, I resolved anew to fight intrepidly for kosen-rufu. His cry came from the depths of his being; it was an appeal from his very life.

— The New Human Revolution, vol. 4, p. 40

According to Greek legend, when Prometheus created human beings and made them stand erect, he said: "All other animals look downward. Man, you will live by looking up at the sky. You will live and talk with the sky and the stars!"

With the world as your stage and your gaze fixed on the eternal universe, youth, live boldly, rising above the insignificant vicissitudes of the world. Let us proceed with composure, afraid

of nothing. Let us resolutely proclaim the truth.

Unless you young people are fired up with energy, we will not be able to burn away the darkness of life that overshadows the times. Unless you advance, the flames of justice will not reach the people's lives. The true significance of March 16 lies in each of you standing up, taking action, praying and speaking out as a torchbearer in your own right.

At the end of your energetic advance will come the time when the mountain ranges and cities of the people's glory and triumph will emerge. That is the time when the ceremony of our "Eternal March 16" will come vividly to life in your hearts and begin to shine with a new and inextinguishable light.

— May 1991 *Seikyo Times*, p. 44

*Youth,
Always push on.
Now is the time;
We should not go back even
a step.*

*Youth, sing the bright and
brave song of youth
proudly and hopefully,
Continuing to challenge
your daily efforts
courageously,
In your pursuit of study and
training.*

*With a golden unity that
will never break down,
Give yourselves to
accomplishing this,
Our sacred undertaking,
Bringing in a new day in
the history of mankind.*

— "A Blue Deeper Than Indigo Itself:
To My Young Friends on Kosen-rufu
Day," *Songs of Victory*, pp. 215–16

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LASTING PEACE, FROM PAGE 1

that has been handed to us. A world without war was the foremost concern and endeavor of Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda. Both men were products of war-torn Japan, and both experienced great personal loss during wartime. They had a deep sense of compassion for the collective losses endured

and reflected in Japanese society and the world.

Each made a vow that he would do his utmost to ensure that the suffering caused by war be forever ended. These men dedicated their entire lives to the pursuit of lasting peace: Mr. Makiguchi, through his groundbreaking educational reforms, and tenacious assaults on an authoritarian government; Mr. Toda, through his uncompro-

mising stance on the abolition of nuclear weapons and through sparing nothing of himself to raise youth who would carry this prayer across the world and into the future.

Daisaku Ikeda was one of these young people. Of those times with his teacher, Mr. Ikeda wrote: "It was at the age of 19, in the days immediately following the end of World War II, that I learned the noble way

of peace from my mentor, President Toda.... I have devoted myself to our movement among the common people...to develop a magnificent global network of spiritual solidarity toward the goal of a world without war."

To this end, Mr. Ikeda has held numerous dialogues and written extensively on the subject of peace. He has indeed created a forum for spiritual soli-

darity among people of all races and religions, from every walk of life and from all over the globe.

The concept of a world without war seems lofty, perhaps even unattainable. Yet there is certain proof of growing numbers of like-minded people the world over. Initiatives and organizations everywhere, including

PLEASE SEE PEACE, NEXT PAGE

RACHEL REITZ, DALLAS

My Invincible Summer

Rachel Reitz battles manic depression and fulfills her dream to study in France.

I've suffered from clinical depression since I was 9. I'm 21 now, and my parents have been practicing Buddhism since before I was born, so I've grown up in this practice.

Three years ago, I started going to a community college and living in a dorm. I was being treated for depression, and everything was going great — for the first two weeks. Soon, I found I no longer needed sleep or food. I discovered I was smarter than even my professors. I talked incessantly and spent \$3,000 in five weeks. I raced cars on the freeway, barefoot.

My parents say I disappeared, but I always knew exactly where I was. They eventually found me and dragged me home.

After 12 weeks, I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, more commonly known as manic depression, which is a chemical imbalance in the brain. Manic depressives experience dramatic mood swings, from suicidal depression to euphoria, which can escalate into manic psychosis. Without treatment, 25 percent of manic depressives commit suicide. Fortunately, my dad chanted and found a doctor, a psycho-pharmacologist, who prescribed the combination of medications that helped stabilize my moods.

With medication, I began to think rationally again, and the diagnosis sank in for the first time. It felt like a death sentence. My old life was over; I was no longer the



'Three years ago, everything looked so dark,' Rachel Reitz recalls. 'Yet spring always comes.'

person I had been. There were chunks of my life I could no longer remember.

So I began swinging rapidly into depression. I chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo for the most basic things: to remember on which side of the street to catch the bus, where my classes were, how to hold a pencil.

I didn't realize it at the time, but my chanting was pulling together the most amazing group of Bud-

dhist deities, the universal forces of protection: my doctor; my English professor; friends I met just when I needed them most; and my parents and brother, who never let me give up on myself.

But as I started to get better, I became enraged at the whole idea of Buddhism. My illness could not all be the result of previous causes. I could not have been bad enough to deserve all this. And so I quit practicing.

It made me furious that my parents and other Buddhists were chanting for me. It was all a bunch of crap, I thought. Through religion and philosophy classes, I started learning about other religions. I attended a lot of different services. It made me angry to admit it, but Buddhism was the only one that made sense to me. I was a Buddhist, damn it!

My English professor kept encouraging me to apply to Austin College, and it turned out that the school offered scholarships. A scholarship would be necessary for me, but to apply for one, I'd have to write an essay about a life-changing event. I was hesitant to write about my illness — some people freak out when I tell them about it — but I chose to be bru-

tally honest. I was granted \$13,000 a year in scholarships.

Soon I was back in a dorm for the first time since I went nuts. It was a struggle, but I remained stable — such a simple, boring word. But as someone who has lived through hell, I can't imagine a word more beautiful.

Through Austin College, I was offered a chance to live and study abroad — in France, where I used to dream of living. I've been attending classes at the Université Lumière in Lyon, France, and joyfully participating in SGI activities here, where I have found true friends, kindred spirits.

Three years ago everything looked so dark, so hopeless. As Albert Camus said, "In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer." And as Nichiren Daishonin wrote: "Those who believe in the Lotus Sutra are as if in winter, which never fails to turn into spring. Never have I seen or heard of winter turning into autumn" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 150).

In the darkness of winter, hope is difficult to find. Yet spring always comes. Chant for courage. Chant for confidence. 卍

BIRAGO JONES, MIAMI

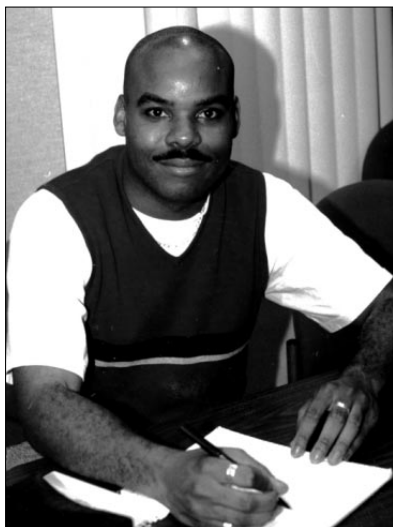
When Things Got Really Good

Birago Jones overcomes bad grades, money problems and a lot of stress to excel in graduate school.

As an undergraduate student, I was expelled twice from the University of Maryland because of my bad grades. Not because I couldn't do the work — I just didn't apply myself. Eventually, I changed my attitude, chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo a lot, was re-accepted into school and graduated on time. I even decided that I wanted to pursue a career in education.

Last summer, I had an internship in Los Angeles, working for an education-related video company. While in Los Angeles, I received the Gohonzon [objection of devotion in this Buddhism] — I had been practicing for 16 years without one. From that point, I really started to practice harder.

Two weeks before my internship ended, I was accepted to graduate school at Florida International University. I drove back to Maryland (my home), then to Miami. I felt as if nothing could stop my fortune. "Things are good," I thought.



'I was chanting...not to give up,' says Birago Jones.

Within two weeks of arriving in Miami, however, I found out that my acceptance to graduate school wasn't full acceptance — because of my poor grades as an undergrad.

When I heard that I wasn't fully accepted, I thought: "OK. I'll just chant about this. No problem." What I didn't realize: Without full acceptance, I couldn't receive financial aid! I was nervous, so I called my parents.

They encouraged me to use my Buddhist practice to overcome this problem. I began chanting two hours a day, and, within a week, I got a job as a graduate assistant designing Web sites for the College of Education.

Then, I found out that I would have to take the GRE test all over again if I wanted to be fully accepted for the fall semester. "OK," I thought again, and started chanting three hours a day. I studied extremely hard for the test.

Since I took the test by computer, I got my scores immediately. I didn't pass! I was surprised, disappointed, but I knew there had to be some kind of mistake.

I've had so many benefits from this practice that I knew that I would overcome this problem. I simply increased my chanting. Two weeks after taking the test, I received a letter stating that there had been a mistake by the com-

puter reporting my scores — *I had passed!*

This news, however, came too late. The deadline for full acceptance for the fall semester had passed. So I kept chanting to somehow make it through the semester.

My problems seemed to increase, as my classes were very difficult. I had so much anxiety, I often felt sick. I was chanting hard just to keep my mind focused on my studies, and most importantly, not to give up.

SGI President Ikeda, in his speech at the Florida Nature and Culture Center in 1996, stated: "Everything begins from the human revolution of one person.

PEACE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures...."

This best illustrates our interdependence as a society, a nation, a world — a universe in which each individual's unique contribution toward the bright vision of lasting peace is essential. On March 16, we remember those who forged this path of peace to today and take this opportunity to steady our course into the future. 卍

It is important first and foremost that each of you win in life and society. I also hope each of you, with your brilliant presence, will illuminate all around you — the people you encounter, your local community, your country, and all of humanity."

I'm proud to say I won. At the end of the semester, I had earned a 3.65 GPA. For this spring semester, I not only received financial aid but got an out-of-state tuition waiver and a scholarship. Through this experience, I mastered the "never give up" spirit. Through my efforts in chanting and taking the appropriate action, I created a big victory in my life. 卍



I READ THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE' BECAUSE IT IS MY MOST CURRENT, DIRECT CONNECTION TO THE SPEECHES AND LITERARY WORKS OF SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA. IT IS ALSO SO ENCOURAGING TO READ ABOUT THE EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES OF OTHERS AROUND THE COUNTRY.

— **Jamie Liptan**
SEATTLE, WA



I'LL NEVER STOP READING THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE' BECAUSE MY LIFE MOVES FORWARD WITH EVERY ISSUE READ. THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE' HELPS ME PUSH OPEN MY LIFE AND TAP A BOUNDLESS ENERGY THROUGH VARIOUS EXPERIENCES, GUIDANCE, STUDY ARTICLES AND REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES.

— **Maia Guest**
NEW YORK, NY



THE THING I WOULD MISS MOST ABOUT THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE' IF IT STOPPED BEING PUBLISHED IS THE EXPERIENCES BY YOUTH THAT ENCOURAGE ME TO BE MORE ACTIVE IN THIS ORGANIZATION.

— **Diana E. Wells**
SILVER SPRING, MD



I WILL NEVER STOP READING THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE' BECAUSE IT'S MY WEEKLY SOURCE OF BUDDHIST NOURISHMENT. JUST AS I EAT FOOD WHEN I'M HUNGRY, I READ THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE' WHEN MY LIFE IS SEEKING ENCOURAGEMENT.

— **Monique Ward**
BROOKLYN, NY



I READ THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE' BECAUSE IT'S INFORMATIVE AND KEEPS ME ABREAST OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE SGI COMMUNITY.

— **Druce Akira Martin**
SAN ANTONIO, TX



EVERYONE SHOULD READ THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE' BECAUSE IT HELPS US BETTER UNDERSTAND BUDDHISM, AND IT ALSO HELPS US IN OUR DAILY LIVES.

— **Vanessa Rubinfeld**
MOJAVE, CA

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