

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Conquering Self-Doubt

Without a doubt, that was the most encouraging experience in the *World Tribune* (Jan. 8) to date!

— LYNETTE BRAWER,
Pianist/Vocalist/Composer
Arlington, Va.

Regarding Three Articles

To the *World Tribune* staff, thank you so much for the “new” *World Tribune*! I have made a new determination to share this wonderful Buddhist newspaper with my family and friends.

I want to comment on three articles from the Dec. 18 & 25, 1998, *World Tribune*.

I am very impressed with the article “A Physical and Spiritual Wasteland,” written by the Prometheus Group (in the “Seize the Day” pullout section). I thank them for a common sense perspective in considering their question “Can doing human revolution really save the world?” The comment that I liked the best was “World peace is not a passive undertaking, and neither is one’s daily life!”

I want to respond to Rita Willoughby’s request for study articles about other American Buddhist sects. In today’s climate of cooperation between religious organizations, I think that to study and compare other current religious sects in our publications would appear to be a form of intolerance. However, there are at least two sources of study available: Nichiren Daishonin’s *Major Writings* and local bookstores. It was also hard for me at first to be able to answer my friend’s questions about other types of Buddhism, so I can relate!

Dan Dewey wrote that political views need to be discussed with fellow members at discussion meetings, as an expression of democracy (and because of the importance of the political process). I like his idea, except that I wouldn’t want to promote disunity. He suggested that we might form FOR and AGAINST groups on specific issues. However, rather than see disunity promoted through political discussion, I suggest that we discuss our views openly, but that we practice tolerance and respect for different opinions. By not taking sides, we can learn from each other and possibly discover new answers. People can have different opinions and be in complete unity. There is such a thing as the Middle Way...

— SUNNY MIKA,
Spokane, Wash.

In Response to Other Letters

Regarding the letter about compiling people’s experiences into a book, I think that would be most encouraging and appeal to a wide variety of people. Regarding the response to the letter “Speak English,” I agree that guests and we, as members, respond to each other’s

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hearts more than words. However, I also feel that we live in America, and we should make efforts to use English words for terms whenever possible.

I've been practicing in the SGI since 1973, and having experienced the overlay of the Japanese culture in our organization, I think it's best that we try to use words and customs that most people use in our country. I have not heard of a movement afoot to translate gongyo or Nam-myoho-renge-kyo into English and I don't think we'd allow that to happen! Perhaps people today only hear the surface of words, but I think it's indicative of a larger problem having to do with life-condition rather than simply what language we use.

Regarding the many letters and dialogue produced by Lisa Jones' article "Bell, Book, Candles and Saxophone," I suspect that, like many things, the answer to how meaningful rituals or formality is in our lives can be quite personal — just as I do not relate to the Gohonzon in exactly the same way someone else does.

I agree with President Ikeda that emphasis be placed on substance and formality needs to be viewed in conjunction with substance. As Sandi Johnson described in her reply, asking the right questions (and taking the appropriate action) will advance our personal power, our movement, our dialogue, our knowledge and our joy of this practice.

— JANE KALLANDER,
Alexandria, Va.

Reproductive Rights

I cannot say I was shocked to read Jennifer Benson's comments about being an "unabashed Buddhist abortion counselor" (Dec. 11, 1998, *World Tribune*) for this is the effect of failing to view ourselves ONLY as bodhisattvas whose behavior reflects the wisdom of a Buddha. We are not women FIRST or minorities FIRST or gays or feminists FIRST. The whole point of our human revolution is to get BEYOND anything that threatens to limit our mission.

Only the expansive life-condition of the Bodhisattva can see that always front and center what is immutable is respect for the innate dignity of life. To fail to manifest the towering self of our Buddha nature is to perpetuate the suffering of the people. I am grateful to the Daishonin for his profound teachings. I am repaying my debts of gratitude to him and the SGI by my efforts to show wisdom in my behavior.

But that was not always the case. I wish I had known about this philosophy 20 years ago. In my youthful, deluded state (Marxist, atheist), I fought for every rights issue imaginable. I marched, picketed, protested and proclaimed my "freedom," my "right of self-determination for my own body." I hardly flinched when I terminated not one but three pregnancies in the span of 11 years.

I urge all of my fellow members to re-read President Ikeda's thoughts on abortion in *Human Values in a Changing World* (pp. 246–49). He clarifies abortion "rights" from many angles: for population growth, for economic reasons, in cases of rape and incest and for dealing with genetic defects. Today, I fully agree with his words: "From the standpoint of respect for life, I am totally opposed to it in most instances, since I consider it wrong to terminate artificially an already initiated life and thus to condemn it to darkness before it has ever seen the light. Furthermore, abortion is physically and mentally cruel to the mother..." These last 10 words especially haunt me, as I know their truth firsthand. I try not to wallow in my pain and guilt.

Thanks to my Buddhist practice, I have grown to understand value and anti-value, cause

and effect and above all the importance of the ONLY revolution that matters, a human revolution. I want to live a life of no (more!) regrets, so I struggle daily to share this magnificent philosophy for living with others.

— BLANCA SANCHEZ-MUILLEN,
Received via e-mail

P.S. Sorry it took me so long to find the courage to send this!

Appreciation

Add my voice to those expressing appreciation for the evolution and remarkable improvement of the *World Tribune*, the “Mailbox,” Lisa Jones’ articles (the image of red ink in the jacuzzi of white paint is permanently lodged in my consciousness), and members’ experiences too numerous to mention — except for Pascual Olivera’s “Conquering Self-Doubt.” I thank him profusely for describing the process of his self-healing in such precise and understandable psychological detail and for relating it so clearly to the practice of faith and personal growth.

Kudos to you all.

— ARLENE TERRAS,
Philadelphia