

## GET REAL ALIGN ALONG THE SPINE

People shared a wealth of wisdom with me this past summer. I thought it would be nifty to distill some of their wisdom into a few pithy paragraphs. Hence comes a theme: Align along the spine.(a sort of chiropractic rap lyric)

All of us struggle. We struggle hard. It seems as if being young is a never-ending onslaught of trials and trips — stinging relationships, money blues, self-hate, cancer, fears. What is the point of all this pain?

The point is we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Look around and see wars waged, congressional pettiness, violent video gaming, greedy consumption of oil and soda pop and so on. Who's going to change all this?

We are. Bodhisattvas. We, because we struggle as others struggle. We struggle and thus we relate to others. People will watch us, will scrutinize our moves. When we struggle and win, they will witness Buddhism in action.

The greatest episodes of this winning come when we are directly involved with a unified peace effort. Take one such effort — the recent Grand Culture Festival in L.A. Each of the 700 L.A. performers, 300 nationwide participants and hundreds of other American youth faced their own individual hardships. But, these youth said they emerged from that mystic campaign with amazing change in their lives, change that echoed in their daily existence. They got great grades, nailed new jobs, found treasured friendships, and more.

The actual script of the culture festival depicted an epic drama. Throughout history humankind has drenched itself in a flood of violence and tyranny, a flood which is at full surge in present day, the dawn of the new century. But, it is here that the youth will flat-out reject the bloody trend. We bodhisattvas enter the world stage and come out kicking butt (non-violently, of course — gentle kicks with soft-sole shoes). We march forth and generate a new generation of culture. We slam on the brakes of that speeding train called the Lesser Self and usher all disgruntled passengers onto the great cruise ship Life and Peace — a big ship with shiny mirrors and cool carpeting.

If we don't stand up against evil, absolutely no one else will. Decades from now, when today's teens have turned into tomorrow's 50-year-olds, our current politicians will be retired or deceased. One would think we'd then have a clean slate, but society tends toward repeating itself. In a downward spiral, we find ourselves approaching an extreme of, what former U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali terms, New Isolationism — a destination toward which we spiral with fierce momentum.

Changing this destiny will be brutal work, but that's where the splendor comes in. All of our struggles will serve as key ingredients for success. Consider the Words of the Week in the Sept. 21 *Seikyo Shimbun*:

*Problems are like textbooks  
for learning about the Mystic Law.  
Because we have problems,  
We can understand the greatness of this Buddhism!*

Getting a great job, polishing an attractive personality — every aspect of winning in our daily life is guaranteed. When we as individuals *align along the spine* of our unified move-

ment, we maximize our power to affect our own lives. It's a precious opportunity. In the next few months on into the next decade, our SGI-USA joint effort is to stand strong against injustice. It'll take guts. It'll take sweat. But, those who fight hard will come away in total triumph. And total triumph is quite nice.

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