

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Thanks to Amy Schor Ferris

I want to thank you so much for sharing your experience (Nov. 5 *World Tribune*) of honoring and loving yourself, i.e., honoring your Buddha nature. I am experiencing a similar obstacle with this and I read your experience twice and started chanting the way you did.

—DIANE LENNON
Barrington, N.H.

The Major Writings

I am so happy that *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* has been published. We, the members of the World Group, have been studying and memorizing passages of the Goshō every month. We read the Daishonin's words out loud over and over again until we commit them to memory both in Japanese and English. Thus we feel his compassion and his encouragement to hang in there no matter what. We are trying hard to become capable people as well as competent interpreters. We are also avid readers of the *World Tribune*.

—SACHIKO MATSUSHITA
Osaka, Japan
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Be Careful What's in Bold Print

I am deeply disturbed by your Oct. 8 issue, p. 5, whereby you used SGI President Ikeda's quote, "Rather than the older generation trying to draw the youth together, the youth naturally draw themselves together," as a subtopic in bold print. It makes sense when I read the sentence prior to this quote and the sentence that follows it; however, the inherent message sent to readers by using this quote as a subtitle seemed to me as saying, "Hey! Adult division, bug off when it comes to youth division activities."

I have chanted many hours to the Gohonzon as to how to best support the Junior High and High School divisions' activities in New York. With financial limitations, there have been many times I have to save a few bucks so that SGI young people can enjoy bagels or sandwiches after their CAP21 Performing Art workshops.... I have gained undeniable trust and friendship from the parents of these SGI young people. With their help and request, I am also embarking on a new SGI project in New York, which I hope will further bring the younger generation together, with many "older generation's" daimoku, efforts and joint discussion with the "younger generation" to make it happen....

What you put in the *World Tribune* has a decisive effect on the attitudes and relationships among the membership, between the young and the old and the older and the "disappeared." You cannot be too careful especially when you single out one quote from President Ikeda as a title or subtitle.... Please keep up the good work and be careful what you put in bold print.

—PETER C. KUAN
New York City

Paper's Larger Mission

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Author:
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Reading the four impressions of the SGI Training Course in Japan (July 30 *World Tribune*, p. 8) brought home to me a point I have been wanting to make to you about the larger mission of our paper. As the sub-head notes, “members from 52 countries attended”; however, all four impressions, though wonderful and awe-inspiring, were American.

I have always wanted to see more about SGI in the other 127 countries I am constantly told we have members in. The third impression (Biteen Orillave’s) touched on the global mission of America and of SGI-USA, which President Ikeda has spoken of so often. I believe to live up to its name, the *World Tribune* (rather than the American Tribune), our paper must be of and for the entire planet. Now that with the recent youth culture festival’s amazing expression of our youth’s (the leaders of the 21st century) determination to reply to pioneer for peace (nonviolence) and freedom (from oppression) throughout history and throughout the world by creating a new history of peace and freedom, not just here in America but worldwide, the 21st century — and with it, the second cycle of the seven bells that Eileen spoke of — has truly begun, it is time for us, starting with our paper, the *World Tribune*, to awaken to our global mission by being a link to members worldwide....

—MARC GINSBURG
Staten Island, N.Y.

Encouraged

I have really been so encouraged by every article of the Nov. 26 issue of the *World Tribune*. I am saving this one and trying to encourage more of the members in the Central Oregon District to subscribe if they aren’t already. It’s like a really good movie. Thanks so much for your encouragement behind the scenes.

—SANDY WALKER
Bend, Ore.

About the Environment

Many thanks to Frank Hotchkiss for his Perspective in the Oct. 1 *World Tribune*! “Some Good News About the Environment” read like the proverbial breath of fresh air. Cutting down trees to produce books to protest deforestation seems slightly contradictory. On the other hand, there are so many opportunities to get involved with local “green teams,” recycling efforts and other programs. Positive action based on a high life-condition and knowledge of hard data will go much further in helping us care for the world than despairing over the predictions of eco-alarmists.

—LEE VOGEL,
Kansas City, Mo.

I agree that we mustn’t allow ourselves to feel hopeless in the face of enormous problems. I feel this is the most valid point Frank Hotchkiss makes in his perspective entitled “Some Good News About the Environment.” But otherwise, the piece was weakened by triviality. Sweeping, inaccurate generalizations and simplistic conclusions are drawn about environmentalism and about at least two environmental scientists who are respected all over the world. But most importantly, the piece seems to encourage complacency and that is always dangerous. It is way too early in the game to pat ourselves on the back for a job well done. The facts presented in this article may or not be from credible sources, and both factoids and statistics are often used to tell whatever story we want them to.

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Nothing else in nature produces waste that something else doesn't make good use of but we human beings, and our development and technology needs to focus on this problem for the sake of our children and their children onto the seventh generation. We cannot eliminate human impacts from production and consumption, but we need to find ways to responsibly come into balance and harmony with our world. Developing fields such as industrial ecology, for example, seek to engineer cost-effective plans to link businesses that can utilize each other's wastes to lessen potentially destructive impacts. All of our best technology is an imitation of systems and processes in nature that have worked with astonishing efficiency for centuries. And as we have interfered with these intricate ecosystems in the name of so-called progress, growth and development, we are just beginning to wake up to what it is we have to lose.

As Buddhists we have learned about the oneness of life and the environment and the Middle Way. The concept of the Middle Way transcends the dualities we have learned, such as the separation of humans and their environment. We are intimately linked to all the life forms on this planet and the earth's life support systems. Nothing could be more fundamentally important if people were truly aware of this relationship. In the writing "On Omens," Nichiren Daishonin explains this, relating our five senses to the four directions and our mind to the center of the compass. He states "when the people's five sense organs break down, the four quarters and the center will be startled and shaken, and as signs of the consequent destruction of the land, mountains will collapse, grasses and trees wither and rivers will run dry" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 644).

But as President Ikeda says, we are living in a world afflicted by the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness. Many otherwise well-intentioned people are blind to the consequences of their actions. In their delusion they do great harm, and we are all involved in the many collective processes that defile the earth. I don't believe that any competent environmental scientist fails to take into account that the planet is trying to refresh and recharge itself, the question is do we give the Earth a chance to do this? Just as we each have our own unique mission to fulfill in life, so does every other species we share this planet with, whether we understand their usefulness or not. Human activity accelerating species extinction is not a scare or a hoax, it is a proven and disturbing reality. When the life support systems of Mother Earth go down, we all go down too. And if you believe in the Gaia theory, that the planet itself is a living organism, then it will then go on just fine without us.

If there is money to be made in dire predictions as Mr. Hotchkiss suggests, the opposite is also true. Consider who benefits from people being complacent and thinking everything is OK. The people who benefit from continuing business as usual will think it's great if you relax and do nothing. Are people in underdeveloped countries really feeling hopeless and doing desperate things because of gloomy environmental predictions? I don't think so. They are feeling unempowered because giant, multi-national corporations from the Northern hemisphere are exploiting and exporting their resources while they are living in poverty and not seeing any gains or compensation from this activity. The alternative view to the current paradigm of development and growth and making money as the number one priority in life is not an ignorant or naive one such as Mr. Hotchkiss suggests by the example of screaming at the receding tide for the ocean to come back.

So by all means, let's act with awareness, and not in fear. But let's not go to sleep or choose to remain blind. A lot of busy people rarely take the time to gather information from a variety of sources, or go out and actually experience the natural world around them.

We all stalk the Earth in ignorance unless we take the time to educate ourselves and do these things. Very few of us understand anything about the place where we live, the inputs and outputs, where the garbage goes, where our water comes from, what kinds of plants and animals are there. And it behooves all of us to make the effort to do this. Let's be truly informed, responsible, forward-looking citizens as we enter the 21st century. And let's pray to live, doing as little harm as possible, in this world where we see all too much violence against humans and nature, while we perpetuate what Gandhi called "commerce without morality."

The real good news about our environment is that it will clean up as we polish our lives through vigilant and assiduous efforts, talking and walking our prayers with conviction in this confused world we live in.

—DON SANDERS,
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