

NEW NATIONAL YMD LEADER INTRODUCED

Seize the Day had the pleasure of interviewing new SGI-USA Young Men's Leader Cory Taylor. He's a creative guy so we knew we had to be creative right back at him. Our strategy was bold. If Cory shows up to the interview with a zany hat, we show up with *two even* zanier hats. If he uses a large vocabulary, we invoke backward Latin. With Cory, life is intensely creative. He's a hilarious guy, but he's also extremely serious about peace. Read on.

Seize: Cory, can we ask a big question?

Cory: Big is good.

Seize: What's the next focus for the youth division?

Cory: March 16

Seize: Why March 16? What's its significance?

Cory: In order to fully appreciate the significance of March 16, we need to understand the conditions in which it took place. In the 1950s, Japan was run by people in their 50s and 60s. In those days, a young person wanting to impact Japanese society wasn't even able to get into a position to make a difference until they were in their 50s or 60s. But in one decisive move, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, a revolutionary in a sense, created a ceremony whereby he transferred the mission for kosen-rufu to his most treasured disciples, the youth. And specifically, to Daisaku Ikeda. This was an unprecedented statement. Can you imagine? In a society where youth were treated, for the most part, as errand boys and girls, President Toda declared that youth are the true leaders of kosen-rufu! Forty-two years later, treasuring youth is firmly established as the spirit of the Soka Gakkai. If we were to stop celebrating March 16, this spirit would die. This is why we must, now and forever, celebrate March 16. It is our right as youth.

Seize: The stakes are high.

Cory: Yes. It's a right. We don't give up our rights. Our seniors in the men's and women's divisions have already experienced the March 16 of their youth. That is why they support us. They know how important it is. We can't allow it to die. On the contrary, we need to take it to a new level. I believe the best way for us to celebrate March 16 in the year 2000 is to initiate an enormous wave of propagation across America.

Seize: So, as we advance toward March 16...

Cory: Yes?

Seize: ...what do you feel is your personal responsibility?

Cory: People don't exist for religion. Religion exists for people. There are millions of youth in America. How many of them know about the Mystic Law? How many of them know about SGI President Ikeda? How many of them know how to forge a resolute and unshakable self—a self strong enough to calmly withstand whatever conditions or circumstances one may encounter in daily life and society? President Ikeda says: "If we were to keep to ourselves the means we have found for attaining happiness, not sharing it with others, we would have succumbed to the states of Animality and Hunger. The wish to share the truth with others, to share the means for achieving happiness is the hallmark of philosophy, of education, of culture and of Buddhism." As young men, our responsibility is to be the engine of the organization. How do we start the engine? By propagating Buddhism. My responsibility is to lead the young men's division.

Seize: Propagation is a hot topic.

Cory: Yup.

Seize: What insight do you have about sharing Buddhism with others?

Cory: Caring for people—that's what it's all about. Two things I'd like to share.

Seize: Take us home.

Cory: Number one: Imagine you've been invited to hear a piano recital. There will be two performers. They will play the exact same song, one after the other. The first person—we'll call him Rupert—gets up there and starts to play. Yeah, Rupert's performance is seemingly perfect. Rupe hits all the right keys at all the right times. He keeps perfect rhythm. He's got natural talent. He really knows the song. Sounds just like the CD you once heard. But even though Rupert's doing a great job, you're starting to look at your watch. When is this song going to be over? Sheesh. You start to space out, thinking about laundry. Rupert finishes. Courteous applause follows.

Seize: Like a golf clap?

Cory: Like a golf clap. The second person—we'll call him Bob—gets up there and starts to play. Same song. Same piano. Bob's clearly not as good as Rupert. He's struggling to find the keys. Occasionally he misses one. But wait! He's really concentrating. He's really struggling. He's pouring his whole life into the song. He knows he's not technically very good. But he's going all out. He's not ashamed. He's pounding the keys with passion, his head upright. Tears start to role down your face. He continues on. Somehow, Bob is communicating something more than just the song. Bob is giving it 100 percent. He finishes. And here we get thunderous applause and tears. Same song. Same piano. Different effect. Why is that?

Seize: Not sure.

Cory: Propagation isn't about technique. It's not about how much we know in our heads about Buddhist philosophy. It's about heart and caring. Let's be confident, natural, true to ourselves. The reality is that people feel the intangible things like effort, and heart and struggle. When it comes to propagation...

Seize: ...we should be like Bob.

Cory: There it is.

Seize: Very cool. You had a second point.

Cory: Point two: Let's get out of the mind trip of worrying about why it's so hard to share Buddhism. Let's just do it! People aren't stupid. Most Americans can distinguish between right and wrong, real or false. We have the privilege of fighting for kosen-rufu together with President Ikeda—the person who has created the greatest Buddhist movement in human history. We should be proud! Let's share President Ikeda's guidance with our friends, families and fellow citizens. Let's display our confidence that we are practicing the greatest philosophy. Let's boldly share with friends our actual proof and development. Let's initiate a new era in the youth of SGI-USA, the likes of which have never been seen before. Now it may be that some people feel that they lack that kind of confidence. Well, it could be said that courage means advancing free from all doubts. But sometimes, it requires even greater courage to advance in spite of one's doubts.