

**NEW YORK YOUTH HOLD INTRODUCTORY LECTURE
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On April 28, youth members of New York's Eastern Region gathered at the New York Culture Center to commemorate the first invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo by Nichiren Daishonin on that same date nearly 750 years ago.

In many ways, the youth meeting contrasted dramatically with the Daishonin's first recitation of daimoku: He chanted facing the sea, surrounded by the splendors of nature. But they used the occasion to introduce their friends to Buddhism through a lecture about the philosophy's relevance to modern life and the stresses of living in a technologically advanced, emotionally fragmented society.

A number of troubling contemporary phenomena were discussed by Iris Pagan and Tony Kolens, including "the loneliness of cyberspace," the ethical dilemmas created by cloning technology, the persistence of violence despite the end of the Cold War, school shootings, police brutality and challenges presented by significantly expanded life spans.

"How can we connect with others? How can we find happiness in this information-overload age? How can we overcome our destructive impulses and establish harmonious relationships with one another?" the lecturers asked.

After a brief foray through Buddhist history, they arrived at the answer to such questions: the philosophy of the Lotus Sutra and the power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which contain the eternal formulae for overcoming negativity and reviving society. People today, like those in the Daishonin's time, contain all the wisdom and fortune needed to overcome adversity, if they chant daimoku. The role of the Gohonzon was also noted, including the fact that the Daishonin saw the danger in statue worship, which encourages a passive attitude and belief that power resides outside oneself, as well as the perils of a fascination with looking only inside oneself. "Nichiren Daishonin gave us the Gohonzon to enable us to have an external object but one that allows us to focus on what is inside," they said.

And so, after linking past to present and noting the undying relevance of Buddhism, the youth and their friends joined in a few minutes of slow, heartfelt daimoku.