

**YOUTH STUDY JULY 2000  
BEING TRUE TO OURSELVES**

**“From this hour I ordain myself loos’d of limits and imaginary  
lines,  
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,  
Listening to others, considering well what they say,  
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,  
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that  
would hold me.”  
(Walt Whitman, *Song of an Open Road*)**

*By Suyrissa Langbell, Youth Study Committee*

Four years ago when I started chanting and reading SGI President Ikeda’s speeches, I remember how he caught my attention as well as my immediate respect. He spoke to youth on the same level as adults. His bold messages always included “be true to yourself.” By contrast, many adults these days are not saying this to youth. Instead they complain about times changing and young people’s lack of respect for life and their elders. I think President Ikeda is different because he sincerely believes in each of us. He trusts and sees our Buddhahood, even though we cannot always see it ourselves. And ironically because we fail to see our own Buddhahood, we sometimes fail to trust ourselves enough even to follow his guidance.

If we look at history and learn from those people who stood up alone against evil authority, we can see that these heroes were first and foremost true to themselves. Their courage was found through their own personal conviction and belief in what they were doing. For example, first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi would not have sacrificed his life in prison during World War II unless he knew in his heart that he was doing the right thing. He did not look to the priests for reassurance or approval because he knew from his own wisdom that they were not protecting the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. If he were to follow their lead, we most likely would never have learned about the Mystic law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

I am beginning to learn that before any individual can take action for justice in his or her life, it is important to see oneself clearly. Once the self is understood, respected and honored, nothing can defeat the individual. We all want to be happy, but many of us seek approval of those around us. Most are afraid to look foolish, which I think is true of all ages. So it is easy to find ourselves putting forth energy to fit in. But as I get older, I am learning how to overcome my insecurities of not fitting in. As long as I am working towards fulfilling my dreams, I have a foundation based on happiness and I do not have the tendency to worry about what others think of me. This creates a calming effect within my life. From this kind of life condition, it is natural then to see the Buddhahood in those around me. As a result of this clarity, I can develop the resolve to help others open up their own lives to the happiness they deserve.

Being true to oneself means seeing our lives in the Gohonzon and believing that we are just as capable of standing up for each person’s happiness as presidents Makiguchi, Toda and Ikeda. “What each must seek in his own life never was on land

or sea. It is something that never has been and never could have been experienced by anyone else” (Joseph Campbell). Each human being has a unique existence — making up a beautiful collage of existences. President Ikeda, who has seen the worldwide spread of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism for more than 50 years, expresses his vision of how our world peace movement will grow:

**Our movement is an endeavor to illuminate and treasure the life of each individual, to help people develop their inherent good, to bring forth their positive creativity, and to forge indomitable selves that are not at the mercy of their desires or environment, selves undefeated by anything. We call this process “human revolution.”** (*The New Human Revolution* , vol. 5, p. 16)

This movement begins in the living rooms of ordinary people, with young people like us enjoying our own unique individuality—following our own path, creating our own history and encouraging our friends to, above all else, be true to themselves.

**This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.**

— Emerson