

IMPRESSIONS FROM THE FNCC YMD CONFERENCE

**JASON EVANS
VIRGINIA, 19**

I saw the Young Men's Division conference as a significant event in the progress of the youth of America. These individuals arrived with many questions and left with many determinations. I am really confident that these young men will make President Ikeda's hopes for the youth of America a reality.

The conference focused on the key issues that these young men are yearning to take responsibility for: The Soka Spirit movement, propagation, the mentor and disciple relationship and responsibility for kosen-rufu. These are the aspects that the young men really developed a plan of action for.

I am certain that as these men return to their respective communities, they will spread great waves of determination to all the youth. When President Ikeda arrives next year, the youth of America will present him with the gift of actual proof. Part of the development of that gift began at the 2000 Young Men's Division Conference.

**MITCHELL TARVER
OAKLAND, CALIF., 20**

*A*t first I was really hesitant about coming to the FNCC, and to be honest, even after I arrived and saw for the first time how beautiful this place was, my hesitation continued. In fact, I was so negative I failed to go to evening gongyo and chose to force myself to sleep at 9:30 p.m.

Awakening the next day, I decided to take advantage and absorb this place with an open heart, as my mother would say. Within no time at all I found myself not only around SGI members but also around a great group of men. I decided to take advantage of this opportunity and to meet and interact with as many people as possible.

It turned out that I ended up meeting great people and learning many things about their practice that I could use to encourage my practice.

**JOHN S. RAJESKI
OAKLAND, CALIF.**

*H*ow do I summarize an experience that's beyond explanation? Honestly, I do not know. What I can share is that it was a tremendous honor to be a part of the first Young Men's Division Conference of this new century. And I would like to personally thank and recognize all of the young men throughout America whose tremendous spirit, sincerity and passion toward learning about Buddhism touched me in ways too numerous to mention. Thank you all very much for allowing me to participate in this experience.

**MICHEAL O'MALLEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIF., 17**

I believe the most important thing said all weekend was “Keep it real.” When the national leaders — James Herrmann, Cory Taylor, Ken Saragosa, Daisaku Leslie and Steve Mortan—said that, I thought they were sharing their compassion and really giving light to the mentor and disciple relationship.

I believe people who had the courage to “keep it real,” look inward in their own lives and to keenly develop themselves, fulfilled the purpose of this conference. “Keeping it real” in the sense of the mentor and disciple relationship is also having the courage to realize the mentor’s vision and implant it into daily life.

This guidance has sparked my determination to really practice Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism wholeheartedly and to not succumb to my own ego.

**THOMAS PATTERSON
BROOKLYN, N.Y., 20**

Thomas shared the following poem:

*Brothers united at Eagle Peak
Sharing their passions
Sharing their struggles.
Today we are reborn
Today it begins
Determined to win,
Let us advance.*

**AL-FUQUAN FLADGER
NEW JERSEY**

Al-Fuquan shared the following poem:

To be a Buddha

*Like a denominator with no numeration
The range is undefined
A mentor and disciple
Proctor for the mind.*

*Creator of the causes
Student of the effect
Unsatisfied in the search for wisdom
Misunderstood by those with no respect*

Humbled warriors exhibiting compassion,

*Sacrificing a lifetime for the fight.
Surging ahead for kosen-rufu because
There's a world we must enlighten*

Potential....

*The word strong enough to make a
Buddha shed tears;
Because it means we haven't accomplished
Enough, for actual proof around our peers*

*Sometimes a lonely spirit,
Struggling to shine within the dark
To many a seeking spirit where
Happiness always sparked.*

**MIGUEL ATWOOD-FERGUSEN
STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, 20**

To Fight until the very last moment!!

Buddhism is win or lose. There is no other way to realize our goals unless we dedicate our lives wholeheartedly. For me, this means to fight until the very last moment. At the recent Young Men's Division Conference at the FNCC, I was continually inspired to look more closely at how I was leading my life.

Right away, I found I had a recurring problem. I was giving up the fight before it was over!!! Although in some facets of my life I was succeeding, I could trace this tendency to give up to all areas of my life. This was especially evident in my work as a musician and in my efforts to spread this Buddhism. After digging deeper, I found this was due to a lack of focus and faith in myself. Then it sort of dawned on me that this had been my life-long battle.

In the past I had always concealed this problem from myself with drugs, lies, ignorance and concentrating on other people's problems. I was miserable!!! A new chapter in my life has begun. I have promised the Gohonzon to steadfastly finish what I have started. I will not defeat myself. As a Bodhisattva of the Earth, I have decided that there is no better time than now to take responsibility for my life and show actual proof to the world!!! Thank you very much.