

IMPRESSION FROM THE JUNIOR HIGH/SENIOR HIGH CONFERENCE

**IVY GABBERT, 25
ATLANTA**

This conference was truly a learning experience for me. I learned not only about myself but also about the teenage members and our shared mission for kosen-rufu.

During the four days of the conference, I met new friends, each of whom had a deep impact in my life. I was unaware of it at the time, but by the last night of the conference, I realized that through each encounter, I was revealing something about myself. I learned that I was limiting myself in my personal life as well as within the organization. Being a leader is quite overwhelming at times—so much so that it is easy to forget why I was appointed with the responsibility in the first place. I found that my limitations were affecting the members that I am supposed to care for. Attending meetings was not a problem, but regularly calling members was. I hardly did it.

I noticed while looking around the Sunshine dining room over the span of four days that people talked and associated with the same people. While in discussion groups we were forced to meet new people, when left to ourselves, we tended to be with the people we felt most comfortable with. It's human nature. I learned that it is with the common mission of achieving kosen-rufu that we are all connected. I realized that we as SGI youth members need to challenge ourselves to be courageous, compassionate and appreciative.

Courage is to do what we believe is right, no matter what other people think.

Compassion is to feel others' suffering, even when we might not have experienced it ourselves.

Appreciation is for all that has been given to us by our parents and SGI President Ikeda, not only expressed in words of gratitude, but through our actions as well.

**GEORGE NAGATA, 16
LOS ANGELES**

Today is July 16, 2000 — a sad yet a victorious day. For many, today is the day they start a new human revolution, embarking from a four-day FNCC hardcore training that we will utilize back at our districts, areas, regions or zones. We received training from the best of the best, and added memories to our most sacred treasure of all, the heart. To a lot of people, the heart may be just an anatomical part of the body, but to me, the heart signifies and stores the most treasured memories. As Nichiren Daishonin states, "More valuable than the treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most important of all" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 851).

The past four days at the FNCC were the greatest experience and memories you could have given me. This conference was a starting point in my human revolution.

Though I saw many who encountered hardships and struggles, one person sticks in my mind. He wanted to enjoy himself and learn at the FNCC, but faced struggles

on Friday and went to a leader for guidance. Having been told to chant daimoku about the problem, he chanted vigorously for one hour the next day. Just as the sun rises and falls, he got an immediate response. Satisfied but not enjoying himself at the conference, he received the greatest gift of all...love. Watching him since day one of the conference, I noticed a change in him. I saw him grow. Today, I tried to report back to the leader who gave him guidance. But before I could finish the sentence, tears of joy and happiness for him overwhelmed me.

Assessing the victory that he won, I truly found a deeper understanding of the power of chanting. As Danny Nagashima said, "When you chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no obstacle can stand between you and the Gohonzon." I could tell just how much he changed from the beginning to the conclusion of the conference. Knowing that the conference changed even one person's life, I feel that I too, can be happy. Now I realize that, through the power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, nothing is impossible. I believe everyone grew in some way during this conference. I think that this conference was a new starting point in my life. I thank everyone for the wonderful memories, encouragement, friendship and guidance. Just having the experience of coming to this conference has made me a better person. I hope — no, I *know* I will see you all again. Once again thank you all. Good luck on the years ahead and please, please keep this experience at the FNCC in the most treasured place, the heart.

We are the "hope of the world." It depends on us and the actions that we take now. I know that we will become the new hope of the world.

**BRIAN NAKAMURA, 17
NEW ORLEANS**

During the conference, it hit me that we're all teenagers from different places with different attitudes and personalities. With everyone there, we pretty much represented a typical, "everyday" teenage society. But unlike a normal teenage society, where there is often friction, everyone at the FNCC was friendly and courteous to one another. Everyone got along as if they were already friends before the conference. Seeing that, I know it's possible for all people to live peacefully together.