

**PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, CELEBRATING AND STANDING UP!
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SGI-USA So. Calif Zone's first LGBT Pride Celebration for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members was held at the Los Angeles Friendship Center on Oct. 23 with a sense of history in the making.

In his message to this event, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima encouraged participants with SGI President Ikeda's guidance: "Love the people! Live splendid lives! Make your life a beacon that will illuminate the darkness ahead."

The celebration highlights included experiences from SGI-USA members Michael Angelo and Becky Heath. Both experiences reflected the struggle to challenge inauthenticity in one's own life, and the sufferings that arise when families become divided. Becky and Michael eloquently shared the doubts, fears and obstacles that arose in the course of their growing awareness of their sexuality and the pain of keeping it secret. Ultimately, both have experienced victories in their practice of faith that have changed long-term sufferings into beautiful causes for advancement and profound personal human revolution.

SGI-USA Vice General Director and Culture Department Leader Eric Hauber, as a guest speaker, offered a thought-provoking perspective and guidance.

Later, Mr. Hauber shared on an equally resonant note that a philosophy, in this case the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin, must be authentic in both word and deed. In terms of this "authentic philosophy," he relayed SGI President Ikeda's guidance on three fundamental points that people must foster within themselves in order to live authentically:

"You must have the courage to face life squarely, you must care deeply for others and their suffering, and you must have the courage to stand up and speak out against evil—no matter what the cost."

Mr. Hauber identified the definition of evil, based on President Ikeda's explanation, as the following: "Any person's or group's behavior that abuses or robs another human being of their hope for the future." This was a particularly powerful statement.

Mastering the evil in our own hearts requires fortitude, persistence and diligence, and on that note Mr. Hauber brought up a delicate point: It is not enough to tolerate others while harboring secret grudges, judgments and prejudices. Authentic compassion lies in the ability to love other human beings—to fill our own hearts with love and develop the mighty life-condition that inspires others to love this way.

The meeting showed a great example of the magnanimousness that Buddhism encourages its practitioners to establish within themselves.