

**ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES CONFERENCE COMING SOON
BY GREG MARTIN
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Upcoming conference will focus on applying Buddhism to the concerns of the SGI-USA's many gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members.

Since the Florida Nature and Culture Center conference on "Our Mission As Buddhists With Alternative Lifestyles" scheduled for March 8–11 was announced in the Dec. 15, 2000, *World Tribune*, there has been much interest and, unfortunately, confusion about what exactly this conference is about. We apologize for the confusion.

This conference was created in response to the many requests from members and leaders who share a common interest in participating in a conference focused on applying Buddhism to the concerns of our many gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members — sometimes referred to in summary as those leading "alternative lifestyles."

Diversity in the SGI-USA is a great virtue. As SGI President Ikeda writes: "Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism deeply respects each person's individuality, situation and character, and shows the way to display one's particular abilities to the fullest. The 'Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings' says, 'Cherry, plum, peach and damson blossoms all have their own qualities, and they manifest the three properties of the life of the original Buddha without changing their character.' People, in other words, should give full play to their unique capabilities as they struggle toward kosen-rufu. Their struggle brings about their own human revolution, and the circle of unity they form is the Soka Gakkai" (*Selected Lectures on the Goshō*, vol. 1, p. 154).

In responding to members' diverse concerns by offering a solid foundation of faith, we use our diversity to strengthen our unity and common bonds as SGI-USA members.

In keeping with the current SGI-USA guidelines for specific interest meetings, this conference will focus on the discussion of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and its application to the specific challenges of these members in their daily lives. This conference will not be used to promote involvement in community activities or political and social issues.

The SGI-USA is proud to sponsor what, for our organization, is a historic conference. We anticipate that it will be a great opportunity for all involved to awaken to a deeper sense of mission in American society, fulfilling our role as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The conference is open to all members, whether or not they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. In other words, everyone is encouraged to participate.

We hope that you will join Women's Leader Matilda Buck and vice general directors Gary Murie and myself at this exciting conference.