

**VIRGINIA STRAUS LECTURES AT NEW YORK CULTURE CENTER
A NEW KIND OF PEACE MOVEMENT FOR A NEW KIND OF WAR
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Since Sept. 11, a drumbeat has been apparent in the media: America is fighting a new kind of war. "So when you are talking about a new kind of war, what do you need?" asked Virginia Straus, the executive director of the SGI-affiliated Boston Research Center for the 21st Century. "You need a new kind of peace movement and the SGI can be in the vanguard of it," she told a room full of members who had gathered at the SGI-USA's New York Culture Center on Oct. 20.

As head of the BRC, whose mission is the study of peace and the promotion of Buddhist humanism in society, Ms. Straus said that in the wake of Sept. 11 it was important for each of them to become a leader in what she called a new "grass-roots peace movement." She said that in addition to being "experts in touching people's hearts," it was also important for members to become eloquent in explaining how Buddhist principles apply to the world around us, especially at this critical time. To this end, she encouraged members to read a number of books, including SGI President Ikeda's *For the Sake of Peace* and *Is There No Other Way?* by Michael Nagler, chairman of the Peace and Conflict Studies Program at the University of California at Berkeley.

Ms. Straus said experts in the field of conflict resolution are coming very close to the essence of Buddhist principles as they discover, through trial and error, how to resolve conflict. Both President Ikeda and Professor Nagler have pointed out that violence, so pervasive in our society, is rooted in hatred. Hatred in turn springs from ignorance of what Mahatma Gandhi called the "heart unity" among people, namely the oneness of all humanity. Ms. Straus said a terrorist would not lash out at someone he was able to identify with. "It is that ignorance that needs to be confronted in everyone," she said.

She urged members to engage in interfaith dialogues with Christians, Muslims and people of other faiths. She said it would be a major step forward for SGI-USA members to understand Islam better, adding that if we want a "spiritually based peace movement," there are people in other religions who can be great allies.

With more than 90 percent of the American public in favor of the bombing in Afghanistan, Ms. Straus said peace scholars are feeling under siege. She encouraged SGI-USA members to contact local universities and invite peace scholars to SGI-USA discussion meetings. She also suggested members visit the BRC Web site (www.brc21.org) to access information on non-violent perspectives on the present crisis.