

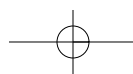
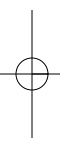


KINGMOND YOUNG

WORLD  
TRIBUNE  
S P E C I A L

May Commemorative  
Contribution:

*Open*  
the Path for  
the Future



Message

# Creating Your Own Grand Vision

by **Danny Nagashima**  
SGI-USA General Director

**In the past year**, the economic crisis has reached all corners of the world. Many are facing serious financial difficulties, including sincere members who have lost their jobs or homes or declared bankruptcy as a result.

Despite these tough times, I hear how much SGI-USA members are supporting and encouraging one another. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to each of you.

From the standpoint of Buddhism, these struggles give us the opportunity to create a new vision for our movement and ourselves. We could even say that now is a crucial turning point for us to progress to the next level of fortune and for America to move to its next stage of development for the sake of peace.

Today, SGI-USA members can refresh their practice at the Florida Nature and Culture Center in Weston,

Fla., and we also have several major culture centers across the country, including one that opened last year on Washington, D.C.'s historic Embassy Row.

This development is a far cry from when I came to this country 35 years ago and worked at a gas station from 10 p.m. to 6 the next morning. I'll never forget the taste of the pastrami sandwich that my local SGI leaders brought to me at the gas station at 4 in the morning to encourage me. I ate that sandwich with tears of joy!

At that time, we had just a few small community centers.



Danny Nagashima

Thanks to your sincere heart and dedication, the SGI-USA opened centers across the country one by one, building a tremendous foundation for American *kosen-rufu*.

Nichiren Daishonin states: "If one gives food to others, one will improve one's own lot, just as, for example, if one lights a fire for others, one will brighten one's own way" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2, p. 1060).

SGI President Ikeda is the greatest example of someone who has selflessly dedicated himself to *kosen-rufu* with the spirit of not begrudging one's life.

As a young man, he poured all his effort into helping second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda rebuild the organization after the war, even spending one winter without an overcoat.

He did so with the conviction that no effort is wasted in faith. In *The New Human Revolution*, President Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto, writes:

"The offerings and financial contributions the organization solicited were exclusively to accomplish the Daishonin's mandate to widely propagate the Mystic Law. Offerings made toward this end were equivalent to offerings made to the original Buddha. There was, then, no greater offering, no greater good. Certainly, nothing could bring greater benefit. This thought filled Shin'ichi with a sense of immeasurable good fortune and joy at having had the chance to make such offerings as a Soka Gakkai member" (*The New*



**Bastion of peace**—SGI-USA members celebrate the opening of the SGI-USA Washington, D. C., Culture Center, located on the historic Embassy Row, June 25.

*Human Revolution*, vol. 4, p. 115).

We can see the effects of the sincere, steadfast causes President Ikeda made in his youth in the lives of the millions of bright and victorious SGI members who practice throughout the world today.

Your dedication and efforts to actualize the dream of *kosen-rufu* will definitely continue to implant tremendous fortune in your own life, as well. With this conviction, please create your own grand vision for the future, while, at the same time, thinking about the generations to follow.

Imagine when millions of people practice Nichiren Buddhism with the SGI all over the United States and *kosen-rufu* spreads throughout the world. Imagine your children and grandchildren taking responsibility for the dream of *kosen-rufu* for the sake of all humankind.

President Ikeda writes: "Benefit that accrues from making contributions is clearly spelled out in the Goshō [*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*]. If we were to contribute to *kosen-rufu* just as the Goshō teaches and then failed to receive

actual proof, then Buddhism would be false. The Gohonzon has tremendous power" (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 10, pp. 171–72).

I deeply appreciate your efforts to share this spirit with others. This May, let's each create our own turning point based on our own human revolution.

President Ikeda is praying for your victory, happiness and the prosperity of your family. I myself am also sincerely praying for your victory. Once again, from the bottom of my heart, thank you! **WT**

**'From the standpoint of Buddhism, these struggles give us the opportunity to create a new vision for our movement and ourselves. We could even say that now is a crucial turning point for us.'**

## Experience

# Happy To Be Able To Give

by *Youngsihn Jong*  
Chicago

**When I was in** elementary school in Korea, my father's business failed. My older sister suffered from mental illness because of the shock. Our family could not afford treatment for her.

My mother decided to start practicing Nichiren Buddhism in hopes of helping my sister overcome her illness. To support my mother, our entire family began to practice and joined the SGI.

One year later, my sister was back to normal. She went on to complete her education and become a well-known medical doctor. Her recovery was enough to convince me of the power of chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo to the Gohonzon.

In 1980, I got married. My husband and I planned to move to the United States, but before we did, I took a trip to Japan with my sister.

She and I made a vow together: When she returned to Korea, and I went to America, we would always keep working for *kosen-rufu* in our respective countries.

In Korea, I had made regular financial contributions to the SGI, because I wanted to support the organization and the members. But when my husband and I arrived in the United States, we did so with nothing but two travel bags.

I made it a daily priority to chant for my husband and me to find work in America and make a good living, because I wanted to show actual proof of the power of practicing Nichiren Buddhism.

I found the work I wanted, but my husband struggled. He started regretting ever moving to the United States, so I encouraged him to try practicing Buddhism with me.

Soon after he started practicing, a luxury hotel in downtown Chicago hired him. He kept practicing and became an SGI-USA member in 1982.

Our financial situation got better, too, and I began making regular financial con-

tributions to the SGI-USA. Meanwhile, my husband and I started a family.

With a young daughter and son to take care of, I dreamed of having a business with flexible working hours, so that we could spend more time with the children and participate in SGI-USA activities more often.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 1001). I got up early every morning to chant for the courage and determination to accomplish my goals. Whenever I lost confidence, I thought of Nichiren's encouragement.

Within a few years, we started a restaurant in Chicago's downtown Loop. At first, we did not realize how great the location was and how many potential customers were working in that area. As time went by, however, our restaurant gained more and more customers.

I was worried that I did not know enough English to communicate well with all our customers. Fortunately, a young man who spoke five languages applied to work at our restaurant and stayed with us for many years.

Our restaurant catered to the lunch crowd and did not stay open late, so we were free to attend SGI-USA meetings in the evening. I also took on leadership responsibilities in the Korean language group and in my district. At first, all the people I took care of were Korean-speaking members. My responsibilities gradually grew to include caring for English-speaking members, too.

I chanted sincerely to understand English so that I could communicate well with everyone. I took an English as a second language class to learn basic conversation, and I expanded my vocabulary by talking with people and by studying the SGI-USA publications. Bit by bit, through earnest prayer and effort, I improved my English language skills.

Every year, I set a goal for participating



**Sincerity—**  
Youngsihn Jong sees the effects of her earnest commitment to support others.

in the SGI-USA May Commemorative Contribution activity and tried my best to meet it. I would set aside a little money every weekday to put toward my goal. No matter what, I would never touch it until the contribution period arrived.

I made my offerings with all my heart. I always felt so glad to be able to give to the SGI-USA and help the organization and the members.

About 20 years after we started our restaurant, business slowed down, and we were struggling. However, I continued to set aside a little money every weekday, and I looked forward to the day when I could make my contribution.

My husband and I kept working hard. In time, business began to pick up again. On April 28, the first day of last year's contribution period, I went to the SGI-USA Chicago Culture Center after work and made my contribution. I felt so happy and victorious!

About a month after that, our restaurant received a large standing order. So many people who worked in a nearby building had been placing individual lunch orders

with us that the managers decided it would make sense to have us bring a large number of meals to their building by lunchtime every weekday.

We have been filling this standing order for nearly a year now, in addition to our regular business in the restaurant. Our customers say that they are happy and satisfied with our service.

Even though the U.S. and world economy took a downturn last year, our business has stayed strong. When we gave our accountants information for our tax return, they told us that our business was the only one to report higher profits for last year than for the year before.

Through all the worries and challenges I have faced, I have always done my best to support the SGI and care for the members. I am now enjoying my life and my Buddhist practice more than ever.

I deeply appreciate the great fortune that my family has created through the power of chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo to the Gohonzon. And I am determined to continue to fulfill my vow to work for *kosen-rufu* all my life. **WT**



## Experience

## Helping Out

by *Victoria Oehlerking*  
San Francisco

**I just moved** to San Francisco from Florida in June of last year. I'm 10 years old, and I'm in the fourth grade. When I was born, my mom and dad were already chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, so I'm what you call a "fortune baby."

Last year, my grandpa had cancer,

and he sent me money for my birthday. A week or so after my birthday, he passed away. I knew that my grandfather wanted me to use the money for something important, so I just donated it to the SGI-USA for May Contribution without anyone telling me to. It made me feel good to give my money to the SGI. I know my grandpa would have been happy.

After that, I made another goal for myself this year and started saving my money. I wanted to donate my money again, because I learned at an elementary school division meeting about how

hard SGI President Ikeda works for world peace, and I really wanted to help. It's kind of hard to explain, but it makes me feel good.

I do five different chores to help my mom like closing the blinds at night and feeding my cat. I also help my mom water the flowers. I just keep my allowance inside of a little box. I want to donate my money every year!

Since I just moved here, making new friends and stuff was a little hard, but I made many friends. And I hope I can go to Soka University of America when I go to college. **WT**

## Study

# The Poor Woman's Lamp

The following is an excerpt from SGI President Ikeda's essay on the value of sincerity published in the March–April 2006 Living Buddhism.

In a letter Nichiren Daishonin wrote 700 years ago in appreciation of sincere offerings made by a devout woman called Onichi-nyo, a passage reads: "A poor woman cut off her hair and sold it to buy oil [for the Buddha], and not even the winds sweeping down from Mount Sumeru could extinguish the flame of the lamp fed by this oil" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 1089). This story is derived from a Buddhist scripture and is widely known as "The Poor Woman's Lamp."

In the days of Shakyamuni Buddha there was a state called Magadha in ancient India. The well-known city Rajagriha was the capital where the king of this state resided. An old woman lived nearby. A person of profound faith, she had always yearned to offer something precious to the Buddha, but, as alone and as poor as she was, she could not fulfill her desire.

One day on the street, the old woman encountered a long procession of carts carrying a large quantity of flax oil. Upon asking, she learned that the oil was a donation that Ajatashatru, the king of the country, was sending to the Buddha. Deeply moved, the old woman also longed to make an offering, but she had no money whatsoever. She decided to cut off her own hair and sell it. (Some say she had saved a little from the alms she had received.) With that money, she bought a small amount of flax oil and went to offer it to the Buddha. She thought: "With so little oil a lamp will burn only half a night. However, if the Buddha recognizes my faith and feels compassion for me, then the lamp will burn throughout the night."

Her wish was fulfilled and the lamp continued to burn throughout the night, while all the other lamps went out in the strong winds that blew from the direction of Mount Sumeru. When day broke, people tried to blow it out, but, on the contrary, her lamp continued to glow all the more, so brightly as to almost illuminate the entire world. Then, Shakyamuni Buddha scolded his disciples who were doing everything possible to extinguish the glowing light:

"Stop! Stop! This old woman made offerings to 18 million Buddhas in her



**Offering**—In 'A Poor Woman's Lamp,' a woman sells her hair to buy lamp oil for the Buddha. The flame fed by the woman's oil could never be extinguished.

previous existences and received a prophecy from a Buddha in her last life that she would attain Buddhahood." Then, Shakyamuni Buddha proclaimed that in the future she would certainly become a Buddha called Lamp Light Sumeru. Needless to say, upon hearing that, the old woman was overjoyed. By contrast, Ajatashatru, even though he had donated tens of thousands of times as much oil as the old woman, could not receive a prophecy of enlightenment, because he had an overwhelming sense of arrogance within himself.

This is a parable, of course, but I think it could be considered philosophical in that it holds a great deal of meaning. What "The Poor Woman's Lamp" teach-

es us, more than anything else, is the value of sincerity. It is true that her efforts were not impressive, and people preoccupied with mundane affairs might not have taken the slightest notice of the dedication she expressed in offering the small amount of oil. But Shakyamuni was indeed a man of penetrating insight. You can no more sever the ties of sincerity that bind human beings to one another in the depths of their lives than you can cut through water or air. Even when all other things wane and collapse into the whirlpool of life's relentless difficulties, such sincerity will only glow all the more brilliantly. I cannot help but feel that, in the light of the lamp that the old woman offered, Shakyamuni saw the light of life, which never fades away.

It is not the material worth of an offering but the spirit behind it that counts. The poor woman's single lamp meant far more than the 5,000 barrels of lamp oil that Ajatashatru, the ruler of that country, donated to the Buddha. The little lamp contained the sincerity that a nameless woman felt with her entire being (pp. 14–15).

## SGI-USA

## Message from the CFO

Please accept our deepest appreciation for your continuing financial support of the SGI-USA in the midst of these challenging economic times.

In advance of May Commemorative

Contribution—to be held this year from April 28 to June 14—I would like to give an overview of the SGI-USA corporation and its financial operations.



Adin Strauss

SGI-USA is an exempt religious organiza-

tion under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. As such, all of the SGI-USA's assets are irrevocably dedicated to its exempt religious purposes and all contributions are tax-deductible to the donor.

The overwhelming majority of our revenue comes from direct contributions from members. Other major sources of funds include subscriptions and bookstore sales, conference fees (for the Florida Nature and Culture Center) and investment income. All contributions, regardless of timing or location, are used to support the faith and practice of SGI-USA members and promote the propagation of Nichiren Buddhism and SGI's philosophy of contributing to peace, culture and education based on Buddhist humanism.

The corporation employs staff to carry out the many tasks needed to support the SGI-USA line organization, which include developing study materials and programs, and acquiring and maintaining its more than 90 facilities around the country.

In addition, we have placed a high priority on a long-term savings program, the 21st Century Fund, to be used to support *kosen-rufu* activities far into the future. A substantial portion of our contribution income is set aside within this fund and invested in a diversified portfolio of securities based on the advice of top-tier investment professionals.

Please visit the SGI-USA Web site at [www.sgi-usa.org](http://www.sgi-usa.org) for further details about sources and uses of funds, corporate governance and our board of directors.

Thank you very much again.

Adin Strauss  
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'In the light of the lamp that the old woman offered, Shakyamuni saw the light of life, which never fades away.'