2015 Growth

Founded in 1960, the Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA) is the most diverse Buddhist community in the United States with more than 550 chapters and some 100 centers throughout the country. The SGI-USA is part of the larger SGI network with more than 12 million members in 192 countries and territories around the world. As lay believers and engaged Buddhists, the SGI-USA promotes individual happiness and world peace through the practical application of the humanistic principles of Nichiren Buddhism. Members worldwide strive to improve their lives and their communities by creating value and contributing to the well-being of others.

In 2015, the SGI-USA continued to focus on the importance of the neighborhood discussion meeting where people from all walks of life come together to convey the joys of their practice and share this practice with family and friends. By the end of 2015, the SGI-USA had 2,777 districts and 554 chapters.

SGI-USA Buddhist Centers Opened

There are about 100 Buddhist centers throughout the United States and its territories (see the back cover for a complete list). The following centers had openings in 2015:

1. April 12, SGI-USA San Fernando Valley Buddhist Center in North Hollywood, California.
2. August 9, SGI-USA Cleveland Buddhist Center, Cleveland Heights, Ohio.
3. August 30, SGI-USA Fort Worth Buddhist Center, Fort Worth, Texas.

Social Media

- Website: Find us at www.sgi-usa.org
- Facebook: Find us (and like us) at www.facebook.com/sgiusa.info
- Bookstore: Shop online at http://bookstore.sgi-usa.org
- YouTube: Search the “SGI-USA Channel” for several videos, especially the series “Buddhist in America,” a documentary series that features youth applying Buddhism to their daily lives; “Composing Hope,” which profiles youth who discuss how their Buddhist practice has informed their work as artists; and “The Buddha Beat” features interviews with everyday people about their thoughts on Buddhism at www.youtube.com/SGIUSAmedia.
- Twitter: Find us at #OfficialSGIUSA
- Victory Over Violence: (the SGI-USA youth-led program aimed at building a culture of peace): Go to www.vov.com
- Create Magazine: (the SGI-USA youth-led online magazine): Go to www.createmag.org
- Revolution in You: SGI-USA’s new anthem for the abolition of nuclear weapons. This music video was spearheaded by the SGI-USA student division as part of the “Our New Clear Future” movement, which aims to eradicate nuclear weapons by 2030—beginning with creating public consensus that will lay the groundwork for future policy. Hashtag at #newclear. Visit http://tinyurl.com/OurNewClearFuture.

Books Published

Books by SGI President Ikeda:
Learning From the Writings:
The Teachings for Victory, vol. 2
The New Human Revolution, vol. 26
The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace — Part 1: Happiness

Other Books: Nichiren (comic)
It is the promise of our practice in the Soka Gakkai International that we can attain a state of freedom and unshakable happiness for ourselves while creating harmony with others. Buddhism is a way of life that makes no distinction between the individual human being and the environment in which that person lives.

The Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA) strives to contribute to American society in significant ways, as it has for more than five decades. Areas of focus span culture, peace activism, disaster relief, sustainability, and education. The ultimate aim of Buddhism and of the SGI-USA is the establishment of a peaceful world. Toward this end, the SGI-USA actively promotes peace, culture, and education.

The Soka Gakkai International continues to be led by its founding president, Daisaku Ikeda. The significance of his leadership as a Buddhist philosopher can most readily be gauged in the dramatic growth of the SGI organization and in the broad diversity that characterizes its movement for promoting a philosophy of character development and social engagement for peace. He has published more than 150 works, ranging from Buddhist philosophy to biographical essays, poetry, children’s stories, and photographic collections. Mr. Ikeda is also the founder of the Soka (value creation) schools, a nondenominational school system based on an ideal of fostering each student’s unique creative potential and cultivating an ethic of peace, social contribution, and global consciousness. The Soka schools span kindergarten through graduate study and include a university in Tokyo, Japan, and another in Aliso Viejo, Calif.

Mr. Ikeda is a staunch proponent of dialogue as the foundation of peace. Since the 1970s he has pursued dialogue with a wide range of individuals around the world in political, cultural, educational, and academic fields. More than seventy of these have been published in book form, with people such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Elise Boulding, Joseph Rotblat, and André Malraux. In furtherance of his vision of fostering dialogue and solidarity for peace, Mr. Ikeda has founded a number of independent, nonprofit research institutes that develop collaboration on diverse issues: the Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue, the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy. The Min-On Concert Association and the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum promote mutual understanding and friendship between different national cultures through the arts.

The SGI-USA is made up of 2,777 neighborhood discussion groups across America. At discussion meetings people share with one another how they are applying their Buddhist practice in their lives. As religion journalist Clark Strand notes, "At an SGI-USA discussion meeting, every voice is heard. Such meetings are egalitarian in spirit, democratic in practice, and decidedly life-affirming in their vision of how Buddhist practice might contribute to the happiness of the individual."

In 2015, the SGI helped spearhead the first White House-U.S. Buddhist Leaders Conference held May 14 at George Washington University and then the White House to discuss topics such as climate change, racial justice, and peacebuilding. Under the theme “Voices in the Square—Action in the World,” 125 leaders, monks, and scholars from 62 Buddhist communities and 13 universities, representing each of the major Buddhist traditions and ethnicities gathered to talk about their roles as socially engaged Buddhists in addressing social concerns.

SGI-USA youth representatives visited the U.N. Headquarters in New York on May 19 to present petitions signed by more than 8,500 youth calling to abolish nuclear weapons. These signatures were collected at SGI-USA March youth gatherings, held at 25 locations around the country. As part of the SGI’s larger global peace initiative called “Soka Global Action,” the SGI-USA student division has since 2011 undertaken an “Our New Clear Future” campaign to turn the tide of public opinion in favor of abolishing nuclear weapons.

The SGI-USA Culture of Peace Resource Centers in major cities throughout the United States sponsor programs such as the Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series to support the mainstreaming of the values of the U.N. Culture of Peace into people’s daily lives. In 2015, speakers included Anwarul K. Chowdhury, former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations; David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation; Asha Hans, the founding director of the School of Women’s Studies at Utkal University in Bhubaneswar, India; Betty Reardon, founding director of the International Institute on Peace Education; and Sarah Ann Wider, professor of English and Women’s Studies at Colgate University.

In this year’s Activity Report, we focus on how SGI-USA Buddhists create value in their daily lives and play a positive role in their communities by creating warm bonds of friendship with others. If you are interested in additional information about the SGI-USA’s movement for peace, culture, and education, we welcome your inquiries.
### Exhibitions Hosted by the SGI-USA

**Artists as Mentors** • March 7–8, Oakland, Calif. • Sept. 20–Oct. 27, State of Arkansas Capital, Little Rock, Ark.

**Artists as Peacemakers** • Jan. 15–18, Third Annual Latte Peace Festival, Tamuning, Guam • April 6–16, Park Point University, Pittsburgh, Pa. • Oct. 18, Oakland, Calif.


**The Century of Women** • Feb. 1–March 9, New York, N.Y. • May 8, Torrance, Calif. • June 4–26, Baltimore, Md. • July 26, Santa Monica, Calif. • Sept. 13–20, Tyler Public Library, Tyler, Texas • Sept. 21–25, Texas A&M Commerce Library, Commerce, Texas • Sept. 28–Oct. 2, Texas A&M Texarkana Library, Texarkana, Texas • Oct. 24, Chapman University, Orange, Calif.

**Children Are the Future** • Feb. 26–March 1, Sturgis Public School, Hayannis, Mass. • March 8, University of California, Irvine, Calif.

**Everything You Treasure — For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons** • March 12–24, Dallas, Texas • March 30–April 6, State of New York University, New Paltz, N.Y. • April 19–21, Middlebury Institute of International Studies, Monterey, Calif. • June 28, Torrance, Calif. • Aug. 7–10, Weston, Fla. • Aug. 21–24, Weston, Fla. • Nov. 20–23, Weston, Fla.

**From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit** • Jan. 15–31, Atlanta, Ga. • March 1–31, Seattle, Wash. • March 8, University of California, Irvine, Calif. • March 9–14, New Orleans, La. • March 14, Santa Monica, Calif. • March 14, Washington Irving High School, New York, N.Y. • March 15, Columbia Park, Torrance, Calif. • March 16, Phoenix, Ariz. • April 9–19, Penn State University, University Park, Pa. • April 26–May 5, California State University, Los Angeles, Calif. • May 11, Santa Monica, Calif. • Aug. 8–9, The First Unitarian Church of Dallas, Dallas, Texas • Aug. 10–13, Unity Church of Dallas, Dallas, Texas • Aug. 30–31, Santa Ana, Calif. • Sept. 21–28, Lyndon State College, Lyndonville, Vt. • Sept. 26, Bill Barber Park, Irvine, Calif. • Oct. 7–14, Richford High School, Richford, Vt. • Oct. 23–24, Nevada State College, Henderson, Nev. • Nov. 20, California State University, Northridge, Calif.

**Seeds of Change: The Earth Charter and Human Potential** • March 26–27, Ways to Sustainability, Chico State University, Chico, Calif.

**Seeds of Hope: Visions of Sustainability, Steps Toward Change** • March 8, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, Calif. • March 13–14, Santa Monica, Calif. • March 15, Oakland Tech High School, Oakland, Calif. • June 21, New York City, N.Y. • Oct. 15–19, Salt Palace Convention Center, Salt Lake City, Utah • Nov. 10–15, St. Hilda’s & St. Hugh’s School, New York, N.Y. • Nov. 10–25, Atlanta, Ga.

**SGI-USA: An Engaged Buddhist Community** • Jan. 1–31, Seattle, Wash. • Feb. 1–28, Tacoma, Wash. • March 8, University of California, Irvine, Calif. • April 25, Garden Grove Park, Garden Grove, Calif. • May 11–May 2017, Santa Monica, Calif. • Aug. 8–17, Cleveland Heights, Ohio

**Victory Over Violence** • Feb. 24, El Camino College SGI Campus Club, Torrance, Calif. • March 6–9, Mission College, Santa Clara, Calif. • March 13–14, Santa Monica, Calif. • March 14–15, Atlanta, Ga. • March 15, Oakland Tech High School, Oakland, Calif. • March 18–25, Johnson State College, Johnson, Vt. • March 20–30, Mission College, Santa Clara, Calif. • May 10, University of California, Santa Cruz, Merrill College, Santa Cruz, Calif. • May 11–22, Marzano Azuela Elementary School, Chicago, Ill. • May 28, Santa Clara, Calif. • June 7, South Robertson Neighborhood Organization Festival, Los Angeles, Calif. • June 21, New York City, N.Y. • Aug. 21–31, North Hollywood, Calif. • Sept. 16–22, Augusta Commons, Augusta, Ga. • Sept. 18, Crofton Library, Crofton, Md. • Sept. 21–24, Lefrak City Library, Queens, N.Y. • Sept. 21–Oct. 2, University of Wisconsin–Superior, Superior, Wis. • Sept. 26, Bill Barber Park, Irvine, Calif. • Oct. 5–15, Montana State University, Bozeman, Mont. • Oct. 13–17, Allan Hancock College, Santa Monica, Calif. • Oct. 24, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, Calif. • Nov. 8, Pacific Oaks College, Santa Clara, Calif. • Nov. 17–19, Salem State University, Salem, Mass. • Dec. 12–24, Middlesex Community College, Middletown, Conn. • Dec. 24, Queens, N.Y.
Engaged Buddhism

“One person inspiring another, transcending all differences—this is the basis of changing society at the most fundamental level.”
—Daisaku Ikeda

Several commendations from Guamanian officials included a proclamation signed by Guam Gov. Eddie Baza Calvo declaring Jan. 26, 2015: “Dr. Daisaku Ikeda and SGI Appreciation Day.” U.S. Rep. Madeleine Z. Bordallo presented a statement recognizing and congratulating the SGI that was read into the Congressional Record, the official record of the proceedings and debates of the U.S. Congress.

SGI Senior Vice Women’s Leader Yumiko Kasanuki, Mayor Louise C. Rivera, and Speaker of the 33rd Guam Legislature Judith T. Won Pat participated in the lighting of the latte stones—stone monoliths that the ancient Chamorros carved from coral limestone and served as a foundation for their homes.

Said Mayor Rivera, “Today, when we see latte stones, we think of the culture we want to embrace and, of course, peace.”

Cultural Exchange at the Third Annual Latte Peace Festival in Guam

Jan. 17, Tamuning, Guam — SGI members participated in the Third Latte Peace Festival, an annual event hosted by the Tamuning-Tumon-Harmon Mayor’s Office, that aims to promote peace, culture, and education through cultural exchanges with the community and neighboring islands. It was held at Tamuning Park, Tamuning, Guam, Jan. 17.

This year’s festivities spotlighted the SGI’s milestone of celebrating its 40th anniversary. Guam was the site where the SGI was formally established on Jan. 26, 1975, at the former International Trade Center in Tamuning.

SGI Senior Vice Women’s Leader Yumiko Kasanuki, Tamuning-Tumon-Harmon Mayor Louise C. Rivera, and Speaker of the 33rd Guam Legislature Judith T. Won Pat participated in the lighting of the latte stones, Tamuning, Guam, Jan. 17.

Kyle Tenorio

SGI members participated in the Third Latte Peace Festival, an annual event that features cultural exchanges with the community and neighboring islands, held at Tamuning Park, Tamuning, Guam, Jan. 17.
2015 Peace Proposal Released


In the proposal, Mr. Ikeda welcomes the ambitious scale of the United Nations’ proposed Sustainable Development Goals, which call for putting an end to poverty “in all its forms everywhere.” In the 70th year since the United Nations was created, he calls for a return to its founding spirit, as well as for increased collaboration between the United Nations and civil society.

Regarding the abolition of nuclear weapons, the SGI leader asserts that while the gulf between the nuclear-weapon states and those calling for nuclear abolition appears great, there is common ground in the desire to avoid the horrific outcome of any use of nuclear weapons. He urges heads of government to attend the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and calls on them to voice there the pledges of their governments to eliminate the danger posed by nuclear weapons.

Since 1983, President Ikeda has issued an annual peace proposal on Jan. 26, SGI Founding Day. His proposals are read by U.N. officials and leading thinkers around the globe.

White House–U.S. Buddhist Leaders Conference a First

May 14, Washington, D.C. — Under the theme “Voices in the Square—Action in the World,” 125 leaders, monks, and scholars from 62 Buddhist countries and 13 universities, representing each of the major
Engaged Buddhism

Buddhist traditions and ethnicities, gathered at George Washington University and then the White House to discuss topics such as climate change, racial justice, and peacebuilding among themselves and with officials from the Obama Administration. The SGI helped spearhead the conference, which marked the first time in U.S. history that such a broad representative gathering of Buddhist leaders had taken place. Together, they discussed their roles as socially engaged Buddhists in addressing social concerns.

Two Thousand Messages of Peace
June 28, Torrance, Calif.—In a united expression of hope, Los Angeles Beach Cities Region held a nuclear weapons abolition event titled “The Paper Crane Send-off” at the SGI-USA South Bay Buddhist Center, Torrance, Calif. Each crane contained a wish for peace by all the participants. The event, attended by 200 community members, observed the 70th anniversary of the August 1945 atomic bombings. The cranes will be shipped to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. Guests included Torrance Mayor Patrick Furey, Carson City Clerk Jim Dear, a Torrance Youth Council representative, and an advisor and board member of the Fukushima Kenjinkai, a Japanese prefectural association in Southern California. Dr. Jimmy Hara, a longtime board member for Physicians for Social Responsibility Los Angeles, served as the keynote speaker. As a physician, Dr. Hara has treated atomic bomb survivors from both Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

He described in detail the immediate and long-lasting effects of an atomic blast, the challenges of responding to such a disaster, and the dangers of radioactive contamination. “In medicine,” Dr. Hara said, “we always talk about preventing what we cannot cure. Naturally, we absolutely want to abolish nuclear weapons. Participating in the day’s events, raising awareness, and building consensus are important to that effort.”

Daisuke Fujii, an SGI-USA youth member, spoke about the student-led “Our New Clear Future” campaign, which aims to turn the tide of public opinion in favor of nuclear weapons abolition by 2030.

During the peace expo that followed, participants toured the center, where they viewed the exhibition Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons, watched testimonials of atomic bomb survivors, and participated in a workshop to fold the last of the cranes for the send-off.
The Buddhist Perspective

Aug. 8, Oklahoma City—“Our New Clear Future: Humanity's Concerns and Buddhism's Vision,” a dialogue event hosted at the SGI-USA Oklahoma Buddhist Center, drew nearly 100 members and guests from throughout the area. The gathering observed 70 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and included a presentation on nuclear weapons abolition. Jill Yoshiko Nakamura Campbell, 85, shared her harrowing experience as a Nagasaki atomic bomb survivor and how she transformed her tragic past into a bright future after joining the Soka Gakkai in Japan.

David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, discussed a nuclear weapons-free world, Torrance, Calif., Sept. 13.

“I Choose a Nuclear-Free World”

Sept. 13, Torrance, Calif.—What action can I take as an ordinary citizen toward a nuclear weapons-free world?

David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, discussed this topic at a peace forum held at the SGI-USA South Bay Buddhist Center.

The event themed “I Choose a Nuclear-Free World” was the culmination of activities hosted by Los Angeles Beach Cities Region to observe 70 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as to raise awareness about the dangers of developing and maintaining nuclear weapons.

To mark the occasion, the neighboring city of Lomita issued a proclamation declaring Sept. 8, 2015, “Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda, Mentor and Disciple, Nuclear Abolition Day.” On Sept. 8, 1957,
second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda delivered his landmark speech advocating for total nuclear disarmament.

At the peace forum, Dr. Krieger suggested that the major obstacles to change are apathy, conformity, ignorance, and denial. The challenge is to transform these obstacles into actions: from apathy to empathy, from conformity to critical thinking, from ignorance to wisdom, and from denial to recognition of the problem. The key to this transformation, he noted, is education.

Dr. Krieger said the first step is to recognize that nuclear weapons undermine our security and threaten all life. Change, he said, will ultimately come when common people voice their concerns and lead their leaders.

Dr. Krieger also met with representative youth from the SGI-USA and the Torrance Youth Council, a student body made up of representatives of the high schools within the city that organizes activities for the community.

Spokane Takes a Stand for Peace

Aug. 9, Spokane, Wash.—SGI-USA members hosted a Victory Over Violence event at the Spokane Buddhist Center to observe 70 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The event displayed the Victory Over Violence exhibition and featured powerful experiences by local members who shared how they used their Buddhist practice to transform their experiences of facing violence into their mission to spread the message of peace.

The highlight of the meeting was an emotional exchange between Miyuki Broadwater, a pioneer member and Nagasaki atomic bomb survivor, and Howard Riggs, who was assigned to the 58th Fighter Group stationed in Okinawa, Japan, during World War II. They told their own experiences of the horrors of war, and together through their interactions of hugs, tears, and dialogue, reaffirmed the urgent need for humanity to work toward world peace.

Hilo Celebrates World Peace

Oct. 3, Hilo, Haw.—At the popular island park Moku Ola, whose name in Hawaiian means "Island of Life," Hawaii County hosted its Sixth Annual World Peace Festival, drawing more than 1,000 citizens of Hilo, Haw. Mayor Billy Kenoi launched the tradition in 2010, after learning that SGI President Ikeda’s worldwide travels for peace began in Hawaii on Oct. 2, 1960. Since then, the event has been held the first Sunday of October to honor SGI World Peace Day, Oct. 2.
SGI members from Charlotte team up with Habitat for Humanity to help out neighbors in need of housing, December 2015.

SGI-USA Buddhist participated cheerfully in PRIDE parades and events in Boston, Chicago, Guerneville, Calif. (Sonoma County), Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and White Plains, N.Y.

Photos by Susan Fane, David Goodman, Michael Kong, Gary Mune, Fumiko Nichino, Debra Williams, and Cherie Wilkoughby.
The Future Is Youth

“Youth means grappling with all kinds of problems. It means resolving them, in spite of all difficulties, pushing aside the dark clouds of despair and advancing toward the sun, toward hope. This strength is the hallmark of youth.”
— Daisaku Ikeda

March Youth Peace Expos: Youth Can Change the World
March 8, Pomona, Calif.— More than 3,000 people attend the SGI-USA Youth Peace Expo at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, Calif., March 8. Highlights included a viewing of SGI peace exhibitions, a dialogue cafe, and 400 guests.

At this event along with others across the country in March, the SGI-USA youth and their guests renewed their pledge for world peace at Youth Peace Expos across the country, March.
Peace Expos with more than 12,000 participants. The spirit of the Youth Peace Expos was crystal-lized in the powerful and tangible faith experiences of young people overcoming violence in their daily lives and in the harrowing accounts of atomic bomb survivors. Thousands of participants at the Youth Peace Expos signed the Nuclear
Abolition Signature Pledge, which was submitted to the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The pledge states, in part: “We, the youth of America, pledge our commitment to expand the network of young people in support of a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, as a step toward ridding such weapons by the year 2030.”

How Do We Protect Everything We Treasure?

April 19–21, Monterey, Calif.— More than 200 people from the local community attended the exhibition Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons hosted by the SGI-Buddhists for Peace campus club at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, Calif., on April 19–21. The exhibition, co-sponsored by the SGI and International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, is designed to bring awareness about the global threat of nuclear weapons while providing a forum for dialogue.

The exhibition was held as part of the SGI-USA student division’s broader efforts to educate society about the movement for abolishing nuclear weapons through its “Our New Clear Future” campaign. This year marks 70 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima (Aug. 6) and Nagasaki (Aug. 9).

At the opening ceremony, a panel of three peace experts held a question-and-answer session and responded to such pressing concerns as “How can we get this message out to the youth?” and “What can we do about the apathy surrounding this issue?” Educating people, bringing exhibitions to school, and utilizing social media were discussed as possible action points.

Actualizing “Our New Clear Future”

May 19, New York— In his September 2009 Nuclear Disarmament Proposal, SGI President Ikeda urged the youth of the world to assume the mantle of this crucial issue, declaring: “It is the passion of youth that spreads the flames of courage throughout society.”

With this spirit, on May 19 at the U.N. Headquarters in New York, SGI-USA youth representatives presented petitions signed by more than 8,500 youth calling to abolish nuclear weapons. They met with Virginia Gamba, the director and deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs of the U.N. Office for Disarmament Affairs.

These signatures, presented during the U.N. Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, were collected at the SGI-USA March Youth Peace Expos, held at 25 locations around the country. The petitions were signed by youth representing nearly every segment of American society and from all corners of the country.

Ms. Gamba said she was encouraged to learn that more than 12,000 people, most of whom were youth, gathered at these peace expos to speak out for the cause of nuclear weapons abolition at a time when the world is desperately looking for youth leadership on this issue.
“I want the youth who signed the petition to know that their voices are being heard,” Ms. Gamba said.

In the United States, the SGI-USA student division has spearheaded the youth’s efforts since 2011, when it introduced its “Our New Clear Future” campaign to turn the tide of public opinion in favor of abolishing nuclear weapons.

Victory Over Violence at the Lefrak City Library
Sept. 21–24, Queens, N.Y. — More than 100 attendees participated in Victory Over Violence events at the Lefrak City Library from Sept. 21–24. Children and parents expressed a wide range of feelings and responses to violence in their communities; through dialogue, everyone present encouraged one another to be the forces of peace in their daily lives and in their interactions with others. Many young, future leaders talked about how they do not give in to pressure to perpetuate violence but instead choose peace for themselves and others.

The Intercultural Leadership Program Presents “Victory Over Violence”
Nov. 16–19, Salem, Mass.— Salem State University Library hosted the Victory Over Violence exhibition from Nov. 16–19. In addition to the exhibition, the three-day events featured a faculty/staff panel discussion titled “The Origins of Violence.” The panelists for this discussion included Dr. Phil Amato, chairperson, Social Work; Dr. Krishna Mallick, Philosophy; Rebecca Comage, director, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs; and Elisa Castillo, director, Health and Counseling Services. Students from the Intercultural Leadership Program led readings, discussions, and dance and musical performances.

Students Build Consensus Toward Nuclear Abolition
Nov. 19–24, Northridge, Calif. — At the start of the semester at California State University Northridge (CSUN), the SGI-USA campus club members of Buddhists for World Peace were asked to support the school’s screening of “Message From Hiroshima,” a documentary directed by atomic bomb survivor Masaaki Tanabe and narrated by actor George Takei, featuring animation by CSUN faculty and students.

The collaborative event took place at the school’s Manzanita Hall and included CSUN’s debut of the SGI nuclear disarmament exhibition From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit on Nov. 19, followed by the documentary screening the next day. The exhibition ran until Nov. 24.

The school’s news outlet, CSUN Today, covered the activities and interviewed Nozomi Aoyagi, the Buddhists for World Peace club president. Ms. Aoyagi said: “People think this issue has nothing to do with them on an individual level because we are not in positions of authority, but nuclear weapons are a dangerous threat to all humanity. From the Buddhist perspective, people are all connected, and we really need to unite to prevent more violence.”
The Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series provides a forum for experts in a broad range of topics, all ultimately addressing global issues of peace to foster a culture that rejects violence and addresses the root causes of conflict through dialogue. This series commenced in 2007, with lecturers focusing on one or more of the eight action areas defined by the 1999 United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

The eight action items are:

1) Fostering a culture of peace through education,
2) Promoting sustainable economic and social development,
3) Promoting respect for all human rights,
4) Ensuring equality between women and men,
5) Fostering democratic participation,
6) Advancing understanding, tolerance, and solidarity,
7) Supporting participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge, and
8) Promoting international peace and security.

Some of the events held nationwide in 2015 include:

**Dewey Scholars on Living As Learning**

Jan. 14, Chicago, and July 12, North Hollywood, Calif.—John Dewey scholars Larry Hickman and Jim Garrison spoke at the SGI-USA Chicago Culture Center on Jan. 14 and at the SGI-USA San Fernando Valley Buddhist Center on July 12 as part of the Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series. The two men discussed the important role education plays in serving the greater good of society and introduced their recently published dialogue with SGI President Ikeda titled *Living As Learning: John Dewey in the 21st Century*. Dr. Garrison, professor of philosophy of education at Virginia Tech, and
Santa Monica College President Chui L. Tsang delivered a talk as part of the SGI-USA Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series, Santa Monica, Calif., Feb. 21.

Dr. Hickman, director for Dewey Studies and professor of philosophy at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, are both past presidents of the John Dewey Society.

They touched on the themes of democracy, education, American exceptionalism, peacebuilding, and the quest for social progress.

“Global Responsibility and World Peace”

Feb. 21, Santa Monica, Calif.—As part of the SGI-USA Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series, Santa Monica College President Chui L. Tsang delivered a talk titled “Global Responsibility and World Peace.” Dr. Tsang discussed how his vision for fostering world citizens is being brought to life on the Santa Monica College campus through a pioneering initiative called “global citizenship.” This initiative aims to raise student awareness about the opportunities and responsibilities of living in and improving our ever-global community. Dr. Tsang said he gained even more inspiration after learning about SGI President Ikeda’s vision and efforts to foster world citizens for the sake of a peaceful, sustainable planet, which parallels SMC’s endeavors.

On his hopes for the new SMC initiative, Dr. Tsang said: “We have a lot of people who are really smart, but they are not providing solutions to humankind. As trained scholars, as educated people, we have the privilege of getting the education that we have; we have the privilege of enjoying the life that we have; we have a responsibility to not just think about things and to say that people are suffering, but to try to do something about it. I hope that this is something that our students will end up with.”

Becoming Protagonists for a Peaceful Society

March 9, New York—“Never reconcile with inequality of any kind. Never accept it as a fact of life.”

Such was Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury’s message to women at an event titled “Equality of Women’s Participation: Essential Foundation for the Culture of Peace in Today’s World.” The former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations participated in the SGI-USA Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series, held at the New York Culture Center on March 9, the day after International Women’s Day.

Despite continued widespread violence against women, the increasing level of women in poverty, and the acceleration of
militarization and extremism, Ambassador Chowdhury said he chooses to remain hopeful that the culture of peace is, in fact, attainable, and its key lies in equally including women in the effort to end war and conflict, rather than merely seeing them as victims of war. And while U.N. efforts are the “hardware” required to achieve this, he said, it is the culture of peace that is the “software,” which can only be developed by each individual’s personal commitment to peace as members of civil society.

Choose Hope and Change the World

April 27, New York — How can we even entertain the possibility of not passing on all that we love and treasure to our children?

As the world approaches the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, David Krieger posed this question to an audience at the SGI-USA New York Culture Center on April 27.

Dr. Krieger is the president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, where he has worked for the last 33 years to educate and mobilize the public toward abolishing nuclear weapons.

His lecture titled “Choose Hope: Change the World” was part of the SGI-USA Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series. Among the prominent guests were Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, former U.N. Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, and Dr. Betty Reardon, who is considered the mother of peace education. The event also drew representatives from the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and the Auschwitz Center for Peace and Reconciliation.

In his talk, Dr. Krieger spoke passionately, his words thoughtful and fueled by his deep belief that the danger of nuclear weapons is the single most important issue of our time.

Noting that the antidote to the problems facing the world lies in humanity choosing hope, Dr. Krieger recalled his three meetings with SGI President Ikeda, praising him as a great example of a world citizen and for his ability to develop future generations of global citizens.

Empowering young people to take a stand, Dr. Krieger offered this insight: “Be introspective enough to think about what is at stake for you and for humanity as a whole. To engage in that introspection and realize that each person is important and needed may not save you from frustration, but we must see that frustration as an obstacle, get over it, and move on.”
He continued: “If you want to get something done, you better find a way to be hopeful,” referring to his own career championing nuclear weapons abolition and his struggle to continuously choose hope. “And how does one remain hopeful?” he asked. “Take action.”

The Next Great Challenge to Peace

July 10, Santa Monica, Calif.— Les McCabe, president and CEO of Global Green USA, cited climate change as the most important threat the world faces today.

His talk on “Climate Change: The Next Great Challenge to Peace?” was held July 18 at the Culture of Peace Resource Center in Santa Monica, Calif., as part of the SGI-USA Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series.

Global Green USA is the American affiliate of Green Cross International, which was founded by former Soviet president and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mikhail Gorbachev to foster a global value shift toward a sustainable and secure future.

Dr. McCabe examined how climate change-related stress on water, food, and energy systems has contributed to instability and conflict in regions around the world.

He noted that this is not just an issue for developing nations, reminding everyone of the impact of Hurricane Sandy and Hurricane Katrina on the United States.

He also emphasized SGI President Ikeda’s three-point formula for promoting education for sustainable development—“learn, reflect, and empower”—from his proposal “The Challenge of Global Empowerment” circulated at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

“Change happens because of a collective of people who make the conscious decision to do so,” Dr. McCabe said. “You really can make a difference in an area that is so vitally important—not only to the future of this country but the world.”

“Creating Peace Is Our Call to Be Fully Human”

Aug. 28, New York— “If peace is not in your heart and mind, if peace is not your dream for all, it is difficult to believe that you will do much for peace at any time, in any place,” said conflict resolution expert Dr. Andrea Bartoli. “The yearning for peace will move your will to do what is possible and good.”
understand the life of others; be reasonable and you will see the burdens of others; be responsible and you will liberate others.” He also emphasized that there are many ways to be present with one another, without having to be in close proximity.

Creating peace, Dr. Bartoli said, is our call to be fully human; it is to live and work for the good of “everyone who was here on earth, everyone who is here, and everyone who will come during your lifetime and beyond.”

Gandhi’s Ecological Vision of Life

Oct. 31, Santa Monica, Calif.— Vinay Lal, Gandhi expert and UCLA professor of History and Asian American Studies, described Gandhi’s life as one guided by the principles of ecology. In the same way that the branch of biology studies the way all organisms interact to their physical surroundings, Gandhi, too, “was as attentive to the minutest details as he was to matters of national importance.”

Professor Lal spoke as part of the SGI-USA Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series at the SGI-USA Santa Monica Culture of Peace Resource Center.

In a youth dialogue preceding his lecture, Professor Lal examined the topic of nonviolence. A profound form of violence, he said, is the “imposition of certain thinking and lifestyles upon everyone else.” On the contrary, Gandhi

“never imposed upon others something he wasn’t willing to impose upon himself first.”

Dr. Lal shared an episode about Gandhi, when he was staying in an ashram [a religious retreat]. People would line up to gain his counsel. One day, an elderly woman came with her grandson, whose teeth were decaying from eating too many sweets. “He doesn’t listen to me,” the grandmother said.

Gandhi told her to return after a month. They did, and Gandhi told the grandson: “My dear little boy, you know you shouldn’t be eating too many sweets.” Gandhi, who was nearly toothless, then said: “See! This is what happens to your teeth when you eat too much sugar.”

“Bapu (Father),” the boy replied, “I will try to do as you say.”

Flustered, the grandmother asked Gandhi why he didn’t tell her grandson the same thing a month ago. Gandhi responded: “I think I was eating too many sweets at that time, so before I had the right to tell him that, for the last one month, I haven’t eaten any sweets. I wanted to see if I could impose that discipline upon myself.”

Dr. Lal said of Gandhi: “This is one life in which every minute act, emotion, or thought was not without its place.”
On “Women, Peace, and Security”

Oct. 27, New York—The SGI-USA New York Culture Center sponsored “A Dialogue on the Future of UNSCR 1325—Women, Peace, and Security,” where the panel discussed the critical role women play in promoting and maintaining peace and security, and stressed the importance of their equal participation in the peace process.

The panel included three renowned global citizens: Anwarul Chowdhury, who served as the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations from 2002 to 2007; Asha Hans, the founding director of the School of Women’s Studies at Utkal University in Bhubaneswar, India; and Betty Reardon, founding director of the International Institute on Peace Education, recognized worldwide as a pioneer in peace education theory and pedagogy.

Ambassador Chowdhury, who was instrumental in the adoption of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, and served as the evening’s moderator, said in his introduction that a dialogue about the resolution was actually a dialogue on the future of the world. “Unless you ensure equal participation of all men and women,” he said, “you are leaving 50 percent of humanity behind.” He then posed questions to Dr. Hans and Dr. Reardon, who co-edited the book *The Gender Imperative: Human Security vs. State Security*.

Ambassador Chowdhury asked Dr. Hans what was the essential merit of a resolution on women and peace and security.

Dr. Hans called the resolution something very close to the hearts of women who have been working on peace and security because it represents the core of what they are doing. For it to have an impact, Resolution 1325 must be adopted on the ground, she said.

“Women must participate in what is happening on the ground on peace and security,” Dr. Hans said. “If we are looking for democracy, then we have an equal right to say Yes or No where war and peace are concerned; we should say, and I think we have the right to say, ‘No to war.’”

Ambassador Chowdhury asked Dr. Reardon her opinion on the role of civil society and how individuals could help implement 1325. He also asked how to connect the resolution to human security, so that the U.N. Security Council will be better disposed to respond.

Dr. Reardon touched on institutional peace vs. organic peace, calling the former an agreed arrangement, with some sort of legal structure that people agree and commit to. “We need the institutional peace so that we can get the organic peace—a way of life in which peace is seen as the natural order, not just an interval every once in a while,” she said. “So that’s something that has to grow, it has to be nurtured, and that is where women’s participation is so important.”

Dr. Reardon called 1325 the most significant postwar document since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [adopted by the U.N. General
To Develop the Culture of Peace

Assemblies in December 1948. She described human security concisely, saying that human security is not about knowing that your nation is more powerful than the other one.

“If you can live with the expectation that tomorrow is going to be a fairly good day, that you’ll have what you need for tomorrow—that’s human security,” she said.

The panel invited attendees to think creatively and practically about responses to global problems and how we can eventually resolve those problems with the focus particularly on the perspective of women’s daily and local realities.

**Embracing Our Roots and Routes**

**Nov. 8, Albuquerque, N.M.** — “What would happen if we honored and valued the root system that connects us all?” So asked Sarah Ann Wider, who gave a public talk on “Roots, Stories, Routes, Stories” at the SGI-USA Albuquerque Center in New Mexico to more than 150 guests.

A New Mexico native, Dr. Wider is a professor of English and Women’s Studies at Colgate University, and coauthor of *The Art of True Relations: Conversations on the Poetic Heart of Human Possibility* with Daisaku Ikeda.

Dr. Wider explained that a “root,” the part of the plant that sustains life, symbolizes where we come from, while a “route,” meaning path or road, indicated moving forward with intention. For humans, the root system of all life is the stories that bind us together.

She elaborated on some aspects of life that can interfere with our sense of interconnectedness. “How often do we mark time by when something will end?” she asked. “And how many of us spend more time in front of a computer screen rather than with other people?”

Yet, she explained, our connections are the origin of all that exists. While roots are always spreading, they continuously hit dead ends, but never give up. Similarly, we are roots seeking to connect, but it is difficult because we must break through the hard soil of mistrust.

Dr. Wider emphasized that all roots must be cared for, and she stressed the importance of taking care of one another. She used the analogy of the roots of grass, which are so interconnected that no blade can claim priority over another, to demonstrate that our lives are an experience of relations and connections in which all are worthy. She shared some images of roots that particularly move her.

Jessica Sanchez, a guest, said she was most touched by the emphasis on our interconnectedness as human beings. “We, in America, use so many more resources than the rest of the world,” Ms. Sanchez said. “It is important that we are conscious of this. We need to navigate our lives so we are not negatively impacting other cultures and people within our own culture.”

*George Nakamura*
My Human Revolution Saved My Life

Kate Hungerford
Los Angeles

I grew up in federal housing projects in Philadelphia and watched as my family and those around me grappled with tragedy and poverty.

In 1971, I moved to Los Angeles to escape that life. Although my young husband and I struggled for years, he eventually became a successful cinematographer and I became a fashion model. Introduced by a friend, I started my practice with the SGI in May 1984.

Later that year my mother was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and I returned to Philadelphia to be her caretaker. While there, I connected with local SGI-USA members and with their support, I fought through my own anguish to become a source of encouragement and strength for my family. As a result, my mom and two sisters began chanting and joined the SGI.

Though my mother prolonged her life by six months, her body was devastated by chemotherapy and radiation treatments. I blamed the harsh medical treatment for her death and swore that if it ever happened to me, I would not accept conventional methods.

About two decades later, that distrust in medical doctors reappeared when I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003, followed by my two younger sisters who were also diagnosed with cancer a few years after. They both passed away in 2009, having lived less than two years with conventional treatment.

Thinking of my three children, I was horrified and determined to beat my cancer. Armed with my practice and belief in the power of my life itself, I launched into researching alternative treatments and nutrition. For 11 years, I felt great while keeping a full schedule and continuing to work, do SGI activities, and travel.

But in January 2014, I discovered that the cancer had not only come out of remission but had spread through my lymph system to 32 bones in my spine, ribs, and pelvis.

I received encouragement from my seniors in faith and was reminded that this practice concerns itself with the present and the future. And that there’s a fine line between learning from the past and holding a grudge. I was encouraged to use the power of prayer to find: 1) the best doctor with 2) the best medicine and 3) to be the best patient. With these three points for overcoming my illness in mind, I chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo abundantly.
A never-ending stream of SGI members came each day to chant with me. They supported me in ways I could have never imagined, making me even more determined to fight for my life.

The words best doctor still made me cringe, but as I continued to chant about it, I began to think of doctors as having the same Buddhahood as me, and I thought about all the future young doctors who are idealistic and full of hope, wanting to change the world.

With this change of heart, I researched and found a wonderful doctor who treated me with deep care and respect. I was moved by her warmth and genuine concern. In July 2014, after several biopsies, she was finally able to prescribe a groundbreaking drug, an antibody, that indeed turned out to be the “best medicine.”

Even though my cancer spread to 32 bones, my blood and organs had remained completely healthy. As a result, my body responded much faster to the medication, and in only three treatments, my bone cancer completely disappeared. The radiologist and the oncologist are stunned and want to study my recovery to help other patients. I will continue following my doctor’s direction to complete a year of treatment (that’s me being the “best patient”).

I will continue to challenge my human revolution for the rest of my life, and I will fight to ensure that the next generation has the same opportunity.

A Genuine Human Being
John Wells
Chicago

In 1960, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda visited Chicago and witnessed in Lincoln Park an elderly white man screaming at a young African American boy for a minor transgression. The boy was so humiliated that he fled. President Ikeda vowed in his heart to build a society truly worthy of the love and pride of young people like that boy.

This type of profound racial animosity and division was commonplace in Chicago at that time.

I grew up in public housing on the city’s south side in a neighborhood that was almost entirely African American. The only time I was with people of different races was when I was in school. For various reasons, it wasn’t easy for me to freely engage other people or make new friends. I felt lonely and insecure, caught up in a world that was dominated by the impulse: fight or flight.

After high school, I was drafted and went overseas. When I returned to Chicago, the city was engulfed in the violent confrontations of the 1960s, culminating in the protests during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. I had only seen African Americans in confrontations with police, but when I saw college-educated white young people being arrested, I began to think of the world as a place divided by those with power and those without, and I decided then that things would never change.

I reluctantly attended my first Buddhist meeting in 1970, but one of the things that struck me was the diversity. True, everyone there was either African American or Japanese but there were clearly many ages, lifestyles, and social backgrounds represented. The sincerity and conviction of one of the pioneer members convinced me to give the practice a try.

I experienced benefits shortly after I began chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but it was only after I studied about this practice did I began to understand the profundity of Nichiren Buddhism as practiced in the SGI. I was inspired when I read about President Ikeda’s first encounter
with his mentor, Josei Toda. At just 19 years old, he vowed to follow his mentor and accomplish kosen-rufu, this grand endeavor to uplift human beings by teaching them how to access their own Buddha nature. When I thought back to when I was 19, stealing cars with no real direction in life, I realized that I wanted to be on this same path as President Ikeda.

I developed the courage to take control of my life, and I started changing the way I interacted with others. I had been such a blunt person that you could call my delivery “straight, no chaser.” As time went on, I began to realize that there was a way to get my point across without beating up other people. I learned how to look at other people’s lives and try to understand where they’re at, and to encourage them from that standpoint.

At that time, there was a relatively small number of SGI members in Chicago compared to today. Our first community center was a small storefront on a commercial street in a residential white neighborhood on the city’s north side. Young men from all over the city gathered there every Sunday morning. Several times when the African American members returned to their cars after activities, they found their tires deflated by those in the neighborhood who did not want us there.

Even though I was young in faith, I had gained the confidence that by responding to bigotry with dignity and courage, we were already beginning to create the kind of change that President Ikeda was teaching us about.

As I continued to practice and study, I began to ask myself: Am I creating value? Am I making causes that will lead me or other people to suffer?

My biggest test came when my youngest sister was murdered in September 1978. I had basically raised her as a baby, and she was just 26 with two young boys when she died. I had to seriously chant while fighting my instinct to get revenge on the person who made her suffer. I spoke with a senior in faith who knew how distraught I was, and he told me that I couldn't talk to my nephews about Buddhism with blood on my hands. When people asked me what I wanted to do, I said I wanted justice, not revenge. I always tell people that we’re born animals with the fight-or-flight instinct. We have to learn how to become human beings. This is what Buddhism taught me—how to become a genuine human being.

I have been married to my wife, Karen, for 40 years, and we have three children, Terrence, Quincy, and Debra. I have also been employed by the Chicago Park Service for the same amount of time at a job that doesn’t feel like work. But the biggest change for me has been transforming my anger and frustration into a determination to secure the peace and happiness of all people in America.

Last October, my son Quincy and I traveled to the Florida Nature and Culture Center, in Weston, Fla., together for the first time to attend an SGI-USA conference. Quincy determined to stand up in faith. Nothing could bring my wife and I greater joy.

“Nothing Can Defeat Me”

Judith T. Won Pat
Tamuning, Guam

Life in Guam growing up was carefree and simple. The neighborhood streets were our playgrounds. No one stayed inside. All the adults looked out for us. What I loved about my childhood was that it was so safe.

My parents started out as teachers, but during World War II, they were forced by the Japanese
military to live in work camps. They had six children, and after the war my father acquired ranchland to raise farm animals and feed our large family.

My mother, Ana, was entrepreneurial. She opened a small Chinese restaurant with my grandfather to help out.

With the appointment of a Guam Naval Governor, my father became involved with the Guam Assembly of Advisors to the Governor. He and a group of leaders pushed for political self-governance at a time when Guam was still under U.S. Naval rule. With the passage of the Guam Organic Act of 1950, all nationals living on Guam became U.S. citizens, and the people elected its first legislators. My father won a seat and was chosen as the speaker of the 1st Guam Legislature. In 1965, he was elected as the first representative from Guam to Washington, D.C., and later served as its first delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives.

As a young adult in 1973, I was completely disillusioned by religion and started to search for a philosophy that fit my beliefs and lifestyle. Most important, I wanted to be happy.

At my first SGI-USA meeting, I heard people chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. I didn't know what it meant, and I was leery of even trying it. But the woman who introduced me told me that I could chant to be happy and that I could change my destiny. That is just what I craved—to be in control of my life. I also liked the idea that I am responsible for my actions based on the law of cause and effect. This made sense to me.

Around this time, my sister was diagnosed with an ovarian tumor, and I decided to put Buddhism to the test. My mother even joined me in chanting for my sister's recovery. During her surgery, doctors removed a 10-pound tumor the size of a football, and she survived. Seeing this actual proof, I immediately started my own Buddhist practice.

After joining the SGI, I began to cherish a dream of connecting my love for Guam with my new mission as an SGI-USA member. This sense of responsibility grew even stronger when I learned about SGI President Ikeda’s efforts for peace. His life’s work for the world became my life’s work for Guam. My Buddhist practice helped me awaken to my opportunity to improve people’s lives and make Guam a better place.

Inspired by my father’s commitment to public service, I taught in Guam’s public school system. During this time, I witnessed the complex problems children face, so I went back to college to become a guidance counselor but realized that this was not for me so I went back to teaching because I wanted to make a difference in the lives of the children.

My Buddhist practice served as an invaluable anchor for my life as the next 20 years included...
extremely difficult circumstances. I lost so many members of my extended family to illness and violence culminating in the tragic passing of my husband. Now as a single mother of three, my daily chanting and support from my SGI-USA friends gave me the confidence to provide for my children and support my extended family. I was able to overcome financial challenges that included property loss due to a super typhoon. I battled and overcame loneliness, ill health, and anxiety as I faced bills piling up and no money for my oldest child ready to start college at an Ivy League university.

Remaining committed to my dream of serving my homeland Guam, however, I was elected as a senator in the Guam Legislature by 1995, then although I did not serve for a while after my husband’s death, I was re-elected to the Guam Legislature a year after I left office, and I also earned my doctoral degree. In March 2008, I followed in the footsteps of my father and became the speaker of the Guam Legislature—a post I still hold today.

I realized that I had to create my own happiness and not seek happiness outside myself. Through chanting and participating in SGI activities, I developed the strength, courage, and wisdom necessary to help my children cope with their father’s death.

My oldest daughter, Ahtoy, overcame her nightmares and insomnia. She is now a doctoral candidate at Columbia University studying epidemiology. My son, Mel, is a graduate student at the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. My youngest, Ana Maria, graduated from the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawaii and is currently a practicing attorney in Guam.

As much as I thought of giving up at times, it was through chanting, studying Nichiren Daishonin’s writings and President Ikeda’s encouragement, and support from fellow SGI-USA members that I realized supreme happiness is attainable through the power of the Mystic Law. Now I know in my heart that nothing can defeat me.

My American Dream: How I Developed An Unshakable Self Through Embracing Others

Arthur Pugliese
Miami

My family moved from Sao Paulo, Brazil, to Miami when I was five, so that my father could pursue his vision of the American dream—money, a big house, and a well-paying job. The stress of living in a new country escalated until my parents divorced when I was 10.

After my father left for Brazil, I often cried myself to sleep. What remained was the lesson he had taught me: Work hard, because money is everything.

At 10, I started washing cars so I could keep busy and forget that he had left. Deep down, I wanted to make my father proud of me and to love me. Alone in a new country with three children, my mother had no idea how to provide for us. My grandmother had joined the SGI in 1985 and insisted that my mother begin chanting, saying, “This is the way to turn suffering into joy.” We joined the SGI as a family on Dec. 6, 1998.

As my mother chanted Nam-myoho-reng-kyo and attended SGI meetings, her attitude completely changed. She became confident and hopeful, refusing to let any challenges rob her of her fighting spirit.

I enjoyed chanting, too, but I was ashamed that my father wasn’t around and was desperate to fit in. Although I had stopped chanting, my mother continued to share SGI President Ikeda’s guidance with me, and my grandmother constantly called from Brazil to say she was chanting for me. Due to their support, I was accepted to the University of Florida, Gainesville, on a music scholarship.

Attending college, however, only deepened my struggle to find my self-worth; I always compared myself to the bright students around me. I also realized that my dream wasn’t to play music; it was to be an accountant. Making that jump seemed impossible, especially with average grades.
Arthur Pugliese with his wife, Marisa, whom he introduced to the practice. Supporting the happiness of others through sharing Buddhism, Mr. Pugliese said, was the key to changing his family karma.

My self-esteem in ruins, I decided it was time to reconnect with my Buddhist practice on my own terms. I joined a district nearby and began chanting to get into the accounting program.

As I chanted, I began to feel that my self-worth wasn’t based on my grades, money, or on having my father in my life. I began to understand the point of Nichiren Buddhism — that I am inherently worthy, and that I can accomplish anything. Before every exam, I’d chant, study late into the night, and wake up early to chant and study again. Soon I got the grades to transfer into the program. I was also hired by the university’s office of audit, because they liked my attitude — definitely a result of my practice. I went on to pursue a master’s program in accounting while working full time as a consultant.

Despite being constantly scrutinized by the company executives, I worked many late nights and had to travel frequently. Many times I wanted to give up, but through my study of President Ikeda’s encouragement, I knew these struggles were part of my growth.

Within two years, I graduated with my master’s in accounting. While I failed my first qualifying exam to become a certified public accountant, I persevered and became a CPA.

On the weekends, I participated in SGI activities. I also shared Buddhism with friends. One was an amazing young woman named Marisa, whom I later married. With each person I introduced, I felt I was becoming a person who could embrace others. I knew this was the key to winning in my marriage and changing my family karma.

This June, I unexpectedly received a call from a recruiter and was hired at my dream job as vice president of mergers and acquisitions at a public company with a great salary and benefits. I work with executives who are 20 years older than me, yet they respect and listen to my opinions. My job gives me the flexibility to attend SGI-USA meetings and support our movement for peace and happiness of all people here in America. My wife and I purchased a home, where we now hold district meetings.

I am eternally grateful to my mother for her amazing care and support. She recently moved back to Brazil and is engaged to a wonderful man. I am also appreciative of my father for having had the courage to bring me to this magnificent country.

This year, I’m determined to introduce more people to Buddhism and encourage them, and to strive alongside my mentor, President Ikeda, to contribute to the peace and happiness of all people. This is my American dream.
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### East Territory

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<tr>
<td>Atlanta Buddhist Center</td>
<td>404.817.8100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miami Buddhist Center</td>
<td>305.728.0830</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York Culture Center</td>
<td>212.727.7715</td>
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<td>Washington, D.C., Buddhist Center</td>
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### Internet Resources

#### SGI-USA
- **Website**: [www.sgi-usa.org](http://www.sgi-usa.org)
- **Facebook**: [www.facebook.com/sgiusa.info](http://www.facebook.com/sgiusa.info)
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- **Bookstore**: [bookstore.sgi-usa.org](http://bookstore.sgi-usa.org)

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- **YouTube**: [www.youtube.com/user/SGIVideosOnline](http://www.youtube.com/user/SGIVideosOnline)
- **Daisaku Ikeda**: [www.daisakuikeda.org](http://www.daisakuikeda.org)
- **SGI Quarterly**: [www.sgiquarterly.org](http://www.sgiquarterly.org)
- **People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition**: [www.peoplesdecade.org](http://www.peoplesdecade.org)

#### Affiliated Institutions
- **Soka University**: [www.soka.edu](http://www.soka.edu)
- **Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue**: [www.ikedacenter.org](http://www.ikedacenter.org)
- **Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research**: [www.toda.org](http://www.toda.org)

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