Special Series:
Message for the Age of Human Rights
—What Does the Third Millennium Require? (2)

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Women's Responsibilities

From Individualism to Solidarity

Ikeda: Their traits as compassionate, loving givers and guardians of life assign to women a very special role in the twenty-first century and the whole third millennium it ushered in. All organizations will find it hard to grow and evolve unless they respect the wisdom of women and pay more attention to their opinions than they have in the past. Failure to do so demonstrates irresponsibility toward future developments and can lead humanity once again into the grievous path of war. There can be no doubt that women can fulfill the responsibility of altering the course of history from an era of belligerence and violence to one of peace and symbiosis. Women's solidarity of goodness is the foundation of human peace and happiness.

The SGI Argentina Women's Peace Committee held its first conference at the SGI Peace Auditorium in Buenos Aires, in April, 2007. Your wife, Amanda, attended the meeting, to which you sent a splendid message. In addition, you are kind enough to serve as honorary chairman of the committee. I should like to take this opportunity to offer you my deepest thanks.

Pérez Esquivel: It is an honor for me. Unfortunately, as I was in the Basque region of Spain supporting interethnic peace and understanding, I was unable to attend the conference in Buenos Aires. Nonetheless, I am honored to have been able to play even a small part. In my message, which my wife Amanda read on my behalf, I had the following to say about the struggle being waged by you and all SGI members.

"President Ikeda devotes his life to education, training people to be aware of issues concerning all humankind and to understand and act on

them. Whatever you can do for your local regions will turn out to be useful to humanity. You are sensitive, wise women concerned about the future. I know how you struggle day in and day out to create a world of equality and amity for succeeding generations, including your own children."

The conference you mention was followed by an environmental exhibition entitled "Seeds of Change: The Earth Charter and Human Potential," the content of which I understand was very rewarding and fruitful.

In modern society, which grows increasingly individualistic, for the sake of creating a culture of solidarity, everyone, not just women, must enthusiastically address social diversity and attempt to extract solidarity from it. In this sense, I expect great things from the wholehearted actions of SGI members, who transcend divisive differences, build bridges among diverse cultures, and demonstrate the potential for embracing and including those differences in actual daily affairs.

Gandhi's Expectations of Women's Role

Ikeda: Thank you for your warm words of understanding and encouragement. Our great hope is that our movement can provide seeds of reform necessary to cope with global warming and the other grave issues confronting humanity.

In April, 2007—the month in which the women's peace conference was taking place in Argentina—on the campus of Soka University in Tokyo, the Institute of Oriental Philosophy was sponsoring a joint symposium on the occasion of the centennial of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolence movement (*satyagraha*). In an address he delivered at the time, my great friend Professor N. Radhakrishnan, former director of the Gandhi Memorial Institute in New Delhi, said that Gandhi can be called the first person in history to give women major roles to play in society. Instead of measuring the wealth of a society in terms of splendid architecture or weaponry, he saw women, the compassionate nurturers of life, as great treasures and said that a society that cannot appreciate them has no future. I am in complete sympathy with what he said.

Pérez Esquivel: I agree with him, too. Some years ago, on a visit to Mumbai, I met men and women who fought beside Mahatma Gandhi in the struggle for Indian independence. Though already old, in their ideals and their capacity to resist, they preserved their ideals of the dignity of life. Gandhi knew that men and women had to share the road to independence under equal conditions. A large number of women were still

keeping alight the flame of ideals of liberty they and Gandhi had lit together. About women's potentialities, he said that, if power is thought of in terms of brute force, women are less forceful than men. But, if it is thought of in moral terms, they are immeasurably superior to men. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman.[1]

Ikeda: Those are famous words. One of the courageous women connected with Gandhi's movement was the late Usha Mehta, former director of the Gandhi Memorial Hall (*Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya*). Together with Usha Gokani, Gandhi's granddaughter, Ms. Mehta welcomed groups from the Soka Gakkai Youth Division to India in 1992 and 1994. She met Gandhi at the age of eight for the first time and has transmitted his spirit, overcoming her subsequent four years' imprisonment during the independence struggle. She spoke of how he taught his followers to fight courageously for justice and to speak the truth. He told them that establishing peace in women's hearts would build social peace and that peace in the minds of women becomes a great explosive force for social change. In words of encouragement, she told the members of our visiting groups that, though they entered the Gandhi Memorial Hall as guests, they departed from it as comrades. She expressed the wish that, as members of the Mahatma's (Great Soul's) expanded family, hand in hand, they would take part in the struggle as they pursued the path to world peace.

Throughout history, the masculine viewpoint has dominated while the true greatness and courage-giving strength of women has been underestimated. I believe, however, that with their spiritual powers and their refusal to countenance political pressure and inconsistency, women have now achieved a breakthrough into a new kind of history.

Women Who Sacrificed Themselves in the Struggle for Justice

Pérez Esquivel: Yes, women who have sacrificed themselves for life and liberty have demonstrated immeasurable courage and dignity. They have set models that all humanity should recognize and appreciate. Indubitably, no force can propel history as strongly as the courage of a woman aflame with justice, irrepressibly crying out for liberty. Social, political, and cultural militancy has a long history in Latin America and many other parts of the world. Women have always played a leading, constructive role in their particular histories. Many of them have left marks on the lives of their peoples. It is hard to enumerate all of the ones who have exerted an influence on the passing times. One notable

representative, however, was Rosa Parks, mother of the civil rights movement in the United States.

Ikeda: I had the fondest respect for Rosa Parks, who, sadly, died in 2005. I met her on two occasions: on the Los Angeles campus of Soka University of America in 1993 and, a year later, at Soka University in Hachioji, Tokyo. I shall always remember how much she enjoyed meeting young students. She told them of the historical bus-boycott movement, which she herself ignited. As you know, the city of Montgomery Alabama had a regulation requiring Black people to give up their seats to White people and to sit in the rear of the vehicle. But Rosa Parks' mother had taught her faith in justice and the need to believe in and cherish her own self-respect in all places and under all circumstances. So, returning weary from work on December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks boarded a bus and sat in front. When a white passenger got on, the driver ordered her to move to the rear, but she flatly refused.

In telling Soka University students how she felt at the time, she said that, after long years of submitting to it in silence she had had enough of discrimination. She had not foreseen the large number of Black people who would rise up in protest against her subsequent arrest and imprisonment. She could not know what harassment lay ahead but was ready to take whatever came her way.

Pérez Esquivel: Yes. Rosa Parks felt the need to cry, "Enough!" And in crying out, without knowing it, she unleashed a wave of resistance and disobedience against injustice. Her simple act of human dignity initiated the bus-boycott movement. Her "No" constituted an act of rebellion, in which Martin Luther King, Jr. was later to take the lead, and which was to result in the passing of civil rights legislation in 1964. Today there are many Rosa Parkses in the world. Indeed, there is one in every woman.

Ikeda: One point she made impressed me deeply. "I have learned that in order to bring about change, one must not be afraid to take the first step, or else it will not be done. I believe that the only failure is failing to try."[2]

I agree with you that many women inherit her spirit and courage. Among the ones who speak out and struggle for justice all over the world, in the area of human rights, I might especially cite Nadine Gordimer for her opposition to apartheid in South Africa, and Rigoberta Menchú Tum from Guatemala. Such women use no violence but fight with great spiritual force.

Pérez Esquivel: Some women do point out the way and bear witness to humanity. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum is one of them. I know of the struggle she has been conducting since her youth. Her own family was massacred, and she was exiled to Mexico. With great courage she denounced the military dictatorship in Guatemala. The whole world heeded her voice calling for an end to violence and massacre.

Ikeda: I have great respect for her noble and indomitable struggle for human rights. The possibility of transforming personal experience of suffering into concern for the happiness of others is part of the greatness of the human spirit. Coming from poor, indigenous, Guatemalan stock herself, Rigoberta Menchú Tum has worked hard to elevate the position and ensure the observation of the fundamental human rights of indigenous peoples. For example, in 1993 she traveled worldwide as a goodwill ambassador in connection with the United Nations International Year for the World's Indigenous People. She insists that, in the struggle for human rights, borders do not exist. The important thing is sensitivity to life and an awareness of shared humanity.

The noble struggle of a single woman for the establishment of human rights and the protection of life epitomizes the dignity of humanity and life. In this respect, Nichiren wrote that, "Here a single individual has been used as an example, but the same thing applies equally to all living beings."[3]

Rigoberta Menchú Tum, you, and I were among the 55 people from all over the world who signed the Appeal to End the Nuclear Weapons Threat to Humanity printed in the pages of *The New York Times* in 2000.

Pérez Esquivel: That is true. We should also mention the Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi. When a group of us, including Betty Williams who organized a nonviolent resistance movement in Northern Ireland, journeyed to Thailand to offer her support, the Myanmar military dictatorship refused us entry into their country.

Ikeda: On the occasion of her sixtieth birthday, in June, 2005, a group of Nobel Peace Prize laureates, including you, Betty Williams, and president emeritus of the Pugwash Conferences Joseph Rotblat published an open letter to her.

In November 2006, Betty Williams, who is founder and president of the World Centers for Compassion for Children International (WCCI), and I met in Tokyo to discuss the role of women in achieving peace and

breaking the chain of violence. Thirty years ago, in 1976, during the storm of violence that swept Northern Ireland, she experienced the horror of seeing three innocent children killed. This tragedy inspired her to rise up in anger. She says she can never forget the wrath that rose up from the depths of her heart and feels that, though it can be destructive, anger turned toward positive purposes can also be highly productive. Rage at witnessing the cruel violence that took the lives of the children transformed her into a warrior for peace.

As Nichiren wrote: "From this you should understand that anger can be either a good or a bad thing."[4] Anger consumed by selfish greed is evil; anger aflame against evil and for justice is good.

Pérez Esquivel: I agree with you. Nothing is as powerful as the anger and indignation women feel in the face of injustice. When forced to experience the loss of sons and daughters, many women awaken to a life marked with tragedy. Then a great cry rises up from the depths of their consciousness and their hearts. They rebel and experience inside them the seed of resistance in the struggle for life and the personal dignity of the people. The social demonstrations of mothers, grandmothers, and families occurring in the Plaza de Mayo, in Argentina, were born of just such a cry.

Similarly, women demonstrated great courage in the civil war in El Salvador as well as during the oppressive military dictatorship in Guatemala. Their persistence earned them the alliance of many other women in Europe, the United States, Canada, and many parts of Latin America, who were willing to risk their own lives to save the lives of others.

Ikeda: As we discussed briefly in the first installment of this dialogue, during the military dictatorship of the 1970s, many people were suddenly carried off—"disappeared"—by armed military personnel. Beloved children and spouses suddenly went missing, never to return. With your leadership and support, thirty years ago, surviving mothers, grandmothers, and other family members formed the movement called the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo.

Pérez Esquivel: Yes. Beginning in 1977, every Thursday, mothers, their heads covered in white scarves, assembled in the plaza. The names of disappeared family members were embroidered in blue on headscarves; their photographs hung from the women's necks. Gradually the numbers of demonstrators increased from around ten at the beginning to several

hundreds or sometimes several thousands eventually. But their loved ones were tortured and killed in detention centers, never to return to their homes even after the governmental shift from military dictatorship to democracy. I supported them from the beginning and recall them and their cry "Our children gave birth to us" in justification of both their struggle and their hope.

Ikeda: A deeply moving story. In February, 1993, I was invited to pay my respects at the congress building in Buenos Aires. I vividly remember feeling intense sorrow for those mothers as I gazed out at the Plaza de Mayo from our passing car.

Pérez Esquivel: Is that so? Like the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, today women all over the world are working vigorously for the protection of human rights. In 2000, after the Gulf War, I visited Iraq in the company of Mairead Corrigan Maguire (1976 Nobel Peace laureate) and representatives of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, which is headquartered in the Netherlands, and American peace groups. We arrived in Baghdad after a thousand-mile desert crossing from Amman in Jordan. Awaiting us was a woman covered head to foot in a black burqua. Her name was Ayamira, and she lived in a wagon parked in front of a children's refuge that had been bombed by American and British forces, taking the lives of six hundred children and their mothers. Ayamira escaped because she had been washing her children's clothing some distance from the shelter. When she returned, she found her whole family dead. This quiet woman in black was a testimony to both the horror and the remembered resistance of a people struggling to recover its values and identity.

A Mother's Prayer Engenders Pacifist Action

Ikeda: Ninety percent of the victims of armed conflict are innocent civilians; most of them are women and children. Throughout humanity's long history, a staggering number of mothers and their beloved children have lost their lives because of conflict and war. My own older brother died in battle during World War II, and we lost our homes in bombing raids. Like many other families of the time, we were evacuated from our original house. First we had a house built next to the home of some relatives. Then, when this too was bombed out, we erected and lived in a kind of hovel on the ruins. At the time, my father was suffering from rheumatism. I had pulmonary tuberculosis. Four of my brothers were

drafted into the military. Three came home in a couple of years after the war. Still later, we finally received word that the oldest had died in Myanmar, or Burma as it was known then. His loss was the most painful thing in the life of my mother, who was usually optimistic and a devoted housekeeper. I shall always remember how stricken she was by the news of my brother's death.

Once we spent a whole night in an air raid shelter during a B-29 attack. At dawn, after the bombers had gone, one American parachutist lay on the ground nearby. I saw him close-up. He was a boyish blond probably around twenty years of age. Taught to think all American soldiers were devils, local citizens surrounded him and beat him severely with poles until finally the Japanese military police took him away. At home, when she heard of the event, my mother said, "Poor boy! His mother must be worried to death about him."

I realized then that mothers all over the world suffered and sorrowed from war just as my own did. These experiences deeply engraved in my innermost being the cruelty and folly of war. There can be no barriers of race or nationality dividing the hearts of mothers, whose role is to have compassion for life. I derived these convictions from observing my own mother's grief. They have been one of the main sources of all my subsequent pacifist activity.

Pérez Esquivel: In other words, you feel the same sympathy for mothers everywhere that you felt for your own mother. And this sympathy has been the source of your devoted labor in the name of peace.

Women Who Illuminate Society with the Light of Humanity

Pérez Esquivel: The millennium opened with great violence and armed conflicts in such parts of the world as Afghanistan and Iraq. As you have said, war claims more victims among women and children than among soldiers. For instance, the peoples of the Great Lakes region of Africa suffered a genocide of more than three million people, which was ignored by the mass media. In addition, Colombia and various parts of Latin America have been submitted to similar violence. In all these bloody events, women have both been victimized and have distinguished themselves as participants in the resistance movements dedicated to the construction of a more just and humane society. Their mere presence and witness to life gave faces, voices, and personalities to the statistics. They illuminate our marches along new roads.

Ikeda: I find this ability to transform hardship into a life mission both noble and profoundly moving. Buddhism expounds that some bodhisattvas dare to draw evil karma to themselves by their own compassionate vow. In other words, the bodhisattva who wishes to save sentient beings will be born into the world polluted with evil and, accepting hardship, struggle to bring about sentient beings' salvation.

Everyone has a home environment. People who give themselves to the solemn struggle to make that environment better and consistently and courageously perform the good inherent in their personalities convert fate into a mission, thus embodying human nature at its most brilliant level. Women are conspicuously better than men at rooting themselves in and making great contributions to their neighborhoods and communities.

In connection with your comment that the disaster of armed conflict takes its heaviest toll on women and children, I might cite something that Richard von Weizsäcker, philosopher and first president of the unified postwar Germany, said on the subject: "Perhaps the greatest burden was borne by the women of all nations. Their suffering, renunciation and silent strength are all too easily forgotten by history. Filled with fear, they worked, bore human life and protected it. They mourned their fallen fathers and sons, husbands, brothers and friends. In the years of darkness, they ensured that the light of humanity was not extinguished. After the war, with no prospect of a secure future, the so-called 'rubble women' of Berlin and elsewhere were the first to set about building homes again."[5]

In the darkest times, women have infinite power of life that enables them to keep alive the light representing the best of human nature.

Pérez Esquivel: In redirecting themselves toward peace, all men must recognize the path women have trodden in the history of humanity. In addition to giving it, women innately enrich life and provide hope. Always courageous and resolute, they set models of resistance and maturity in dealing with the actual struggles of daily life. In *All Men Are Brothers*, Gandhi put it this way:

"If only women will forget that they belong to the weaker sex, I have no doubt that they can do infinitely more than men against war. Answer for yourselves what your great soldiers and generals would do, if their wives and daughters and mothers refused to countenance their participation in militarism in any shape or form."[6]

In Latin America, many women rely on solidarity with other women as they rear and educate their children in difficult situations. Often they

are forced to face life alone. Their resistance movement has grown and consolidated with the passing of time. They have testified to the worth of life and set examples that have conquered emotions and inspired solidarity in broad sectors of society.

Ikeda: I agree. Without doubt, expanding the solidarity of women is absolutely essential to lasting peace. The father of European unity, the late Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, who engaged in a dialogue with me, said that, whereas the will to fight and kill is an inherent instinct in males, women inherently want to be considerate and caring toward others. We have, on the one hand, male warriors who deprive people of life and, on the other, women who give life. Characteristic values associated with women are symbiosis, union, harmony, and peace. None of these values can be realized without the internally generated operations of life itself. By contrast, associations more closely associated with the masculine sex are opposition, exclusivism, and war; that is, external oppressiveness and restraints applied to the lives of others. Rousseau and Jean Paul, both of whom applied educational theories to their examinations of human attributes, stressed the importance of the female element and, in a thought-provoking manner, characterized as depraved societies that fail to respect women or heed their voices.

Women suffered horribly during the war and violence of the twentieth century. Nor has the negative heritage resulting from the domination of the masculine principle yet been swept away. In the twenty-first century, however, such fundamental values as life, heart, soul, and family are beginning to be examined close-up. The effort to do so approaches the basic feminine principle. Surely a revival of such feminine elements as symbiosis instead of competition and self motivation instead of external pressure will determine whether this century is characterized by respect for peace and life. A society where women can smile radiantly and act vigorously is blessed with harmony and promises a future illumined with hope. The twenty-first century is increasingly in need of the spirit of women who are compassionate toward life and stubbornly refuse to countenance violence.

Women As the Great Builders of Peace

Pérez Esquivel: I am in complete accord with what you say. In Uruguay, Paraguay, and Costa Rica, women who are our comrades for the protection of human rights carry out diverse educational programs in which they demonstrate their great capacity. In all the offices of their

movement, they share responsibilities with men on a footing of equality and with the same rights. Their input in the programs for the nonviolent resolution of conflicts is essential, because fundamentally women are the builders of peace and understanding among individuals and peoples.

Ikeda: Wonderful! In connection with a theory of civilization, the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore expected much from the activities of women. He believed that today civilization is still basically masculine. In such a civilization of power, humanity had lost freedom and humanity in the attempt to conform to a vast mechanistic organization. Tagore expressed the hope that, in the civilization of the coming age, the whole world will be founded, not on profit and politico-economic competition, but on social cooperation and the ideal spirit of mutual respect instead of on the economic ideal of efficiency. Tagore was sure that women would find their true position in relation to the achievement of this goal. He further believed that, when they awaken to their own responsibilities, women will be able to address the new task of building a spiritual civilization with fresh heart and care.[7]

In other words, in the past civilization of power, human beings have been treated as mere means and have lost their humanity. In the task of building a new civilization of the soul, women will play the leading role. We must therefore hope that they will be given a broader stage for actual activities in all countries and all fields of endeavor.

Pérez Esquivel: I agree. Unfortunately, because of religious intolerance, in some nations, women are forced to live in restricted exclusion as if they were inferior beings. Nonetheless, in many nations, the presence of women is becoming increasingly important in cultural, scientific, and technical circles. The female population has managed to free itself from of the marginality to which it has been confined in some nations and break out of the rigorous mold of being considered only means of reproduction or pleasure.

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, defiant, feminist movements became militant and rebellious enough to create new spaces for their participation and to reclaim the right to total equality and, refuting rigid systems and male monopolies, to fight for the right to exercise their freedom.

Ikeda: Very true. Throughout history, women have been oppressed and exploited. Even now in the twenty-first century, behind the long strides of economic development in some nations, many women are forced into

extreme poverty. At the same time, as their participation in politics becomes widely accepted, women's rights are becoming a focal point on a global scale. The birth of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the last quarter of the twentieth century is symbolic of an irreversible current.

Pérez Esquivel: Yes, it is. Women have made important conquests; but progress has been slow, laborious, and in many instances painful. Men have remained unwilling to give women space outside the family ambit. The struggle has been unequal because power has remained in the hands of the patriarchy.

Women's victories have depended on social battles and enormous individual and collective intellectual capacity. Female intervention in society, politics, science, and culture followed a long period of male triumphs. In this connection, I should like to mention the great research scientist Marie Curie, who broke the shackles of her epoch and opened new possibilities for female interventions in formerly exclusively masculine fields. In doing this, she made a fundamental contribution to humanity.

Ikeda: There is a statue of Marie Curie at Soka Women's College, which I founded. Her granddaughter, Hélène Langevin-Joliot, a French nuclear physicist, visited there and engaged in heartwarming exchanges with students. As is represented by her two Nobel Prizes—in physics and chemistry—Marie Curie and her achievements symbolize a new stage in the history of women's wisdom. Shining with special nobility among those achievements is the self-sacrificing way in which, during World War I, ignoring personal danger, she and her daughter nursed the wounded on the front lines and treated some of them with high level X-ray medical technology. After the war, she actively promoted peace in the League of Nations. She wanted to be able to say she had done everything possible to ensure that her life had not been lived in vain and that, instead of thinking about what she had accomplished, she always asked herself what she had yet to accomplish.

Historically, many other women have perseveringly striven to turn the path of humanity in the direction of good, hope, and peace. In an age plunged in confusion and anxiety by war, violence, human-rights violations, plague, and hunger, surely it is women who, going beyond care of children and family, can rise up to shed the light of expanding compassion and hope on society at large.

The Lady Shrimala and Mother Theresa

Ikeda: In cooperation with UN organizations like the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, SGI actively participates in the organizing of exhibitions related to human rights and the collection of funds for refugee assistance. In these efforts we are impelled by the Buddhist wish to practice the philosophy of respect for the dignity of life.

Buddhist history and scriptures provide many examples of highly active women. One of them is the Lady Shrimala, who vowed to Shakyamuni to work persistently for the sake of suffering people. She promised never to abandon the lonely, unjustly imprisoned, ill, disaster-afflicted, or impoverished she encountered but to bring them tranquility and abundance. Without equivocation, laxness, or retreat she vowed to enfold and encourage them all warmly.

Pérez Esquivel: I remember your telling us of the Lady Shrimala as a woman who pledged herself to protecting human rights when my wife and I met you in Tokyo in 1995. Her story reminds me of Mother Theresa, whom I met on several occasions. As a Catholic nun, she devoted herself to the impoverished, marginalized people on the verge of a despairing, lonely death, like the so-called untouchables (*harijan* in Gandhi's term) of Kolkata (Calcutta). When asked about the world situation, the functioning of the financial world, and the problems preoccupying governments, she said she had no understanding of such things. She was afflicted by the sufferings of others and considered putting love into action supremely important.

Ikeda: Philosophically very profound. Because their ultimate goal is the happiness of humanity, politics and economics must be founded on the religious spirit of love and compassion. The spirit of compassion symbolized by the image of the Lady Shrimala courses through Nichiren Buddhism. Nichiren, who lived during the thirteenth century, a time when the ordinary people suffered bitterly in a series of wars and disasters, wrote his "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land" as an admonition to the authorities of the ruling Kamakura shogunate. In it he uses a variation of the written symbol (*kanji*) for the word nation, which ordinarily consists of the character for monarch enclosed in a boxlike form (*kunigamae*) indicating something that surrounds. Nichiren replaced the monarch element with the character for the people (*min*). In other words, he thought of a nation, not as a territory controlled by authorities, but as mainly something centered on the

ordinary people and stressing their happiness and tranquility. His attitude is related to what in modern terms is called human security.

In "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land," Nichiren formulated the idea of the ordinary people as the reformers of their epoch, while evoking all their own potentialities on the basis of the philosophy of respect for the dignity of life.

In this way, he encourages us to live creatively for the sake of the happiness of all humanity: "If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquillity throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?"[8]

Making Nichiren's philosophy of peace and popular welfare the basis of all action inevitably is conducive both to the realization of world peace and universal happiness and to opposition to all modern authoritarianism and evils that threaten human dignity.

The Buddhist View of Women

Pérez Esquivel: I know that, since its foundation as a great lay organization based on the teachings of Nichiren, Soka Gakkai has consistently worked for the peace and happiness of humanity. But I should like to know what view Shakyamuni had of women.

Ikeda: Extreme discrimination against women prevailed in the India of Shakyamuni's time. Numerous passages in the Brahmanic scriptures speak contemptuously and insultingly of women. But, adopting an historically epoch-making stance, Shakyamuni instructed both men and women, permitted women to be members of the Order, and regarded the sexes as equal in terms of religious qualifications. After his death, however, male-centric views came to dominate. This change in attitude resulted in the doctrine of the Five Female Hindrances, according to which women are innately incapable of becoming celestial beings like Brahma, Shakra, Devil king, Wheel-turning king, or Buddha. Called emissaries from hell, they were said to lack the seed of Buddhahood. In other words, they could never become Buddhas.

In its philosophy of the Buddhahood of women, however, the Lotus Sutra is heir to Shakyamuni's own spirit of the equality of the sexes. This approach is illustrated by the story of the Buddhahood of the eight-year-old Dragon King's daughter in Chapter Twelve, "Devadatta." When the disciple Shariputra comments on the Five Hindrances preventing women from attaining Buddhahood, this little girl tells him, "Use your own supernatural powers to behold me becoming Buddha." In effect, by

saying this, she takes the epochal step of destroying contemporary discrimination against women and makes a great human rights declaration.

Pérez Esquivel: Shakyamuni's attitude toward women must have been highly revolutionary for the India of his time. What attitudes toward women characterized the Japan of Nichiren's day?

Ikeda: The supremacy of the male sex dominating the patriarchic society, the Japanese Middle Ages was strongly colored by attitudes encouraged by indigenous Shinto and by a discriminatory Buddhism that had abandoned Shakyamuni's spirit of sexual equality. Against this background, Nichiren insisted that in terms of religious practice and capability of enlightenment, men and women are completely equal. The following pattern gives an idea of his attitude: "There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women."[9]

"Only in the Lotus Sutra do we read that a woman who embraces this sutra not only excels all other women, but also surpasses all men."[10]

"All the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra, men or women, are World-honored ones (Buddhas), aren't they?"

Nichiren wrote many letters of encouragement to women, whom he addressed with the same titles of respect he used when writing to men. He had supreme respect for women.

Pérez Esquivel: He made no distinction between laity and clergy and none between men and women but had the highest praise and encouragement for female believers.

Ikeda: Yes. Shakyamuni taught that it is not through birth but through deeds that a person becomes noble or base. He and Nichiren, too, never discriminated among people on the basis of sex or class, origin, or membership in the laity or the clergy. For them, nobility or baseness depends solely on the individual's deeds and mental attitudes. The important thing is not gender but whether a person is able to bring his or her limitless possibilities to full flower and find happiness. Shakyamuni and Nichiren shared this spiritual viewpoint. Instead of being obsessed by gender differences, human beings must strive to perfect their personalities and fulfill themselves.

Pérez Esquivel: Your explanation makes the Buddhist view of women clear to me. And this in turn explains why Soka Gakkai, the basic cur-

rent of which is the philosophy of Shakyamuni and Nichiren, respects and places great significance on women.

President Makiguchi's Emphasis on Educating Women

Ikeda: It is good of you to say so. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, first president of Soka Gakkai, put the highest expectations in mothers and women in general as the builders of the ideal new society of the future. He referred to the awakening of the "great maternal" and placed maximum emphasis on the education of women.

In 1905, at the height of the Russo-Japanese War, he was a teacher at Tōa (East Asia) Women's School in Tokyo and made efforts with other people to found a correspondence-course organization called the Japanese Association for the Higher Education of Women for primary school graduates and served as manager of the organization. It charged no entrance fees, reduced instruction rates for families of soldiers at the front, and had a system for recognizing model students. Mr. Makiguchi planned a women's school of liberal arts, an institute of learning free of charge for girls unable to pay school fees. In 1907, while managing the Japanese Girls' Association, he published a magazine for women called *Nihon no Shojo* (The Japanese girl), the second-oldest periodical of its kind in the country at the time. Indicative of his fervor for female education, all these activities were carried on in the spirit of the desire to provide education for everyone.

Pérez Esquivel: Most impressive. Taking such action in the name of women's education at the beginning of the twentieth century was highly innovative. Education is the basis of all society. It is necessary not only for imparting knowledge, but also for generating conscience. It gives women the creative vitality and sentiments to maintain inner and outer equilibrium in the face of conflicting and traumatizing social impacts.

Ikeda: Just as you say. In the magazine *Daikatei* (The great home), which was sent monthly to members of the Japanese Association for Women's Higher Education, Mr. Makiguchi published a speech including the following passages:

"Are there people in the world today who don't feel the need to educate women? The era in which it was possible to suppress the love of learning and claim that women's learning is useless and dangerous has passed."

"I want to use education to keep women from falling into poverty."

"Instead of giving them money, material goods, or jobs, it is far more important to give them the ability to discover their own ways of living and to overcome difficulties."

An educator himself, the second president of Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda emulated Mr. Makiguchi's efforts in correspondence-course education. As their spiritual heir, to realize their ideals, as third president of Soka Gakkai, I founded the Soka Women's College and have established correspondence educational courses in Soka University.

In addition, at the time of its inauguration, I suggested that the Kansai Soka schools, initially started as girls' schools, adopt as school bywords *Conscience*, *Good Health*, and *Hope* and, at the first entrance ceremonies, I urged students to never to try to build their own happiness on the unhappiness of others.

Pérez Esquivel: Three generations of Soka Gakkai presidents have undertaken women's education. The great expectations Mr. Makiguchi had for women and his exhortation to them to awake to their potentials indicate and illuminate the course we who live in the twenty-first century ought to follow.

Soka Gakkai has pursued a path leading to liberty and the creation of peace. The founders and precursors have followed the path of peace and solidarity with the intention of radically transforming spiritual values in diverse aspects of life and human action.

Walls Dividing Humanity

Pérez Esquivel: Many of us thought that, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the world entered a new stage of international cooperation and solidarity and that liberty would be won for everybody. We thought that humanity would direct its efforts toward the elimination of hunger and poverty and concentrate on protecting the global environment. But circumstances turned out much more complicated, and our hopes for the cessation of ethnic conflicts and acts of terrorism were frustrated. Even worse, the global problems confronting humanity, like war, famine, indigence, and the destruction of the environment, assumed still more alarming forms. The balance between humankind and nature has been lost. The world has become engulfed in clouds of violence and uncertainty. At the same time, high illiteracy rates and insufficient resources to ensure human health and development have become a constant threat.

Ikeda: True. In the hope of focusing on such problems and discovering

hints for resolving them even slightly, for some years, I have been issuing yearly peace proposals. In addition to the peace proposal, I published a proposal entitled "Fulfilling the Mission: Empowering the UN to Live up to the World's Expectations" for the United Nations General Assembly, which was held in September 2006. In it, I wrote that, as long as there are people in the world threatened by famine, poverty, and environmental pollution, though it may entail problems and invite criticism, the only way to discover solutions is to empower and vitalize the United Nations, to which many nations belong and which is morally supported in all regions.

In spite of recently increasing numbers of children completing primary school all over the world, according to UNESCO estimates, there are still 785 million illiterate persons worldwide. Of this number, two-thirds are women. More than a hundred million children are said to be deprived of the chance to attend school. UNESCO plays a central part in conducting the campaign Education for All, the goal of which is the creation of an environment where basic education is provided and where educational opportunities are equal for both sexes. In connection with this goal, in 2003, the United Nations started its UN Literacy Decade.

Pérez Esquivel: Certainly the work of international organizations like the UN has born fruit. Nonetheless, the facts reveal the persistence of many different kinds of walls dividing humanity; for example, the wall between the rich and the poor, the wall between Israel and Palestine, the wall dividing North and South Korea, and the wall between the United States and Mexico. These walls deepen rifts among peoples by intensifying hatred, resentment, and vengeance.

Without doubt, however, the most difficult walls to raze are those erected within our hearts by intolerance, absence of dialogue, and the lust for power and conquest. Such walls can be torn down only by means of a daily, individual process of personal dialogue and social and cultural interactions.

Ikeda: I agree. As a mother, woman, and human being, Betty Williams courageously both spoke out and took action to bring such walls down. In my talks with her, we discussed ways humanity can break the vicious circle of hatred and vengeance. She said, "For me, and the only way I can work, is to remain true to one's beliefs and love one's opponents into submission…. This is by no means an easy thing to do."[11]

Candid, open interpersonal dialogue is the only way to eliminate the walls of intolerance and discrimination poisoning human life. Develop-

ing inherent good human traits of courage and compassion through steady, persistent dialogue builds a solidarity of goodness among ordinary people. And this is the way to lasting peace. The power of dialogue is the true weapon of peace. Furthermore, dialogue is more a female than a male specialty. Wise men of the past who have stressed its importance have called attention to women's power of dialogue.

As you yourself point out, Ralph Waldo Emerson insisted that, to make its content truly profound and noble and to extract its greatest profit, we must aim for person-to-person dialogue. He said, "Women are, by this and their social influence, the civilizers of mankind. What is civilization? I answer the power of good women."[12] Surely the power of women will initiate and guide the age of dialogue.

Pérez Esquivel: I agree. History presents a rich trove of women's experiences and contributions to plotting the path to freedom. The constantly evolving, living examples they set enrich all humanity. This was especially true in the twentieth century, which was characterized by violence, wars, and armed conflicts that profoundly wounded human life and conscience.

Ikeda: SGI women members have ceaselessly struggled to build peace with a tough spirit undaunted by violence and terrorism. The journalist Mariane Pearl is one of them. In January, 2002, while on assignment in Pakistan, her husband Daniel Pearl, a correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal*, was abducted and killed by an armed group. The terrorists behind the killing shocked people all over the world by posting the murder on the Internet. It is hard even to imagine the depth and scope of his wife's sorrow. She was pregnant with their son at the time. But, refusing to give in, she said that letting her suffering get the best of her would cost her soul. "Hating the criminals would only satisfy their wish to plunge my husband and me into fear and submission and make us powerless. I intend to win this battle for the sake of the happiness of my son, who has never seen his father's face."[13]

Her memoir, which aroused great public response, received the French Truth Award for outstanding factual reporting. In the message of condolences I sent to ceremonies marking the first anniversary of the tragedy, I said, "The global sorrow caused by Daniel Pearl's death has created a vast network of human solidarity. Not even the most hate-filled can destroy this force for good."

Pérez Esquivel: I agree with your way of thinking. Women are becom-

ing protagonists of social change and are forging a new conscience for humanity. Recently I have been having encounters and interchanges of ideas with teachers and other professionals in the fields of education, psychology, and the law as well as with social workers, instructors at various levels, and students. Most of these people are women of extraordinary dynamic powers striving to create interdisciplinary networks in various fields. I feel that their silent revolution of the conscience will generate new social paradigms.

Women are assuming new roles and places in societies. Throughout the Latin American Continent, including Argentina, mighty women's movements have arisen in defense of human rights, like the ones I have already mentioned: The Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo; the families of the imprisoned and disappeared; and similar expressions of solidarity among actresses, singers, writers, musicians, and many other female intellectuals.

The SGI Women's Movement

Ikeda: The people you mention are leading precursors in the creation of A Century of Women. In our SGI movement for peace, culture, and education too, women display wonderful strengths and play various leading roles. For example, the Soka Gakkai Women's Peace Committee is active in such publishing projects as the twenty-volume series entitled *With Hopes for Peace*. In addition, its members help cultivate informed public opinion by producing a variety of exhibitions, including the "Women and the Pacific War," "Our Global Family," "Women and the Culture of Peace," and "Children and the Peace Culture." To take the peace message to all parts of the world, they conduct lectures, hold mass meetings on important topics, and collect petition signatures.

Pérez Esquivel: I am immensely happy to know that Soka Gakkai International is boosting its work in the name of peace and that its women are dedicated protagonists of value creation in expanding the importance of understanding the problems confronting humanity. Without doubt, they give us a sign of hope for the times.

We are moving from individualism toward a network of solidarity and shared struggle and hope for the people. We must strive for freedom, not singly, but all together. Women play a major part in the development of a new human conscience. When they break their silence and rise up conscientiously, it will mean that something in the world is changing. That will be a salutary symbol. In this connection, I am reminded of some-

thing Don Quixote says to his faithful squire: "Sancho, the dogs are barking. That means we are riding forth."

The eruption of women into the life of the twenty-first century promises to bring many surprises signifying hope for the arrival of a new dawn.

Ikeda: You quoted the same passage from *Don Quixote* before leaving Japan at the time of our first meeting in 1995. On that occasion, you said, "When someone I trust is being criticized or maligned, I will say nothing to that person. But I express dissatisfaction when that person goes uncriticized by everybody." This is the kind of sentiment we can expect to hear from a person like you who has overcome hardship time and time again.

The waves a ship in full sail arouses are proof of forward motion. Those of us who have struggled against groundless, jealous criticism and painful condemnation find your message immensely encouraging.

Pérez Esquivel: I am very happy that you still remember my words. I can understand the calumny and baseless lies the three successive presidents of Soka Gakkai—Makiguchi, Toda, and yourself—have endured.

Ikeda: I am grateful for your understanding. I once expressed my emotions concerning women as leaders in the Century of Life in the following verses.

Like a new sun
the new century of women is imminent.
In that century,
women will win
happiness and peace.
Life will triumph.
The movement,
activity, and progress
will live to triumph:
The triumph of the family
….
To mighty women of the new century
who stride forward limitlessly,
banzai!

Peace begins near at hand. The women of our SGI peace movement

initiate their unpretentious dialogue campaigns in their own homes and local communities. All their other activities spring from such dialogues. I am certain that the struggle waged by these women and mothers will open the door of the new century and radiate hope in the third millennium.

The Strength of Youth in Building a Peace Culture

Nuclear Weapons an Absolute Evil—Thoughts of Hiroshima

Ikeda: Allow me to thank you sincerely for the heartfelt message of congratulations you sent on the occasion of my eightieth birthday. The years have flown by since I first met you and your wife in Tokyo in 1995. Forming a friendship with a great peace and human-rights leader like you and having it extend from one century into another are some of the proudest experiences of my life.

Pérez Esquivel: I take this chance to repeat my brotherly wishes for your peace and well-being combined with our best felicitations on attaining the age of eighty in a life dedicated to sharing the struggle and hopes for a more just and fraternal world for all humanity. Please accept greetings from my wife, Amelia, and my sons, as well as from the entire Service of Peace and Justice Foundation in Latin America.

Ikeda: Thank you and please extend my best wishes to your well-remembered, intelligent wife, to your whole family, and to the members of all the branches of your highly respected organization. Though as a youth I was so unhealthy that doctors predicted I would hardly live beyond thirty, I have now reached a healthy eighty and am resolved that my remaining years shall be devoted to the important task of rounding out my life. I can concisely express my current frame of mind in these verses:

> "At eighty, to join with youth to build the future;
> At eighty, to join with intelligent people everywhere
> to build a century of peace."

This is why I consider it a real honor to conduct a dialogue for a peaceful century with you, who have consistently placed your own life on the line to protect the human rights and dignity of the masses.

Pérez Esquivel: Thank you very much. In this age of dialogue, the clarity of your thinking, your concern with life and spirituality in our societies and the paths people have chosen to walk on, and especially your concern for the future of young people are obvious. With their struggles and their experience of life, women have their own place on the road you have traveled. You have always paid respect to the collective popular memory, identities, and values of peoples. I am sure that you have contributed to the development of a critical awareness and to plotting paths of liberty and human dignity. Under your leadership, Soka Gakkai has contributed to producing that critical awareness by promoting its educational values of liberty and peace. In your long and productive life, through your experience and wisdom, you have strengthened those values and convictions.

Ikeda: Once again, you praise me too generously. As you suggest, the cultivation of a critical awareness to discriminate between good and evil will determine future human happiness and peace. Social settings may sometimes muddle it, but the clear distinction between good and bad means that harming, debasing, and taking life are always wrong whereas protecting and cultivating life are always good. This much is certain. And this is why nuclear weapons are an absolute evil. Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the sites of the first atomic bombings, should be imprinted on human history as the start of a movement to renounce war completely. This is my conviction, to which I work to win as many adherents as possible.

Pérez Esquivel: I agree entirely. Hiroshima is unforgettably burned into my brain.

Ikeda: An active proponent of nonviolence and human rights, you have called Hiroshima a victim to ultimate violence. In the autumn of 1988, you and your wife visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Cenotaph for Atomic-bomb Victims and listened to what survivors of the bombing had to relate. You expressed your reactions to these experiences in this way: "I thought I knew about the horrors of the atomic bombings. But having seen them with my own eyes, I began to understand that the scale of the tragedy exceeds all imagining. This experience stimulated me to persevere in my work for peace with greater earnestness."

In an act of great good-will, you immediately created a bronze sculpture expressing the destruction of property and human life and presented

it to the city of Hiroshima the following year when you visited Japan. I understand that the statue represents the hope that, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, humanity would be able to recover from the tremendous loss. The citizens of Hiroshima, who have long struggled in the name of peace, were deeply touched by your gift. What impressions did your visit to Hiroshima make on you?

Pérez Esquivel: I can still see the looks on the faces of some girls in photographs in the museum. Many years have passed. The Hiroshima survivors have grown old. But something has marked them forever, something we cannot forget, something we must not forget. In the girls' childish glances is quietly engraved forever the moment that is a testimony of the people of Japan and of all humanity. In those seconds, those minutes, human lives were deprived of breath; the pulse of the world stopped. At that instant, the sight of his destructive work made the copilot of the bomber Enola Gay cry out horrified, "My God, what have we done?"

Whenever I see or sense that world leaders or the chiefs of state of both great powers and of developing countries try to use nuclear arms as a way of acquiring power, Hiroshima comes to mind immediately. Hiroshima has left a mark on humanity. Nuclear armaments reveal what scientific power can lead to and what the costs of its impact and risks can be for present and future generations of the world.

Ikeda: Humanity must never repeat that tragedy. Many of my friends were exposed to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some were in their mother's wombs at the time. They have courageously told the world about their experiences. Working mainly with young people from those two cities, our organization has conducted an extensive program of interviews and tape recordings of the experiences of victims and has published them to ensure that each of their stories reaches posterity. In addition, we have sponsored exhibitions, lectures, and questionnaires on peace and the dignity of life in various parts of the world.

On your visit to the Hiroshima Museum in 1995, you saw the stone in which the outline of a victim of the bombing remains dark against a background bleached by radiation. You entitled that stone "The Shadow of Humanity." On the same occasion, you spoke courageously and justly for the bombing victims when you called for an immediate cessation of all nuclear experimentation.

In describing his impressions of his visit to Hiroshima, Richard von Weizsäcker, president of Germany from 1984 to 1994, said that the mis-

ery caused by the inhuman explosion was indescribable and that nothing he knew of on Earth more clearly revealed the need and the reason for eliminating the weapons that caused it. He said that no city could so strongly incite the desire for peace as Hiroshima. He also said that the vital power of Hiroshima, its will to live, its cultural strength, and its natural beauty inspire hope for the future.[14] All world leaders, especially those of nations possessing nuclear weapons, should go to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to see for themselves how cruel nuclear weapons are and how great is the disaster they wreak.

A Revolution in Leadership for the Sake of Peace

Pérez Esquivel: I agree completely. The people in power refuse to understand that to concentrate on nuclear armament only creates greater insecurity and imperils the lives of their own people and of all humanity. We realize that advances in technical and scientific knowledge are important to many countries and that political decisions determine whether nuclear energy is used for developmental or destructive aims. A reading of the world situation and the great-power politics shows us that those in charge have no desire to register or take into account the vociferous demands of their peoples. Like a madness, feeble memory and ambition for economic, political, and military power cause rulers to ignore the historical experiences and sufferings of their people by unleashing wars and invasions. Power blinds them and leads the generation of greater destruction and death.

Ikeda: As was true in the militaristic Japan of the past, the evil of authority causes the ordinary people untold tragic suffering. When the people in power become arrogant and disregard the dignity of many ordinary people's lives, the greater their authority becomes, the more immeasurable the pain and misery they cause. Consequently, in this nuclear age of horrifyingly murderous weapons, preventing the recurrence of such tragedy absolutely requires a revolution in the nature of leaders.

What are your thoughts on the condition of the world today in relation to nuclear weapons?

Pérez Esquivel: The five great powers constituting the United Nations Security Council dominate the world and have at their disposal huge nuclear arsenals capable of destroying everything living on it. The powers that rule today run breakneck toward armed might and nuclear arma-

ment. I doubt that the end of the Cold War terminated the competition between the United States and Russia. Besides, some other nations that have developed technology and possess atomic weapons also want to become members of the nuclear club of death. Israel is one of them but, as an ally of the United States, little is discussed about its nuclear arsenal. From the Israel-Palestine perspective, coupled with the regional instability in Iran, the situation in the Middle East grows worse.

The great powers have no intention of beginning real disarmament. They intend to be the sole possessors of the arms of mass destruction that permit them to control and subjugate the rest of the world. As long as they are unprepared to disarm, the arms race continues to imperil global peace.

In each country, hate, intolerance, and rivalry stimulate development of the destructive power of nuclear arms with the idea that greater military power and the possession of hypocritically named "weapons of deterrence" result in greater influence.

Ikeda: The arms race you speak of with such regret represents the cycle of evil that human beings are fated to repeat over and over and that the Buddhist philosophy of the nature of life describes as the Realm of Anger (*Shura-kai* in Japanese). In this state of life, extreme selfishness compels the individual to be constantly making comparisons with others and to get the better of them. This evil condition allows no room for respecting others, who serve only as means to the satisfaction of the selfish person's aims even to a willingness to cause destruction. The Realm of Anger is one of the ten Buddhist categories of life: starting at the lowest and moving upward, they are the realms of Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva, and Buddha.

Since human life largely consists in a transition of suffering among the lower six states, the Realm of Anger is comparatively frequently encountered in individual existence and in collective society as well. Collisions among individuals experiencing the Realm of Anger generate limitless conflict and destruction. In the final analysis, the insatiable arms race spells defeat for humanity itself.

Pérez Esquivel: Yes, that is its logical conclusion. But how can we get the big powers to begin real disarmament? We ask ourselves the following questions. Have they forgotten the suffering of humanity? Have they forgotten what happened during World War II? Have they become oblivious to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Holocaust, the millions of lost

lives, the horror, the deaths, and the consequences that persist still today in the lives and awareness of humanity? In the face of the situation in which human beings now live we must ask ourselves what each of us can do and what our leaders can do.

Expanding the Global Nuclear-free Zone

Ikeda: I sympathize entirely with your passionate statement. I firmly believe that, no matter how difficult, any situation human beings have created human beings can rectify.

One promising noteworthy attempt to deal with the nuclear-arms situation is the expansion of nuclear-free zones. In 1967, Latin America set the pattern by drawing up the first-ever treaty establishing a non-nuclear zone where all nuclear experimentation and the use, production, deployment, and acquisition of nuclear weapons are forbidden. As is well known, your own homeland, Argentina, also declared its abandonment of nuclear development plans at an early stage.

Pérez Esquivel: Quite so. As you say, in 1967, the nations of Latin America concluded the Tlatelalco Treaty of nonproliferation of nuclear arms. Later, it was amended to include the nations of the Caribbean region, and its title was altered accordingly to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. It has been ratified by the 33 nations making up the region. All in all, these steps seem encouraging.

Ikeda: They do indeed. On a global scale, in 1959, with the adoption of the Antarctic Treaty System, all nuclear explosions and the disposal of nuclear wastes were forbidden south of 60 degrees south latitude. Since that time, nuclear-free zones have been established in—as we have seen—Latin America and the Caribbean region as well as in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia. At present, the entire southern hemisphere is non-nuclear; and signatories to the non-nuclear-zone treaty number well over 100. As I mention in my Peace Proposal for 2008, it is now urgently necessary to develop a similar non-nuclear zone in the Arctic. While the International Court of Justice did issue a milestone advisory opinion in 1996 that nuclear weapons are illegal, the elimination of nuclear weapons requires a vaster and more vocal popular consensus on their illegality. We must take the success of the movement in the southern hemisphere and now increasingly in Asia as a basis on which to establish this consensus as the norm for all humanity.

In the murky conditions that have followed the conclusion of the Cold War, the danger of proliferation as a result of traffic in nuclear materials and technologies increases. In these circumstances the wisdom of the decision by the Latin American nations, including Argentina, to go non-nuclear shines as an historical event.

Pérez Esquivel: The whole world expects Japan, as the victim of nuclear attacks, to assume a leadership role in the elimination of these weapons.

The Spirit of the Antinuclear Declaration

Ikeda: For Japan, contributing to peace is a mission, a right, and a duty.

As his primary parting instruction to young people, in September, 1957, the year before his death, Josei Toda delivered his Antinuclear Declaration, in which he denounced nuclear weapons as an absolute evil. In it he declared, "… the ordinary citizens of the world have a right to live. Whoever threatens that right is a devil, a Satan, a monster." He went on to say that the young men and women of Japan have a mission to convince the whole world that any nation and its people who would conquer by using nuclear weapons are evil and satanic. He discerned the devilish desire to intrude on the lives of others that is fundamental to the use of nuclear weapons.

Without basic changes in humanity itself, far from leading to disarmament, the situation can only worsen and make the creation of lasting peace impossible. This is why, together with his efforts in the name of disarmament, Mr. Toda promoted the human revolution movement as a way of triumphing over the evil infesting human life.

The late Joseph Rotblat, who was president of the International Pugwash Conferences on the abolition of nuclear weapons, was intensely sympathetic with the ideas expressed in Mr. Toda's declaration. First held in 1957, the year in which the declaration was made, the Pugwash Conferences have continued to exert a great influence for a world free of war and nuclear weapons. He resonated strongly with our peace movement and with Mr. Toda's declaration.

Professor Rotblat wrote that evil cannot be conquered with evil and that the threat of war should not be used as a way to avert war. He also said that, though it is the norm for nuclear nations, possessing such arms, even for preemptive purposes, is immoral. I think his meaning is in line with your own concerns.

In any case, the road to peace must give first preeminence to the gen-

eral tranquility and happiness. The time has come for world leaders to be deeply aware of this as they pool their wisdom and act.

Pérez Esquivel: I think so, too. The people are the basic element.

Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Mohamed ElBaradei makes an important point when he says in effect as follows: We must create a world that is just, equitable and fair. For that you need a system of security that covers everybody, a system of security that does not depend on nuclear deterrence, a system of security where every man and woman has a decent standard of life.

Security must be founded on the life and development of peoples, not on their exploitation. I believe that the possibility for averting confrontations among nations in specific regions, like Latin America, is to be found in the unity of people, in achieving consensus, and in encouraging cooperation and solidarity.

Ikeda: I concur entirely. When I met him in November 2006, in Tokyo, Director General ElBaradei said "Rights as human beings must take precedence over national rights. We can achieve peace if we can go beyond race, ethnic group, religion, and skin color to understand the oneness of humanity. We can realize peace only when we understand how much we share as human beings. Comprehension of our shared values will put an end to fighting and war because boundaries, races, ethnic groups, and skin color have nothing to do with human values but are only peripheral matters."

Clearly a peace movement expanding understanding of our shared human values and enlightening the peoples of the world to them is indispensable. Taking Josei Toda's antinuclear declaration as our starting point, we of SGI have long promoted peace by the people and for the people by undertaking various projects. For instance, in 1974, our Young Men's Division collected ten million names for a petition to ban the atomic and hydrogen bombs. In recognition of their passion, I went to New York to present the book containing the signatures personally to Kurt Waldheim, then secretary general of the United Nations.

Beginning in the 1980s, we have sponsored a series of exhibitions including "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World," sponsored jointly with the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the United Nations Department of Public Information, and, in 1996, an updated version of this exhibition, "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Humanity." These exhibitions have been shown in 39 cities in 24 countries, including the Soviet Union and China, and have been visited by more than 1.7 million people. In 2007,

to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Mr. Toda's antinuclear declaration, we initiated an exhibition called "From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit." This exhibition is a concrete example of what the United Nations means by encouraging the people to turn their own hands to spreading the word about disarmament and nonproliferation. While striving to arouse popular awareness about the elimination of nuclear arms and disarmament, we hope to also stimulate a rising tide that can change the times by transforming the culture of war into the culture of peace.

Developing Inherent Human Goodness

Pérez Esquivel: The culture of peace must be a sustained formation covering all disciplines of knowledge. Thus, when we touch on the theme of nuclear arms, we cannot overlook such recent events as terrorist attacks and diverse conflicts. Some events are the results of irrationality attempting to establish logical connections between violence and counter-violence, aggressors and the assaulted, victims and their victimizers. In some cases, reason is lost and unreason takes its place.

The tremendous terrorist attacks on New York and Washington of September 11, 2001, shook everyone. Violence and self-justification are two sides of the same coin. Thus walls of intolerance are raised by means of ideological, religious, and political conceptions. Disturbed spirits submerged in hate cannot reach the light. They heed only themselves and bear evidence to a world of contradictions and struggles for power and dominion. Radicals adopt their own ideologies and consider themselves proprietors of a truth that they attempt to impose on others. It makes no difference what means they use to attain their objectives. They justify the use of violence against each other and the need to destroy the enemy. Their own peoples become an abstraction before which all of humanity—its nature and existence—is denied.

Ikeda: You describe the fearsome condition in which human beings can no longer perceive each other's humanity and madly cease being human themselves. No matter what the reason for its use, violence is an abandonment of humanity, the demise of humanity.

I joined spiritual leaders from many different fields in contributing an essay, entitled "The Evil over which We Must Triumph," to the book *From the Ashes: A Spiritual Response to the Attack on America*, published shortly after 9/11. In it I dealt with Buddhism as a philosophy of respect for life and the condemnation of terrorism, which tramples on

life, as absolute evil, no matter how virtuous its pretext. To break the series of evil manifest in the violence and war of the twentieth century, we must continuously strive to develop the good inherent in human life. This is true because the foundation of peace is the evolution of the good elements—nonviolence, compassion, trust, wisdom, courage, and truth—for the sake of defeating the evil infesting us and ceaselessly threatening life itself. In this connection, I must recall Linus Pauling, the father of modern chemistry, with whom you too were on friendly terms. Already 91 years old, Dr. Pauling was good enough to attend a lecture entitled "In Search of New Principles of Integration," which I delivered at Claremont McKenna College in 1993. In commenting on my speech, he touched on the Buddhist philosophy of the Ten Realms: "Number nine, the world of the Bodhisattva—a state of compassion in which one seeks to save all people from suffering—this is a spirit that people would do well to accept." In this way, he expressed his sense of the importance to humankind of attaining and acting in accordance with what Buddhism calls the bodhisattva life-state. Peace can be made manifest in various ways in politics, law, and economy as long as human beings are guided by internal motivations to rejoice in the happiness of others and never to attempt to build their own good fortune on others' misfortune.

Pérez Esquivel: I am happy that you mention Doctor Linus Pauling, a great friend with whom I shared many activities, basically comradeship. Among the activities we engaged in together was the voyage of the Peace Ship, which, departing Sweden and Norway, took us to Corinto, in Nicaragua, were we provided support for suffering Nicaraguan victims of war. On board we carried medicines, fertilizers, machinery, and school materials for the people, but our most basic cargo was solidarity and friendship. Labor unions, the Lutheran Church, and the government of Norway collaborated in the mission, as did another close friend of both of us, George Wald, Nobel laureate in Physiology or Medicine.

Ikeda: A ship bearing solidarity and friendship is a wonderful page in history. A great scientist, Linus Pauling was also a bodhisattva who devoted his life to peace and the struggle for the good of suffering peoples. His friendship with you is a source of eternal light.

Putting the Security of Humanity First

Pérez Esquivel: On September 11, 2001, the day of the terrorist attacks,

another piece of shattering information went unnoted by the major information media. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization announced that on that day, and on every other day of the year, throughout the world, 35,615 children died of hunger. No television channel covered this item. The UN, national governments, and many religious organizations said not a word about this silent genocide by starvation, this mute bomb more murderous than war.

Ikeda: You point out a very important fact. Extreme poverty and hunger are the background of modern terrorist attacks, conflict, and war. Structural violence like exploitation, prejudice, discrimination, poverty, hunger, and disease generate the causes of direct violence. The Bengal famine of 1943, which claimed three million victims, stimulated my friend and the former president of the Pugwash Conferences M. S. Swaminathan to study agriculture and to tackle the problem of food provision. He insists that peace cannot grow when people are too obsessed with hunger to heed morality and religion and that human beings have the ecological, economic, physical, and social right to balanced diets and clean drinking water.

I agree with him. In many dimensions, promoting the security of humanity is the issue to which we must afford primary precedence. In the truest sense, this is the way to defeat war and violence.

Toward an Age of the Global Citizen and a Century of the Spirit

Ikeda: The Russian cosmonaut Alexandr A. Serebrov related to me an impression that indicates something about the direction of the interesting reformation of human consciousness. He has flown into space four times and has performed ten space walks. He says that each time he returns from a space journey, as soon as the lock of the craft opens, he is most strongly impressed with the aroma of the planet, the fresh smell of Earth. We must pursue educational policies that develop citizens of the Earth who respect and are willing to care for the planet that is our common home and the mother entity of all life.

Pérez Esquivel: Without doubt. Terrorism, conflicts, and nuclear armaments threaten our common home, this small planet called Earth. We have no other. We must care for and respect our Mother Earth, its seas, forests, and plants and the biological diversity of all living beings that are part of our planetary life.

Ikeda: Tsunesaburo Makiguchi opposed both narrow nationalism and vain, insubstantial cosmopolitanism and insisted that people should start with close-to-home thinking as the first step in evolving steadily into global citizens. For instance, children should realize that the cotton garments they wear are made possible by the hard work of cotton-growers sweating under the hot Indian sun. Such concrete observation helps children understand that their own homes are connected to the whole world. Mr. Makiguchi wrote, "My life is related to the world; I consider the world my home. I realize that all countries are my realm of activity."[15] For him, education must make each person aware of belonging to the immediate home region, the nation, and the world. Awareness of the home region and the world prevents people from being swept up in nationalistic evil. Such a view is essential to the creation of a society of neighbors and global citizens. In addition, from a historical standpoint, he argued that in the future humanity should advance from military, political, and economic competition to humane competition. The observations of a man like Mr. Makiguchi, who died imprisoned by the Japanese militarists, have much to teach us in the twenty-first century.

Pérez Esquivel: In the course of evolution, the human being has traveled different paths in prayer and meditation. The power of the spirit takes humanity to the right point, where all other paths come together. The infinite grace of God guides each individual there. It is the ascending and converging power to merge with divinity. In the words of the French philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955), it is the Omega point. In addition to seeking universal mysteries and secrets, we must humbly delve into ourselves to encounter the revelation of life where life reveals itself to all of us equally like the dropper produces drops of water. The ability to see life is barred for those whose spirits are closed to the self and against the world, though it can come to light through meditation and many other ways. This life-bestowing spirit flows as free as air in our lungs.

Ikeda: I see. What you say reminds me of the idea of Immanuel Kant, whom Tsunesaburo Makiguchi read fervently until his death in prison.: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: *the starry heavens above and the moral law within*."[16] As Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, to whom you refer, foresaw the arrival of a century of the mind and the spirit, the intellects of the world have pursued the essence of the cosmos and of humanity in their own ways.

Shakyamuni Buddha attained insight into his own, vast, internal universe and perceived it to be unified with the great external universe. He also perceived the cosmic life force that is the source of both inner and outer universes. This was his Enlightenment, which subsequent Buddhists inherited. One of them was Vasubandhu, who lived in India in the fourth century. Vicariously experiencing Shakyamuni's discernment, he also systemized the deep layers of the inner cosmos in what is called the teaching of the Eight Consciousnesses(*Vijnana*). According to this teaching, the profound levels of the mind are made up of eight kinds of consciousness: the five sensually perceptive consciousnesses plus the sixth consciousness, or thought, which integrates the five perceptual consciousnesses; the seventh or *mano* consciousness, which corresponds to the self; and the eighth or *alaya* consciousness, which is the storehouse of karmic potentialities. The first six constitute ordinary self-awareness. The seventh enters the realm of fundamental self-awareness. The eighth, or *alaya*, consciousness is the deepest. It constitutes the most essential current of life which flows in relationships with others. In the first seven consciousnesses, both bad attitudes like power lust, hatred, greed, and egoism, and good attitudes like nonviolence, compassion, self-control, and altruism are operative. Buddhism further perceives the good and bad latent energies as good and bad karma in the realm of the *alaya* consciousness. According to Mahayana teachings, the altruistic, sympathetic way of the bodhisattva reinforces the good karma in the *alaya* consciousness and makes possible perception of the fundamental cosmic force of life. This approach coincides with what you call spirituality.

Pérez Esquivel: Yes. Buddhism arrives at truly profound insights into the inner world.

Ikeda: Further, Buddhism identifies the cosmic force of life with the Dharma or Buddha nature, the inherence of which gives dignity to all human life. The Tiantai (Tendai in Japanese) and Nichiren schools of Mahayana Buddhism add a ninth, or *amalaya*, consciousness which is totally pure and includes all the other eight constituent consciousness of the individual life. The Buddha nature resides deep within the human inner cosmos but is united with the outer cosmos. In its total purity, it is illumined by the light of compassion and wisdom. This fundamental life beyond the eighth consciousness is expressed as the mantra Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, the monarch of all nine consciousnesses. Buddhism teaches us how to live so as to understand the basic power of life and the

fundamental wisdom of the universe and in this way to make our lives radiant. In the individual life, this is the philosophy I have called the "Human Revolution"; in society as a whole it shows the way to build peace.

Pérez Esquivel: I recall an African proverb that goes, "If you don't know where you're going, go back to find out where you started from." We lose sight of our destination; returning to our starting point helps us see where we are going. Perhaps we can tell how we will arrive, how we will depart, and what we can hope for from a return. Perhaps we cannot. But if our spirits are open to the four winds of liberty, love, peace, and justice, we can acknowledge our common spirituality.

Ikeda: No matter what happens, we must keep in mind the starting point that is our shared human spirituality.

Pérez Esquivel: I agree. We should know how to see what exists but is invisible to our eyes, to discover the spirit inhabiting each of us. Some time ago, I told a group of students about something written by a Nicaraguan woman imprisoned during the dictatorship of General Anastasio Somoza (1925–80). She wrote: "Without permission, a Nicaraguan prisoner cannot talk, whistle, smile, sing, walk fast, or greet other prisoners. They can neither give nor receive pictures of pregnant women, couples, butterflies, stars, or birds.

"On Sunday, a school mistress named Didaská Pérez, imprisoned for her ideological ideas, was visited by her five-year-old daughter Milay, who had brought her mother a picture of birds she had made. At the prison gate, the censor tore the picture up. Birds are forbidden.

"The following Sunday, Milay came again, this time with a picture of trees. The censor passed it: 'Trees are permitted.' Didaská praised the picture and asked her daughter what were the colored spots she saw among the branches. 'Are they oranges? What kind of fruit are they?' 'Shhh,' whispered Milay. 'Silly! Don't you see? They're eyes. Of the birds I brought you. But they've all hidden themselves in the leaves.'"

Can we see what is hidden in our hearts and minds—to return to the interior of each person and let the wind and silence in. To allow free entry and open our hearts so as to return to our common home. We follow different roads toward the "land of no evil," the promised land where we can build our common home. Not knowing where that home is means we are lost.

We must seek a road to the common hearth of the human family, and

that road is spirituality and peace. There is no home without spirituality. Within ourselves, we must awaken the compassion without which we can never find the road to our common home.

Ikeda: Your story provides much to think about. I believe that we must fundamentally alter our way of life by transcending ethnic and national boundaries and returning to our shared roots; that is, in your words, to the common home of humanity.

In 1993, the year after the Los Angeles race riots, I visited the United States, where I dedicated to my friends there a long poem entitled "The Sun of *Jiyu* over a New Land," which contains the following passage:

> "As each group seeks their separate
> Roots and origins,
> Society fractures along a thousand fissure lines.
> When neighbors distance themselves from neighbors, continue your
> Uncompromising quest
> For your truer roots
> In the deepest regions of your lives.
> Seek out the primordial 'roots' of humankind.
> Then you will without fail discover the stately expanse of Jiyu
> Unfolding in the depths of your life.
> Here is the home, the dwelling place
> To which humankind traces
> Its original existence.
> Beyond all borders,
> Beyond all differences of gender and race.
> Here is a world offering true proof
> Of our humanity.
> If one reaches back to these fundamental roots,
> All become friends and comrades
> To realize this is to 'emerge from the earth'."

The Lotus Sutra, the quintessence of Mahayana Buddhism, teaches that everyone is the child of the Great Force of Life and is endowed with dignity. This essential nature is represented in the form of Boddhisattvas who rise from the Earth on the occasion of the teaching of the Lotus Sutra to save all sentient beings. In Japanese, called the *Jiyu no Bosatsu*, they are empowered by the operations of the four cosmic elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. First, like fire that rises heavenward, illuminating everything around, they lead along the right path lighting courage in

people's hearts and dispelling darkness with the light of wisdom. Second, like wind, with the might of life itself, they move ceaselessly, freely, and powerfully, blowing all obstacles from their paths. Third, undefiled and pure like running water, they cleanse the world of anger and greed. Fourth, like the sustaining Earth, they compassionately guard all things with complete impartiality. The ideal goal of our "Human Revolution" is the evocation and manifestation of this fundamental cosmic force in both the self and others. The four powers of the Bodhisattvas from the Earth are essential in good leaders.

Pérez Esquivel: You know the common home of humanity, the dwelling with many differences that we must value and accept in our hearts and minds.

You have expressed it in a beautiful poem that guides us toward a knowledge of our primordial identity. Many people ask me whether peace is possible in a world rocked with war. We ask everyone, including ourselves, this question in the face of the awe and amazement of our times, in which war seems to be the only way closing off all other options. People wonder whether peace is a Utopia, a dream humanity can never realize.

We must re-create spirit and conscience by freeing ourselves and building a culture of peace while eliminating from our inner beings the violence that has dominated and enslaved us, that culture of violence by which we have been subjugated.

Ikeda: I understand your meaning. The way to convert violence into peace is to regenerate the spirit in the mind of each individual. Expanding popular pacific solidarity, too, is a way to turn violence into peace. Such solidarity becomes power for peace and inspires cooperative popular enlightenment oriented toward spiritual reform. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi urged us to concentrate on humanity, provide hope, and establish connections with the people.

In a similar vein, in the Epilogue to *War and Peace*, Tolstoy has Pierre tell Natasha, "The whole of my idea is that if vicious people are united and constitute a power, then honest folk must do the same. Now that's simple enough."[17] I firmly believe that a great popular solidarity to convert evil to good, hate to compassion, and violence to nonviolence can build a peace culture that will finally break the fated cycle of bellicosity and force.

Youth's Peace-building Mission

Pérez Esquivel: Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was eager to establish an authentic humanism in which respect for human dignity was ingrained. As he indicated with great precision, we must turn our attention to humanity, provide people with hope, and seek to unite them. How can we achieve these aims? The challenge is great. But often the solutions are simple. If we only could practice what Mr. Makiguchi said, values and attitudes toward life would change radically.

As you know well, in many regions, people live in a uni-polar world rife with conflicts: wars, hunger, and social, cultural, political, and economic inequalities.

At a recent meeting of the Service of Peace and Justice Foundation for working on and evaluating priorities and needs, I insisted that we concentrate on what is urgent and important. There are times when the urgent coincides with what is important and deserving of priority. At other times, however, we get carried away with the urgent and forget the important and the necessary. Immediate conditions absorb us, obscuring our objectives. This is why we must constantly renew our aims and consider whether we are on the right path. We must be capable of correcting mistaken directions and re-determine whether our objectives are really our priorities.

New generations must understand and must take part in the struggle to build a different society in which peace is the pillar of social, political, economic, and spiritual life and in which horrors like Hiroshima and Nagasaki, concentration camps, wars, and the destruction of life never occur again.

The younger generations of today were not alive in that epoch when the irrationality of power, destruction, and murder was let loose by governments convinced that the world was their own. Young people today have the mission of creating spaces for harmonious coexistence and mutual respect among individuals and peoples. To enable them to carry out this mission, we must cultivate spiritual fortitude in them. Let us remember that the past is not gone forever and that some situations, though now submerged and latent, have not disappeared.

Ikeda: Yes. That is why people who knew the evil and violence of the bellicose twentieth century must transmit a spirit of peace and justice to the youth of the twenty-first. A month after September 11, 2001, Joseph Rotblat, who was 92 at the time, flew from London to the United States, eager to address a group of first-year students at Soka University of

America, the mission of which is cultivating people devoted to the peace of the world. I remember vividly how, with the courage of a lion, he said that the terrorist attacks on the United States were part of the twentieth century's negative heritage of despising and ignoring the dignity of life. This heritage is symbolized by the Holocaust and the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Dr. Rotblat went on to express his belief in the goodness of humanity and its capability of civilized evolution and to insist on giving precedence to the benefit of all humanity over that of ethnic groups and nations.

A speech you delivered at Soka University, Japan, in 1994 has become a historical tradition among students, who speak of it still.

Pérez Esquivel: Thank you very much. It was an honor to visit Soka University, an institution founded by Soka Gakkai, an organization dedicated to value creation. The founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and his two successors endured attacks and persecutions for the sake of defending peace and justice. I consider it important to point out that we share with you the struggle for those two great causes.

The knowledge of our common humanity underlies human dignity. Moreover, this knowledge grows when we act on our own initiative for the sake of others and for the good of society. To say that youth is the future is only a relative truth. I think that youth is the present, the now, the today, and that the future will be the direct consequence of the present. We will perceive the fruits tomorrow of the things we have the courage to sow today. For this reason, young people must learn history and cultivate a critical awareness. Youth can open the doors of tomorrow. They can do it with weapons in their hands or with arms outstretched in hope and brotherhood. Peace must be built in each young person and in the comradeship of peoples.

Human rights are nothing special. To the contrary, we must realize that they proceed from individual behavior. I hope we will be able to cultivate and develop this awareness and the sense of responsibility that emerges from it.

In Latin America, the Service of Peace and Justice Foundation, together with certain Swedish organizations, conducts a disarmament campaign placing special emphasis on young people. Its efforts are directed toward schools and the development of awareness of the consequences of arms and the necessity of disarmament.

We aim to teach nonviolence as a way of life. We must resolve our conflicts through dialogue, not violence. We encourage daily life practices for the individual and in families, communities, countries, and the

whole world.

Achieving ideals always requires effort and great hope. This is something that Josei Toda indicated very effectively.

Ikeda: Thank you for understanding my mentor. You and all the other world intellectuals with whom I have shared dialogues agree that the future of humanity rests on the shoulders of youth. Josei Toda bequeathed the creation of the new century to the ardor and energy of young people. Shedding even more light on the world's troubles, we intend to build popular solidarity for action in the name of solving global problems.

Pérez Esquivel: Soka Gakkai International contributes to the formation of youth and the building of new paradigms of life and peace. So, its member organizations and individuals are worthy to enjoy respect. I should like to say that you are a person of consistent words and deeds. You put your words into action and impress on them the strength of your own spirit. I hope that you will continue your work for the good of humanity for many years to come.

Ikeda: I have learned much from this dialogue with you. The courage that your wisdom and faith as a man of action have imparted to young people is beyond measure. Buddhist scriptures teach, "If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present."[18] As we unflinchingly tread the way of peace and justice, you and I together are creating causes of future hope and triumph. I wholeheartedly pray for your long life and increasingly good health for the sake of humanity.

Notes

[1] *Young India* (April 10, 1930).

[2] Rosa Parks and Gregory J. Reed. *Dear Mrs. Parks: A Dialogue With Today's Youth* (New York: Lee & Low Books, 1996), p. 97.

[3] The WND II, p. 844.

[4] The WND II, p. 931.

[5] Geoffrey Hartman, ed. *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

[6] Krishna Kripalani, ed. *All Men Are Brothers: Life and Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi As Told in His Own Words* (Paris: UNESCO, 1958), p. 163.

[7] Translated from Japanese. Mitsuo Yamaguchi, *Jinkaku ron* (*Tagoru Chosaku shu*

vol 9) (Tokyo: Daisanbunmei-sha, 1981).

[8] The WND, p. 24.

[9] The WND, p. 385.

[10] Ibid., p. 464.

[11] News Letter No. 7035 (November 28, 2006). Translated from the November 8, 2006, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper.

[12] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "WOMAN," in *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Fireside Edition), vol. 11 (Boston and New York: 1909).

[13] Translated from the translator's postscript for the Japanese edition of *A Mighty Heart: The Brave Life and Death of My Husband, Danny Pearl* by Mariane Pearl, translated into Japaense by Tato Takahama (Tokyo: Ushio Shuppansha, 2005), p. 425.

[14] Translated from Japanese. Richard von Weizsäcker, *Vaitsuzekka Nihon Koen-roku: Rekishi ni Me o Tozasu na* (Richard von Weizsäcker's Speeches in Japan: Don't Close Your Eyes to History), translated by Kiyohiko Nagai (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996).

[15] Translated from Japanese. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, *Jinsei Chirigaku* (A Geography of Human Life), in *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi) (Tokyo: Daisanbunmei-sha, 1996), vol. 1.

[16] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, translated by T. K. Abbott (New York: Prometheus Books, 1996), p. 191.

[17] Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, translated from the Russian by Louise and Aylmer Maude (London: David Campbell, 1992), vol. 3, p. 474.

[18] The WND, p. 279.

Daisaku Ikeda
Born in 1928. Honorary President of Soka Gakkai. President of Soka Gakkai International (SGI). Founder of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy. Established educational institutions such as Soka University, Soka University of America and Soka Schools; cultural institutions such as the Min-On Concert Association and the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum; as well as academic and peace-research institutions such as Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research and the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century. Authored numerous literary works such as "*The Human Revolution*" (12 volumes), "*The New Human Revolution*" (in progress), and "*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*," and "*Wonderful Encounters: Recollections of Meetings with Unforgettable People Around the World*." Furthermore, there are many collections of dialogues with intelligentsia and leading world figures, "*Choose Life*" (A. Toynbee), "*Moral Lessons of the Twentieth Century*" (M.S. Gorbachev), "*Choose Peace*" (Johan Galtung), etc. He has received over 240 honorary doctorates and honorary professorships from universities and institutes around the world, such as Moscow State University, University of Glasgow and Beijing University.

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel
Born 1931 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Graduate of the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes and the Universidad de La Plata. Highly acclaimed as an architect, sculptor and artist he worked in a number of sculptural medias. In 1974, he founded the El Servicio de Paz y Justicia (the Service of Peace and Justice Foundation) for the safeguarding of human rights by promoting an international campaign to condemn the atrocities committed by the military regime. He was arrested in 1977 in Buenos Aires by the Policía Federal, tortured and held without trial for 14 months. While incarcerated, he received the Pope John XXIII Peace Memorial. In 1980 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in defending human rights. He has received honorary doctorates and honorary professorships from universities around the world such as the University of Buenos Aires. His wife, Amanda, is a pianist and musical composer.