

## **SGI-USA Statement Regarding SGI-Related Article, Forbes Magazine, September 6, 2004**

We are surprised and disappointed that a magazine with the stature of Forbes would choose to publish an article with the embarrassingly poor quality of journalism as *Sensei's World* which appeared in their September 6 issue. In addition to the numerous inaccuracies (some of which are cited below), we object to the mean-spirited approach and total lack of fairness demonstrated by its co-writer, Mr. Benjamin Fulford. By failing to quote a single Soka Gakkai representative in his article despite several in-depth interviews, he has deliberately rendered us voiceless and maintained the fiction that we are secretive. We have in fact spent many hours responding to his questions both in person and in writing.

For the record:

1. While this article refers to sources “alleging” Soka Gakkai involvement in “violence, blackmail and intimidation,” the organization has never been involved in any such incidents and no such charges have ever been brought against us.
2. As for the Asaki suicide sidebar, the Soka Gakkai did not win “several” defamation cases related to her death, but won them all. Asaki’s daughter was required by the courts to publish an apology and retraction of her accusations. Moreover, the final decision not to prosecute the case occurred in April 1997—more than two years before Komeito joined Japan’s coalition government.
3. The Soka Gakkai imposes no “tithing demands”—contributions are strictly voluntary.
4. The referenced “Ikeda-related wealth” does not belong to SGI President Daisaku Ikeda (who has in fact assigned his personal assets—such as the copyrights to his books—to the Soka Gakkai), but to various legally established institutions that include affiliated national religious organizations, a university system and a peace research institute.
5. The article infers that Soka Gakkai does not pay taxes or reveal any information about its finances. This is not true. Soka Gakkai is taxed on certain activities as a religious corporation under Japanese law and has strictly complied with all filing requirements. The same is true of SGI-USA, which has maintained its tax-exempt status as a religious organization since its initial qualification in the 1960s.
6. Quoted critic Lisa Jones was neither a “former aide” to Mr. Ikeda nor someone “who ghostwrote an Ikeda book.”
7. We object to the publication of a 40-year-old quote from Mr. Ikeda that James White, author of *The Sokagakkai and Mass Society*—whom Mr. Fulford cites—himself dismissed as an isolated remark at odds with Mr. Ikeda’s demeanor which has often been taken out of context and misinterpreted.

Mr. Ikeda’s philosophy would be better judged from the following more recent remarks: “The purpose of Buddhism is not to produce dupes who blindly follow their leader. It is to produce people of wisdom who can judge right or wrong on their own in the clear mirror of Buddhism.”

As a responsible religious organization we are not above fair and accurate criticism. We find Mr. Fulford’s article to be neither fair nor accurate, but rather deeply biased, and quite callous in its disregard for accuracy. We call on Mr. Fulford and Forbes Magazine to publish the numerous corrections submitted to them.