

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have a wonderful word in Subud, a word we use so often we almost take it for granted, a word that is both ordinary and extraordinary, a word Bapak gave us — and one we loved to hear him say: “Begin.”

“Begin” may not have the cachet of other words in our Subud lexicon. Yet, it is at the heart — and start — of what we really DO in Subud. And as the latihan also shows us, we must repeatedly “begin” to really grow.

So now we begin — again — with SICA.

The day after our SICA testing in Christchurch, Helena, Susannah, and I had the intention of testing about our roles after the morning latihan. But as the latihan finished, I felt we must first sungkum Ibu and ask for her blessings for our work. Muti said Ibu could fit us in to her schedule right then. So we followed Ibu and party out of the hall to a meeting space the Congress Organizing Team had arranged for Ibu in the floor above the hall.

After we did sungkum, we sat for a moment together, and I told Ibu we were the new SICA team. She took one look at the three of us (and one of the women IHs who had come with us) and said, “Where are the men?”

We laughed and said we still had to attract them! Then I told Ibu that we had come for her blessings and prayers for our work ahead as SICA was “quite weak now” and had not yet been able to achieve the goals Bapak had laid out for us so long ago.

Yes, she said, (*paraphrasing*) SICA is weak because there has been so much attention to business. But SICA is still important because we cannot *show* people the latihan. But we can show the results of our latihan, especially as we continue in Subud and become more and more able to know and express our own real talents. *And if people can learn to feel the difference between what has content and what does not*, that can make a difference in the world.

I apologize that I do not have the exact words. We thought it was being recorded, but the recording didn’t take. What I put in italics is what I remember the most. Ibu also wished us well in our work — and reminded us that we would need much patience!

But even before our testing, and before Ibu agreed that SICA is weak now, all of us who tested, and those who met with us about where SICA might be headed, agreed that we need to re-vision SICA.

There were no SICA working parties scheduled when we arrived at Congress, and while there were all manner of cultural activities at the congress, none of them — save one — had the SICA name on it. The one? The wonderful work of our young filmmakers who set up the whole Congress TV program. Did they know that back in 1984 Bapak had predicted that film and technology would play a key role in putting SICA on the map?

The truth is SICA is not on our map, and it needs to be.

Our SICA team — and it's still growing — includes Susannah Rosenthal (USA) and Helena Casbolt (Australia) as Vice Chairs. Rosetta Narvaez (USA) is Treasurer. Bachtiar Lorot (Spain) serves as advisor and SICA liaison to the UN and to the WSA's External Relations group. Olivia Moyano (Argentina) serves as SICA liaison for South America. Rasjidah Franklin (USA), Rosario Moir (New Zealand and Colombia), Maya Korzybska (Indonesia and France) and Erica Sapir (France) are on the Board. Luke Pensenev (Canada) is also on the Board ex officio as the WSA Chair. Sharifin Gardiner (UK) is our SICA-SD liaison.

As part of this re-visioning effort, we are also forming a sort of ad hoc task force of active Subud creatives to help us rethink SICA. Honorah and Dahlan Foah (USA) have already agreed to help with this effort, as have Hussein Dickie and Lilliana Gibbs.

To begin our re-visioning, we have given the acronym, SICA, an additional meaning:

Spirituality
Inspiration
Creativity
Action

Our re-visioning process will look at ways for SICA to establish a more direct relationship with people already working in cultural fields. We will look at ways to partner with dedicated and committed groups of people from all over the world that wish to be involved and active in the sharing process of one or more aspects related to Spirituality, Inspiration, Creativity and Action.

The partnerships between SICA and those groups can facilitate mutual learning, connecting, sharing and celebrating among a whole range of people: lay people, amateurs, professionals — especially through public cultural events. In fact, one of the things that sets SICA apart from the other wings is that it does EVENTS. (Exhibitions, performances, conferences, forums, festivals, workshops, etc.) Not to say, SICA is exclusively event-oriented, but it's certainly key.

Clearly it is the public event that often allows the public to engage with and *feel what has content and what has not*. Consider the organist in Christchurch who played during our Subud concert. He was not in Subud, but he was so filled with something he'd never felt before, his music soared in a way he'd never experienced before. And we were all touched with the content of his playing.

These public events do something else, especially when they are done in the name of Subud International Cultural Association. They give the name value. They help us build a public track record that can in turn empower SICA to better help our members while giving us the cachet we need to enable SICA as an international organization to be connected, affiliated, and accredited to the main cultural governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders.

We need that value. Subud needs that value.

We very much look forward to partnering with our brothers and sisters of Subud Mexico in organizing the cultural programs of the next World Congress, and we welcome hearing from our brothers and sisters around the world who are already doing exhibitions, workshops, performances and other public events in the name of SICA. We would like to catalog all that has been done over the years.

Right now SICA is working closely with the Wisma Subud Historical Preservation Project (WSHPP). It's an effort launched within Wisma Subud to explore a UNESCO cultural heritage designation for Wisma Subud. Such a designation can be based on tangible or intangible assets. ("Outstanding Universal Values.") The WSHPP could apply for UNESCO status as a physical place or for its content in terms of ideas, processes values, international meeting space etc. That there is an international cultural organization with worldwide cultural activities associated to Wisma Subud is beneficial. In fact, SICA was asked to have a representative on the steering committee from Innsbruck Congress and Bachtiar Lorot served in this capacity. This position was renewed in Christchurch, and Helena Casbolt, our vice chair, is now serving on the WSHPP steering committee.

Helena is also working on setting up a new SICA website with an emphasis on member services while we further devise our public outreach programs. It will include a built-in cultural data base capacity and content management system to facilitate contributions to the site from many editors worldwide. It will also invite member participation and interaction. We will showcase, support and provide communications services for Subud members within the broadest definition of creative activity. We hope to have the new site up and running in the next few months.

Here in the USA, Susannah Rosenthal, our other Vice-Chair, is working at the join point of creativity, spirituality, the expression of individual talent, and enterprise. She is exploring ways in which local centers can serve as action centers for SICA. That she is also chair of Subud Los Angeles — as well as Chair her local community Arts Commission — fits rather nicely with this task. She's already dreaming of beginning something called a "Creative Café" in the downstairs part of the LA Subud center. (The LA Center is also just across the street from the Los Angeles County Art Museum.)

I am working on getting money to help support our endeavors, getting our re-visioning retreat to happen, and continuing to build the creative team that can help make all this happen.

We would very much like to hear from our brothers and sisters around the world who have been doing SICA work. We want to hear about their successes, their difficulties, and their goals. We especially want to know how to be in touch with them!

Oh. There's one other very important ingredient to SICA work. Without it, I doubt that anything can happen. Play. There must be time to play and have fun.

May God bless, guide, and protect us in our actions for our Subud International Cultural Association and in our lives, both inner and outer. And please forgive us also for our mistakes and shortcomings and for anything we have said that is out of place.

With love,

Latifah Taormina
Chair, Subud International Cultural Association.
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