

**SIGNIFICANT DATE: Student Division Anniversary — June 30
To Stand Up Against Injustice
By VALERIE THOMAS, SGI-USA Student Division Chief**

Before the establishment of the SGI-USA student division this year, I was not aware of the significance of June 30, 1957, the day the student division was established in Japan. To better understand the student division's mission in the United States, I did some research.

The establishment of the student division in Japan coincided with events there that provided the opportunity for members to stand up against injustice. During this time, there was a conflict between the coal miners union and the SGI in Yubari. The union treated the members unjustly because they were supporting a political party the union did not support.

The youth division members in this area stood up to the union to dispute its unfair treatment of the members. President Ikeda was in Yubari supporting these members when the inaugural student division meeting occurred on June 30, 1957.

President Toda attended this meeting of the student division at the Azabu Public Hall in Tokyo. Although the announcement of the student division had been made more than a year before, the original 190 student division members had located additional student division members and introduced new students to the practice. The success of their efforts resulted in 500 students gathering with President Toda to mark the establishment of the student division.

An account of this day in vol. 11 of *The Human Revolution* describes President Toda as very happy with the students' success in gathering for this meeting. He was especially pleased with the number of young women present.

"When all of you have assumed leading positions in society, you will no doubt completely overshadow those who are now being looked up to as its leaders," he said. "I earnestly hope that all of you will live up to my expectation."

The Human Revolution continues: "On that day, the student division of the Soka Gakkai set out on its journey. The sole remaining vacuum in the organization, for which Josei Toda had long been concerned, had finally been filled." President Toda died 10 months later.

I believe there is tremendous significance in the establishment of the student division in the United States exactly 40 years after it was formed in Japan. For many, their years as students is a time to question many aspects of life, including religion and other issues in society. Supporting these members and providing the opportunity for them to understand their missions for kosen-rufu, can forever impact their futures.

There are also issues being addressed by members in the SGI today that mirror those that took place at that time in Japan — for example, standing up to the priesthood issue and the negative media coverage of the SGI. I believe the mission of the student division in the United States, as with all SGI members, is to again stand up for the common people's happiness.

The student division in Japan has become a division where members have deepened their faith and answer their questions on life. I believe the best way for SGI-USA members to respond to President Ikeda's expectations for the newly established SGI-USA student division is to similarly create a division where members are encouraged to seek answers to their questions, and fully challenge themselves in all aspects of their lives, as the youth did in Japan when standing up to the coal miners union.

This is what I will be reflecting on as I celebrate the 40th anniversary of the student division.

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