

## Disarmament Advocate Speaks at U.S.–Japan Exchange

By JEFF FARR, Associate Editor

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Youth from both sides of the Pacific, who gathered for the 4th U.S.–Japan Youth Peace General Meeting today, agreed that peace *is* possible. When Dr. David Krieger, a guest speaker from the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, asked if the participants thought so, at first there was a hesitant “Yes.” But after he repeated the question a couple of times, that *yes* became stronger and louder.

“You know the answer, and I applaud you for the answer,” Dr. Krieger said. “But the next question — and a very important question — is what are you willing to do to achieve peace?”

Dr. Krieger’s speech, “Sowing Seeds of Peace,” asked youth to take a stand on nuclear disarmament, the goal toward which he has dedicated his life. “Really I’m asking no more of you than to fulfill the goal set forth by Josei Toda 40 years ago and that has been steadfastly adhered to by the president of the SGI organization now, Mr. Ikeda,” said Dr. Krieger.

Today’s meeting commemorated the 40th anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, on Sept. 8, 1957. Based on the Buddhist principle that we all have the right to live, Toda railed against nuclear weapons, which he called the ultimate destructive force. Dr. Krieger praised Toda’s foresight in demanding the abolition of nuclear weapons, not just a halt to testing, saying that Toda’s was “an early call, a clarion call, the call of a prophet.”

Forty years later, Dr. Krieger pointed out, the United Nations has endorsed the International Court of Justice’s decision that nuclear weapons are illegal. Dr. Krieger found it significant that in issuing this opinion, the president of the court, Mohammed Bedjaoui, echoed Toda’s view that nuclear weapons are devilish functions, calling them the ultimate evil.

After his talk, Dr. Krieger said in an interview that he also respects President Toda for sticking with his convictions, no matter the consequences. “I really admire [first Soka Gakkai president] Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda for speaking out against militarism, against their own nationalism,” he said, “for not being willing to ‘go along with it.’ And for paying the price of going to jail for their convictions. That is an example that deserves the highest respect in my opinion.”

Based on his own strong conviction, Dr. Krieger in 1982 formed the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, which has become one of the leading anti-nuclear organizations in America. The Santa Barbara, Calif.-based foundation, which has sponsored the World Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and a Magna Carta for the Nuclear Age, is now part of Abolition 2000, a worldwide network of more than 700 citizen action groups working for a treaty prohibiting and eliminating all nuclear weapons by the year 2000.

Dr. Krieger’s group has built alliances with many peace scholars and human rights activists and includes on its advisory board people like Helen Caldicott, Jean-Michel Cousteau, Johan Galtung, Lord Yehudi Menuhin and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Recently the organization announced it is preparing a statement to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Toda’s declaration and honor SGI President Ikeda’s dedication to that legacy. Dr. Krieger himself will present the statement to President Ikeda next month in Japan.

In closing today, Dr. Krieger gave the SGI youth division members specific action points they can implement to “carry forward the message of peace”:

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- 1) Increase your awareness. Inform yourself on disarmament and other peace issues.
- 2) Exercise your citizenship. Speak out about peace issues.
- 3) Sow seeds of peace. Show compassion toward others in your environment.
- 4) Support Abolition 2000. Sign the Abolition 2000 International Petition and help circulate it. (You can sign an e-mail version of the petition and find out more about it at the foundation's website, [www.wagingpeace.org](http://www.wagingpeace.org).)
- 5) Grow to your full stature as a human being. Think not only of your rights, but of your responsibilities as a human being.

These points were food for thought for the 800 participants today, 88 with the exchange group from Japan and 82 visiting from Soka Women's Junior College. The exchange group members were at the end of a one-week visit to the United States that took them to San Francisco and Dallas as well (see p. 1).

This series of U.S.-Japan youth meetings began in 1994 in Los Angeles, when the 10th anniversary of the 1984 U.S.-Japan culture festival in San Diego was celebrated.

Youth peace general meetings have since been held in New York (1995) and at the Florida Nature and Culture Center (1996). In addition, youth exchange members have visited several other cities over the last four years, including San Diego, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta. With this fourth exchange, organizers from both countries feel the series is now well-established, and plans are already under way for next year's exchange.

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