

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
A NOVELIZED HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI
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'I don't think that the old me would have been able to handle losing the husband I loved and having to fend for myself in America with two small children,' Masako Clarke says, concluding her experience at the America West General Meeting. President Ikeda explains: 'A golden glow emanates from those whose hearts are ablaze with a powerful sense of mission. It serves as a beacon of courage and hope, capable of transforming even the most painful, sorrowful darkness into a realm of brilliant light.'

BY DAISAKU IKEDA, SGI PRESIDENT

Masako Clarke wiped away her tears and tried to continue, but her voice choked up once more. "I'm sorry," she said to the audience and turned her gaze to a seat in the front row of the hall's ground level. On it was placed a large framed picture of her husband.

She had so wished for the two of them to attend this America West General Meeting with President Shin'ichi Yamamoto together. But now that her husband was gone, she had decided to bring along his picture, so that he would be there symbolically. Seeing her husband's face, she lifted her head and began speaking again with renewed composure.

"I don't think that the old me would have been able to handle losing the husband I loved and having to fend for myself in America with two small children," she said. "But I have the Gohonzon and the support of many wonderful members. My moping about would only grieve my husband on Eagle Peak. Instead, I know that my striving with passionate commitment to spread Nichiren Daishonin's teachings will draw his cheers of support and approval.

"My husband gave me two beautiful children," she concluded. "It is my responsibility as a mother to raise them to be fine young people who can contribute to kosen-rufu. Above all, I also have a mission to realize the widespread propagation of the Dai-shonin's Buddhism in Seattle and throughout America. So that I may fulfill that precious mission, I am determined to live with courage and strength, and to become a model of unsurpassed happiness for all to behold. Thank you."

Her words were met with loud, sustained applause.

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Masako Clarke's experience and her brave resolve had deeply moved the audience.

Speeches by the leaders accompanying Shin'ichi were next on the agenda, after which new leadership appointments and additions to the U.S. organizational structure were announced. Introduced first were Nagayasu Masaki and Emiko Haruyama, who were appointed America General Chapter leader and women's division leader, respectively. Next, the appointments for several newly created positions were announced: Akio Ishibashi was named general chapter vice leader, a position to be held in addition to his responsibility as Los Angeles Chapter leader, while Yukiko Gilmore was made general chapter women's division vice leader concurrently with her position as San Francisco Chapter leader.

In the youth division, meanwhile, Yuji Nakahara was appointed vice leader of the young men's division North America General Corps, and Chikako Hayashida was named the young women's division leader for Los Angeles Chapter.

The establishment of several new districts for Los Angeles Chapter was also announced along with the appointment of several men's division members as their respective district leaders, a new development that particularly drew Shin'ichi's attention.

After the newly appointed leaders rose in turn to powerfully voice their resolve to work for kosen-rufu, Kiyoshi Jujo took the podium to announce the plans to open a Soka Gakkai community center in Los Angeles. He explained that the new center would also house the offices of the America General Chapter and the Los Angeles Bureau of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai newspaper in Japan. He heartily congratulated the members on this development, which signified that the movement to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism was progressing steadily in the United States.

When it came time for Shin'ichi to speak, he greeted the audience with a warm smile and said in English, "Good evening!"

Reverting to Japanese, he continued: "It's good to see you again. Many thanks to those of you who have traveled from as far away as Seattle and San Francisco especially for today's meeting. Seeing all of you here, your lives filled with benefit and joy, makes me deeply feel that spring has at last come to Los Angeles.

"Only after surviving the harsh trial of winter can seeds burst into fresh growth in the springtime," he said. "Similarly, only by surmounting hardships can we be victorious in life and savor real, lasting joy. On the other hand, if we shun difficulties and lose our challenging spirit, then all we'll be left with in the end is failure and regret. Therefore, I propose that we blaze a trail through the forest of difficulty we find ourselves in, and that tomorrow we work again energetically for kosen-rufu!

"My colleagues from Japan have already stressed the most important points," he said, "so I now want to open up the floor to any questions you may have. If there's anything at all you want to ask, please don't hesitate."

Several hands shot up. The questions were diverse, ranging from points of study, such as a clarification of the concept of the realm of the five components [form, perception, conception, volition and consciousness], to more general inquiries about how to approach Christian customs and traditions in the United States. One person wanted to know why a number of old Japanese military songs were included in the repertoire of Gakkai songs and regularly sung by the members.

In the early days of the organization, there being none among the membership who were songwriters or composers, the Soka Gakkai members often took well-known songs — some of them old military tunes — adapted the lyrics somewhat, and sang them as Gakkai songs.

Shin'ichi replied: "Even if the tune is the same, the lyrics can make a world of difference to a song's spirit. Similarly, even if the lyrics are the same, the spirit with which they're taken can make a profound difference to the song's meaning. In the early days of our organization we may have sung old military songs, but we sang them to express our commitment to kosen-rufu, to the realization of world peace and the happiness of humanity. It is because the members could in fact appreciate the spirit in which these songs were sung that they have struck such a strong chord in their hearts and become an enduring tradition of the Soka Gakkai."