

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE AMERICA DETERMINES THE 21ST CENTURY

*The following message was read to an audience of Southern California youth at the June 27 kick-off meeting for the SGI-USA Youth Grand Culture Festival to be held this fall in Los Angeles.*

My dear members of the youth division, to you who shoulder the glorious future of the United States of America:

I offer my most sincere congratulations on the holding of this assembly, this fresh departure toward boundless new horizons. You are endowed with such a grand mission!

Why do I say this? Because what becomes of America will determine what becomes of the world in the 21st century. And what becomes of America will be determined by its youth — the protagonists of the coming century — and the way you lead your lives.

It is young people like yourselves, you who embrace, share in dialogue on, and practice the philosophy of peace and happiness, who shall drive the transformation of your respective communities and society as a whole, for time without end.

After pondering the meaning of the century-ending *fin-de-siècle*, one philosopher noted this: A *fin-de-siècle* does not imply a certain year, but a time when youth lose their ideals. Likewise, when youth are impassioned by ideals, that signifies the dawn of a new century.

So it is with deep admiration that I say the new century dawns here, among those of you who have gathered today!

I have been informed that you have begun a signature-collecting campaign on your own to promote nonviolence. I would like to ask that you proceed with this drive with joy and the freedom to exercise your utmost initiative to make it a resounding success, so that the memories of this campaign will remain forever golden in your hearts.

Nonviolence is a testament of our humanity. It signifies the triumph of the human spirit. Mahatma Gandhi proclaimed that the power of the human spirit is mightier than an atomic bomb. This towering belief in humankind is tantamount to the Buddhist principle of *ichinen sanzen*, or 3,000 realms contained in a momentary existence of life.

When America shines with hope, the world is alight. When America loses its light, then the world must suffer in darkness. For good or bad, yours is a country that possesses an extraordinarily vital and mystic mission. America is the first in history to be created by the will of its people, a unique land upholding ideals that inspired wave upon wave of immigrants to its shores.

What are these ideals? As it states in the Declaration of Independence, “All men are created equal, that they are endowed with...certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” They are ideals representing a paean to humanity, principles that stand in perfect consonance with the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism and the profound respect it pays to human life.

The Founding Fathers, the bearers of the great American renaissance, the selfless principals of the American civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King and Mrs. Rosa Parks — all of them fought to establish these ideals as a social reality that you enjoy today.

And it is you, my friends, who must follow with pride and dignity in their hallowed

footsteps. To realize this long-cherished dream of your esteemed predecessors, to establish a utopian world for all of humanity, even more consummate than these great men and women ever knew was possible — that is your lifelong mission.

To do this, you must stand alone. For the resolve of a single individual is what will determine everything.

Walt Whitman wrote:

*Henceforth I ask not good fortune, I myself am good fortune  
Henceforth, I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,  
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,  
Strong and content I travel the open road.*

Let us embark upon this most sublime of journeys! Let us advance toward this magnificent Utopia that humankind has so longed for!

I wish to conclude my message with my sincere prayers for the continued good health of each and every one of you gathered here today, and for your epic victory.

My congratulations again to the youth division of the SGI-USA!

*June 27, 1999*

*Daisaku Ikeda*