

YOUTH CULTURE FESTIVAL BEGINS NEW CENTURY

Sept. 25 was the “first day of the 21st century,” as Jomo Thorne, SGI-USA junior high school division leader, put it. The 1st SGI-USA Youth Grand Culture Festival, held Sept. 25 at the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena, Calif., was the youth division members’ kickoff toward the new era.

The 700 youth performers ambitiously took on all of human history. The show started with the past: humanity’s violent struggle with itself, depicted through reenactments of everything from the American Revolution to Nelson Mandela’s liberation in South Africa.

There was the present: the youth of today taking a stand against the violent world they are growing up in—a world in which guns have even sneaked their way into the classroom. And there was the future: Bodhisattvas of the Earth, the next generation of youth division members, emerging from the earth and expressing through music and dance their determination to take responsibility for the future.

A video presentation on three large screens above the stage also introduced SGI President Ikeda’s worldwide travels for peace, which segued into greetings from SGI youth across the country and around the world. The festival closed with an original song, “Rise,” penned by SGI-USA members Wayne Green and Brian Potter, which summed up the youth’s resolve: “From the Earth / to the skies / to the stars / we will rise / our time is now.”

—JEFF FARR

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