

**HIGHLIGHTS OF SPEECHES GIVEN AT THE YEAR-END REGION LEADERS
MEETING, DEC. 5
GREAT TEAMWORK IS THE KEY...**

**DANNY NAGASHIMA
SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR**

I really want to express my sincere appreciation for the efforts of our seniors, General Director Zaitso, Mrs. Clark, Mr. Sasaki and all of you who have been struggling over the past seven years to take leadership in this extremely difficult time. Mr. Zaitso had unbelievable patience and took great care and consideration in trying to create such a democratic, new organization I really would like to show my heartfelt gratitude. Thank you very much, Mr. Zaitso!

My determination is, with all of your support, advice and encouragement, to create an American SGI organization of outstanding teamwork with a great heart. I really appreciate all of you giving me this opportunity. Let's strongly unite for the sake of the members and for the sake of the happiness of the American people in the 21st century. I promise to do my utmost! (At this time, he introduced all the newly appointed national leaders, the team members, individually—the youth, the women and the men.)

I don't want to ever forget the efforts of the pioneers, many of whom are not here today—those people who since 1960 built this organization in America together with President Ikeda. They made unbelievable, painstaking efforts. Mr. Williams is here today. We should never forget our sense of appreciation for those pioneers. Many pioneer women division members who struggled together to reply to President Ikeda's dream of global kosen-rufu are here today, along with many representatives of a new generation. In the 10 years since 1990, we have experienced tremendous changes as an organization and we have won a great victory!

Together with the newly appointed leaders, I would really like to create a new era. As I was taking a bath last night, I dozed off and had a beautiful dream about a time 25 years from now. Mr. Zai-tso mentioned that this coming year is the 25th anniversary since the SGI's establishment. I was thinking about the future, when I will be 75 years old. What kind of SGI will we have? In my dream, people are living cheerfully. There are beautiful families, lots of children, a new generation—great artists, great scholars, great physicians, senators and people in Congress. I was also dreaming that we have an Ikeda museum and all kinds of tributes to President Ikeda's achievements.

I know that when we really unite together, nothing is impossible! President Ikeda sent a message to our Youth Culture Festival. In it, he quoted a poem by the great African American poet, Langston Hughes, "Let America be the dream the dreamers dream. Let it be that great, strong land of love." America is a country of dreams. 26 years ago dreaming a dream of America, I came first to Hawaii, then to Los Angeles, moved to New York, back to Los Angeles, then to San Francisco, and back again to Los Angeles. This is the beauty of America. Let's awaken our dream of America based on President Ikeda's guidance. Let's continue challenging, until there are millions of happy members. Nothing is impossible!

In 1990, when President Ikeda came to the United States, he made dramatic changes in our organization toward the 21st century. The 30 years from 1960 to 1990, then the 10 years from 1990 seem like the three steps forward and one step backwards of the lion advancing on its prey. Nichiren Daishonin writes, "The lion king is said to advance three steps, then gather himself to spring, unleashing the same power whether he traps a tiny ant

or attacks a fierce animal” (“Reply to Kyo’o,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 412). At that time, President Ikeda shared so much of what we need to know to establish this Buddhism in America.

He taught us that the leaders should be the servants of the members. This guidance I took as my own. “A leader in the organization is not someone who stands above others but one whose role is to serve and support everyone else. This is something that second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda used to explain by saying ‘Leaders are the servants of the members.’ In a sense, a true leader of kosen rufu is one who is determined to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the members.” So number one, I really want to be a servant to the members — to serve the happiness of every member of SGI-USA.

And number two, I really want to create an American organization where we treasure our own families. Together with our loved ones, let’s create the happiest families and the happiest organization. President Ikeda says we are one big family whose members are joined by the lifeblood of faith in the Mystic Law. Our organization for kosen-rufu should be like a comfortable home. I hope that all members, their lives illuminated by the Gohonzon, will come together with a feeling of relief and relaxation, with a sense of energy welling up from within. With sincere prayer to the Gohonzon based on President Ikeda’s guidance, nothing is impossible. Let’s create beautiful families together.

Number three, I would like to read from President Ikeda’s guidance in 1990 once again. This was before the temple situation started. President Ikeda mentioned that “Followers who possess strong faith and remain committed to kosen-rufu throughout their lives are already Buddhas. Therefore, those who deprecate and look down on such members, in essence, despise Buddhas” (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*). I really believe that President Ikeda’s guidance was in a sense a prediction of what would happen. I determine that, no matter what, we will protect our precious SGI members and not let them be deceived by the malicious Nikken sect. Let’s enable temple members to see how beautiful our organization is, how wonderful President Ikeda is, how much benefit they can receive.

Personally, I am determined that by the end of next year, I will introduce at least one person to Buddhism. During the ’80s, I introduced 47 people to Buddhism, but since 1990 I’ve had no one join for the past nine years. I really reflected on Mr. Wada’s guidance today that every moment, everything is changing. How can I initiate the changes instead of following the changes? I want to change myself. I really want to do my own human revolution. I would like to promote 10 subscriptions to our publications by the end of the year. I am determined that no matter what, I am going to personally visit 1,000 SGI-USA members by the end of next year. I would like to share President Ikeda’s guidance with them.

President Ikeda loves America and we love President Ikeda. Let’s create an America where President Ikeda’s love for us and our love for him become one. Based on President Ikeda’s guidance from the *New Human Revolution*, my determination is to create an SGI-USA that shares the same destiny, the same vision, the same victories as our mentor, that shares both joy and suffering together with the mentor. Let’s share our joy and suffering together with our mentor, with the spirit to never begrudge our lives for kosen-rufu.

I really appreciate Mr. Wada, Mrs. Hachiya and Mr. Saito who have come here from Japan, and who, day and night, have been continuously encouraging us. Thank you very much.

MATILDA BUCK SGL-USA WOMEN’S LEADER

Title: Great Teamwork Is the Key. . .
Subject: World Tribune 12/17/99 n.3273 p.6 WT991217p06 Los Angeles, California 12/05/99
Author: Danny Nagashima, Matilda Buck
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The concept of the “power of one” means a self-motivated person, a person who takes responsibility. It’s all in the preamble to *The Human Revolution*: “A great revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a society and further, will enable a change in the destiny of humankind. This is how much teamwork we have already: three different people gave me this quote because I didn’t quite remember it. That, to me, is everything. That kind of support for just for one quote; just asking for help and it was right here.

Wendy Clark shared that when she first became women’s division leader, she took a walk with President Ikeda. He said to her, “Let’s build a great America.” I believe that we are part of that continuum. We talked about the old days a little bit, the pioneering days. We’ve been building a great America since 1960 and many of the people in this room began at that time.

How many of you saw *Saving Private Ryan*? I’ve seen many other movies about Normandy. That launching at Normandy was monumental. When you make a great beachhead, it’s bloody. It takes very courageous people. When you do things like that, it takes a certain kind of person and there’s no time for niceties and common sensibilities. We had that kind of beachhead in first establishing Buddhism in America. The thing that’s interesting is that we were all part of that. We’re all pioneers—Japanese born and American born. At that time maybe things were a little rough. At that time, we didn’t live by common sense. To establish what we did, we couldn’t.

Many of the early pioneers from Japan made tremendous sacrifices with their families, their friends, with their own lives. And some of us have done the same thing. But what Mrs. Hachiya stressed to us is that this is truly a new era. Now that we’re established, President Ikeda’s vision is that it wouldn’t be appropriate to keep making those kinds of beachheads. So now we’re pioneers once again of a new kind. We have to really grasp that this is the time for common sense, the time to create a comfortable atmosphere in our organization so that members in American society can feel very comfortable and happy joining our organization and being part of it at whatever level they choose to.

That means the leadership as well. It doesn’t mean that, “Oh, we’re going to welcome all these members to these very comfortable meetings but we ourselves are going to be madly scrambling.” It doesn’t work that way. Mrs. Hachiya gave very poignant guidance about that when she talked about leadership. She was saying that we shouldn’t be special leaders, leaders who sacrifice our lives. Of course as bodhisattvas we do serve others, we work for their happiness. But we shouldn’t be people who say: “My family doesn’t matter. I’m just going to do this for the members,” or “My life doesn’t matter,” or “My dreams aren’t important.”

She said that it is very important that we, more than anybody, address our problems. She used herself as an example. Because of the tremendous efforts she was making here with us, she actually missed her son’s high school graduation. But when she got back, it was perhaps a more crucial time for him because he was applying to a university. She stayed home from activities for four days. Now for Mrs. Hachiya to stay home from activities for four days, the world could stop, right? And she stayed in front of the Gohonzon, and her son, who was off taking these examinations, knew that that was where his mother was. She chanted daimoku for four days for his success and he was accepted at Soka University.

I think that’s such an important example of what we have to do. There’s no way to do this unless we become true masters of teamwork. That’s our job now. That’s how we can all share in building our organization. The upcoming women’s division activities next year

are a perfect place to practice this. We will have women's conferences on Feb. 10–13 and also August 10–13. We want to stick to the power of one theme: How one woman can make a difference. Like Rosa Parks, for example, she may have had one feeling and one action, but she is definitely a team player. The network she has created is unbelievable. In February we will be holding our 11th commemorative meeting of the “clear mirror” guidance President Ikeda gave to us in 1990.

At that time he told us: “Society and daily life are the great earth of our faith and the practice of the True Law. The steady development of kosen-rufu can be ensured only when, based on faith, we carefully attend to the affairs of society, our daily lives and to our families. Faith manifests itself in daily life. This is our eternal guideline.” Ten years later his guidance is so timely for us. “Raising the Curtain on the 21st Century — The Year of Youth” is our SGI theme for the year. I truly believe that all of us in the adult division can best support this goal by taking care of every aspect of our lives and encouraging our members to do the same.

Personally, I feel the power of one is believing in the power of Buddha in my life. Nichiren Daishonin has told us we have it. President Ikeda has exhibited it and is telling us over and over that we have it. When we manifest this power and determine to solve our problems and realize our dreams we can become the happiest people. In a district where many people are practicing happily we can create a wonderful atmosphere for youth. We can make a home where they will want to bring their friends.

If we don't become the happiest, most empowered, most well-rounded people and create that kind of a normal, happy, give-and-take, atmosphere, where will the youth go? I believe this is how we can best support our wonderful young people.