

SIGNIFICANT DATES
JAN. 26: THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SGI'S FOUNDING
MAKING THE RIGHT TIME, BY STEPHANIE CELANO, STAFF WRITER

“To wait for the right time. To make the right time.... The establishment of the SGI on Guam in 1975 was a watershed in the full-fledged spread of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism throughout the world” (Nov. 5, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 6). SGI President Ikeda wrote these words in his new series “A Record of My Life” of that memorable day—Jan. 26—when the first International Buddhist League World Peace Conference was held. It also marked President Ikeda’s inauguration as the president of what would later be named the Soka Gakkai International.

On that significant date 25 years ago, 158 representatives from 51 countries gathered with the shared determination to create peace. What brought these people together, I believe, were a great hope and desire to make a cause toward creating a brighter future. In the form of a signed declaration of peace, their promise was documented.

The past century reeked of the atrocities of war. Two world wars, Vietnam, Cambodia, Rwanda, Kosovo, the Persian Gulf and Chechnya...whether fought in the name of democracy, religion or ethnicity, these conflicts scarred millions. And Guam was no exception. Apart from Pearl Harbor, this American territory was the only other American soil to be touched directly by war in the 20th century. Symbolizing that a time to heal had come, that an effort to write a new history for the United States and Japan—indeed for the world—was desperately needed, Guam was chosen as the point of departure for the SGI’s peace movement.

A generation later, we in the SGI—more than 12 million strong in 148 countries and territories—are dedicating our time and our lives for the future of peace on the planet. In his speech on that Jan. 26, President Ikeda spoke of “dedicating your whole lives to sowing the seeds of the Mystic Law for the sake of peace throughout the entire world. I shall do the same.” Undeniably, this vow he has kept—evidenced by every one of his awards, honorary doctorates, peace proposals, addresses and meetings with individuals from all walks of life.

And how are we creating this peace? One by one, we are fulfilling our individual lives based on the life-nurturing philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin. We turn to society with a vibrant sense of humanism and share with one person at a time not just this philosophy but our spirit, our unique creativity. Ours is a patient, steady process of transformation, a cultivation of peace within humanity itself.

Although the eyes of the world may have been somewhere else on Jan. 26, 1975, this year people will celebrate not only in Guam but around the world. How we as individuals celebrate is up to us, but I say we must celebrate this 25th anniversary of the SGI with all the renascent spirit that we started this third millennium with.

And let’s not stop there! Let’s continue to create history. A quarter of a century ago, looking toward the dawn of a century of peace, those present at the conference on Guam took a courageous first step in developing their lives. Now, as the next generation, what will be our legacy? Who will truly make this new millennium one of peace rather than war?

As we raise the curtain on the 21st century, this Year of Youth is pregnant with promise. What happens in future generations will depend on how we nurture the youth of today and tomorrow, what we pass on to them. Will we wait, hesitate? Or will we finally make now the right time?