

**VIVA THE AMERICAS!
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LOS ANGELES**

With enthusiastic anticipation 53 members from Latin American countries, and 160 from across the United States and Puerto Rico, attended the First International Spanish Language Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, April 6–9. This historic conference gathered members from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and the U.S. for the first time. Topics featured in the main sessions included unity and Soka Spirit.

During his opening remarks, SGI-USA Executive Advisor Fred Zaitzu stated, “This is a new era and a new departure for the kosen-rufu movement in America.” He also mentioned that SGI President Ikeda is very happy about our having this wonderful conference uniting North, Central and South America, and asked that it be a joyful conference with no accidents.

President Ikeda sent a special message, which was read at the opening of the first session (please see page 1).

SGI-Argentina General Director Kazuo Oshida commented: “I have been practicing for 41 years and I am deeply in love with this practice. Do you know why? Because it talks about the heart and teaches us about life. President Ikeda said, ‘He who quits never wins; a true winner never abandons his faith.’ Kosen-rufu should be based on indestructible happiness and unity. ‘*Itai doshin*’ and ‘to stand up’ are synonymous. ‘*Niji*’ [as in *niji seson*], ‘in this moment’ or ‘now’ means the moment that one stands up to fulfill one’s mission for kosen-rufu, and does so by one’s own decision. It is not important how many years of practice we have. Rather, we should ask ourselves how much human revolution we have done.” He also mentioned that “*itai doshin* means ‘to transcend any differences through dialogue.’ If any one interrupts this unity, he is destroying Nichiren Dai-shonin’s teachings and preventing the advancement of the kosen-rufu movement. For instance, High Priest Nikken is creating disunity. Each one of us, as Nichiren Daishonin’s disciples, should challenge ourselves and win in every area of our lives.”

There were also open guidance sessions with Wendy Clark, SGI-USA women’s division vice senior advisor, Sheilah Edwards, SGI-USA vice general director and vice senior women’s advisor, Greg Martin, SGI-USA vice general director, Leiko Komatsu, SGI-USA Dominican Republican women’s division leader, Kazuo Oshida, SGI-Argentina general director, Benshiro Ikeda, SGI-Argentina Study Department leader, and Gabriel Martinez Graces, SGI-Panama general director.

The passion and pride of the diverse participants was colorfully displayed at the Thursday night opening parade of national costumes presented by the Florida members. Several members even brought this warmth forth more vigorously during the Saturday night friendship exchange.

The Sunday morning session included the exchange of moving experiences by several participants and a surprise performance by jazz flautist and SGI-USA member Nestor Torres. Participants enthusiastically determined to continue attending training sessions at the FNCC and make it a focal point for fostering the advancement of kosen-rufu in the Western Hemisphere.