

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA IN AMERICA
CREATING THE FUTURE FROM DIVERSITY
BY SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR DANNY NAGASHIMA**

This year marks the 40th anniversary of SGI President Ikeda's first visit to America in October 1960. Newly inaugurated as the third Soka Gakkai president, this was his first trip outside Japan, marking the origin of our global network of SGI nations.

At that time, there were few members in the United States, most of them young, Japanese-born brides of American military personnel. These women were homesick and lonely, and clung to their Buddhist practice as a form of solace or connection to their homeland. President Ikeda's message to them was clear: Each was a Bodhisattva of the Earth, entrusted with the mission to lead all people to happiness. Each had a mission in America—a mission for the world.

For 40 years, President Ikeda's message has never changed. He has continued to remind us that America has a significant mission to contribute to world peace, and that every American shares this mission. For instance, his three poems to America—"To My Young American Friends" (1981), "Arise, the Sun of the Century" (1987) and "The Sun of *Jiyu* Over a New Land" (1993)—all center on this point.

President Ikeda has returned to visit the United States almost 30 times—reaching all corners of our country—each time making the personal care of individuals his focus. He has created the SGI-USA that we have today and influenced America through painstaking one-on-one development of people. This human network has as its foundation friendship and trust.

I am overwhelmed with appreciation for his efforts to personally raise so many beautiful leaders for America and the world.

In America, President Ikeda sees a land of limitless human resources; a nation that can draw immense strength from its unprecedented social, racial and religious diversity; a country built by the world's people that must in return serve the world. With great humility, America must set an example—this is his expectation, I believe.

On May 3, 2001, we look forward to the dedication of the Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo campus, which President Ikeda has founded as a gift to the world. This university—open to students of all religious, national and cultural backgrounds—aims to foster many young people dedicated to working for international and intercultural understanding in the 21st century.

All of President Ikeda's efforts in America lead up to this point. He has set the stage for youth from all over the world to come to America and train themselves as the leaders of the future.

It is my great hope that on May 3, 2001, we can show our mentor our appreciation and determination through the young champions of peace that we have discovered and raised.

I know that President Ikeda's heart is full of pride at our growth. Let's continue advancing with him toward the realization of kosen-rufu with the spirit of "many in body, one in mind." Let's set the example.