

**ADVANCING WITH APPRECIATION AND DETERMINATION
BY SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR
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On July 21, SGI President Ikeda completed his new poem “Soar — Into the Vast Skies of Freedom! Into the New Century!” I strongly believe that he wrote this poem to each of us; he calls us his “sublime fellow SGI members in America.” It not only reflects his joy about our growth, but his vision for our future — that America move to the forefront of a new age of humanity.

Consistent with his previous three major poems dedicated to America — “To My Young American Friends” in 1981; “Arise, the Sun of the Century” in 1987; and “The Sun of *Jiyu* Over a New Land” in 1993 — President Ikeda discusses the Bodhisattvas of the Earth at length. The beginning of this new poem — “The Bodhisattvas of the Earth / have emerged! / They have arisen!” — is a wonderfully bold and powerful statement, which I believe expresses his confidence that we have set out on the correct path toward American *kosen-rufu*. Essentially, he is proclaiming certain victory in each of our lives.

Together with his mentor, Josei Toda, President Ikeda established a vision for America. This vision has taken shape in the form of Soka University of America. It is our dream to welcome President Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda to America for the opening of the new SUA campus at Aliso Viejo, Calif., on May 3, 2001. In this poem, he concretely states his determination to spend the culminating years of his life in America, fostering many young successors toward his dream of a world of peace, prosperity and joy.

I know that in establishing this university, President Ikeda wishes to express his appreciation for the untiring efforts of the thousands of pioneer members who have made this unprecedented era of our movement possible. Without them, I am certain we would not have this opportunity to advance together with our mentor into this new century.

Toward May 3, 2001, let’s infuse our lives with this poem. Let’s truly emerge from the earth, triumphing over our lesser selves — challenging our current struggles and helping our fellow members overcome their sufferings. Let’s create lives of joy and appreciation, so that we can greet President Ikeda next year with our hearts ablaze as we “soar into the vast skies of freedom!”