

**JOY2K: LOS ANGELES CELEBRATES
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More than 10,600 people attended the Southern California Zone “JOY2K: Buddhism in the New Millennium” celebration at the Los Angeles Convention Center Oct. 14, commemorating the 40th anniversary of SGI President Ikeda’s first visit to Los Angeles.

It was 40 years ago that President Ikeda, with a will to realize second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s dream, set out to launch worldwide kosen-rufu, making Los Angeles one of the pioneering stops. Because of the dedication of a few pioneers of our Buddhist movement with whom he met in October 1960, the Southern California Zone members were able to celebrate the event in such a fun and natural way. During the commemorative meeting, these pioneer members were honored for their efforts to spread this Buddhism and become happy by replying to the expectations of their mentor, President Ikeda.

The commemorative meeting also featured a mother sharing her experience of how, through faith, she and her husband saved her infant daughter’s life, as well as a video presentation on the importance of the mentor-and-disciple relationship to the expansion of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Large pastel banners with excerpts from President Ikeda’s latest poem to America, “Soar—Into the Vast Skies of Freedom! Into the New Century!,” flanked the convention center halls and greeted participants as they entered the Middle Way Mall. There in the mall, educational exhibits on applying this Buddhism to such daily life concerns as family, education, the workplace, culture, health and the environment were just some of the 20 exhibit booths installed. The fun, carnival-like atmosphere provided an exposition on Buddhism that offered something for everyone.

Other exhibits introduced Soka University of America, tolerance through understanding, Victory Over Violence, the life of Nichiren Daishonin, an introduction to Buddhism and 40 years of SGI-USA history. There was also a Myoho Café, a bookstore and an interactive children’s area, where children could play and draw.

Multi-cultural entertainment was featured throughout the day, reflecting the diversity and globalism of the SGI-USA family, including songs and dances from Thailand, Africa, China, Korea, North and South America, Japan, Spain and more.

The five-hour event was an expression of the spontaneous creativity of individuals working together to bring the joy of this Buddhism to everyday Americans.

California Governor Gray Davis sent a message of congratulations, and the event was featured in the religious section of the *Los Angeles Times* with the headline “10,000 Buddhists To Pledge Victory Over Violence.”