

**TOWARD THE FEBRUARY WOMEN'S MEETING
'SPIRITUAL CIVILIZATION':
EMPOWERING OURSELVES, EMPOWERING OTHERS
BY THERESA HAUBER, LINDA JOHNSON AND YOSHIKO KADIN**

The Century of Women has arrived! Our first women's meetings of the century to commemorate SGI-USA Women's Day (Feb. 27) are just around the corner. As SGI President Daisaku Ikeda said in celebration of the new year, "This year will determine the future of kosen-rufu for thousands of years to come."

This isn't something that happens "out there" or through someone else's actions—it happens because we choose to take responsibility in our communities, because we choose to make a difference among our friends, families, co-workers, neighbors. Make no mistake: We are each heroes of kosen-rufu, creating history in our precious areas.

We have been presented with a richly worded theme (see box at right) that will stay with us for a number of years, one that will provide fuel for many goals and hurdles to come, and one that we ourselves must explore to find the meaning it holds for each of us. (Matilda Buck will discuss the women's theme in more detail in a future issue.)

One thing is for sure: We will best find the meaning of these words from among ourselves, from our own efforts to encourage and cherish others, to construct a network—a team—of caring, self-motivated individuals. President Ikeda, in his New Year's poem (Jan. 1 *World Tribune*), describes what may be the kernel of the "spiritual civilization":

*From one individual to another,
Starting in our immediate environment,
From small, modest efforts,
Let us steadily carry on our movement.
A commitment to treasure each person—
In that daily, unceasing practice
Lies the dynamism
To transform the entire planet.
And there, too, shines a life
Of unparalleled value creation.*

That means, as we strive to cherish others, we must also, equally, cherish ourselves. As SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck has said, "Absolute happiness is found in striving to honor our own lives and the lives of others, regardless of circumstances."

We must own the fact that we, too, are Buddhas. Thus, we deserve to accomplish our hopes and dreams. By continually challenging ourselves to grow, we reveal to others the greatness of this practice and inspire them to do the same.

As we move toward our February women's meetings, we can use this time to strengthen our relationships and empower those around us, building a sense of true teamwork, where every individual is cherished.

Our February meetings may be as simple or complex as we wish. In some areas, women are including all four divisions. In others, they are planning community events to include women of all backgrounds. In some places, the activity is focusing on the entire theme; in others, on a small part.

The most important part is empowering each individual. As the renowned

anthropologist Margaret Mead said: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Let’s create history!

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THE THEME OF THE WOMEN OF THE SGI:

*Create a spiritual civilization in the 21st century
based on our solidarity
as women of the SGI.*

- 1) With strong faith, reveal one’s true self.**
- 2) As a world citizen, contribute to society.**
- 3) With dialogue based on justice, expand the force for peace.**