

**CELEBRATING MAY 3, 2001
FROM SGI-USA WOMEN'S LEADER MATILDA BUCK
LET'S MAKE OUR OWN HISTORY**

‘Now that May 3, 2001, is here, we have an opportunity to grasp its historical significance,’ says SGI-USA Women’s Leader Matilda Buck. ‘Each of us can make it a significant turning point, a day where we choose our goal, our dream, our hope—whatever change we want to make.’

At a recent meeting I attended, Kazuko Aoki shared her memories of the historic meeting on March 16, 1958, when second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda met with 6,000 youth and entrusted them with the future of kosen-rufu. What was a revelation to me was that she had no sense at that time of just how historic that meeting would be. She was only high-school age, and her mother made her go. She didn’t think, “Oh, yes, this is our final moment with President Toda,” or “He’s handing this mission to the youth.”

Only time would tell what a profound moment it was and how much it would affect her life. Today she is devoted to the kosen-rufu movement in Los Angeles.

We often do not have a historical sense or perspective. But President Toda did, and SGI President Ikeda does. He is already talking about the 23rd century!

Over the last few decades, President Ikeda has been making friends all over the world, and in this way making Buddhist humanism available to all. He has shown us that this Buddhism is so broad, so embracing, that he can share great understanding with people without directly mentioning Buddhism. Not only has he exerted himself beyond anything we can imagine, but he has included millions of people in this effort. That is amazing. He sees the most common person as a great bodhisattva, whose contribution is no less important than his.

The point is to spread the ideals of Buddhism, not just to have religion for religion’s sake or so that we can count people in our census. The goal is to make humanism—the humanistic foundation of Buddhism, where the human being is the focus—the most important factor in society, enabling all people to live creative, harmonious lives.

It is now our turn to start reaching out.

I think these last 10 years have been extremely important for the SGI-USA. They have been a time of growth and reflection, of solidifying and diversifying our mission as an organization. I saw this illustrated by the recent “Imagine Peace” Conference organized by the SGI-USA women in Washington, D.C. (see the March 23 *World Tribune*). I talked to some of the women who had been among the so-called pioneers, American women who, decades ago had been girls rehearsing in parking lots, wearing shiny satin short dresses and boots, marching in parades. That had made little sense to these former hippies, but they knew it was for world peace, and they felt happy when they did it. At the recent conference, many of them said: “It’s our same little group, only now we’re at the World Bank, and we’re talking with ambassadors and peace workers, like-minded people who can take action to make a peaceful world. We’re doing the same things as before. We’re taking care of every detail the way we did before, when we were looking ahead toward May 3, 2001, but now it is May 3, 2001.”

In 1972, the year I joined the SGI, there was a convention in Los Angeles called “L.A. in May,” and even then people were aiming for May 3, 2001. It had no sound of reality to

me. I did not think I would still be chanting in 2001. It sounded like something for other generations.

Some members may remember a slogan we used to hear, “Let’s keep fighting to 2001!” But I never believed I would be part of that. It sounded like fiction then, but it is here. I am so grateful to the people who, in 1972, had a different goal for me; people who have allowed me to develop and have supported me so that I could become the happiest woman by May 3, 2001. And I am.

The idea of the Seven Bells, of having that goal toward May 3, 2001 — this concept is not readily accessible to most people. I have often heard about the Seven Bells but understanding it was something I put off. When I saw an article about it in the *World Tribune*, I was so happy to see it spelled out. Even then I had to read it over and over.

In our high-tech society, where speed and convenience are highly prized, we are seldom thinking about a five-year plan or a 10-year plan. In America, we’ve got the five-minute plan and the one-minute manager. We love books that tell us how to spend the least amount of time with maximum result.

But the truth is that anything of value takes time to construct. This is what I have learned from President Ikeda. If he says it is going to happen, it is going to happen—not mystically, but through tenacious effort. Personally, I need to start thinking more that way, tenaciously working toward specific goals rather than just responding to the moment or hoping and chanting that things will turn out.

We have now entered the Century of Women. I heard recently about a group of women who emigrated from Cambodia between 1975 and 1980 because of the strife in Cambodia. They moved to Long Beach, Calif. and eventually encountered the Gohonzon. One by one, they committed themselves to a dream: They wanted to go to Cambodia to share Buddhism. They saved their money, working more than 10 or 12 or even 14 hours every day. After that, they would translate Buddhist materials into Cambodian. Finally, they went back to Cambodia in 1995 and stayed for two months.

They racked their brains about how to introduce people to this practice. They only knew their relatives and families, so they would pick one house in a town or street and ask permission to use it as a meeting place. And then they would visit all the neighbors and give them fliers announcing their meeting. Many people came, and the number of members increased. Last year, the government approved this group as an official SGI organization. In Phnom Phen, they have 100 members, including 40 to 50 youth, and counting the outlying provinces, they have 300 members.

These are just ordinary women, but look at what they are accomplishing. I think this is a great example of creating a spiritual civilization.

To appreciate our differences, to say there is something important to do with your life and that it includes many other people — this is kosen-rufu. This is teamwork.

Those Cambodian women work all day long and most of them have children. Yet they want to create something, so it is natural to create a team because they could not do it all themselves. They do not have the time or the money to just go off on their own. They need one another.

If we can all recognize that we need one another, we need our differences, we need our unique abilities — then we know that what it takes to accomplish kosen-rufu is a team. When there is a team, no one gets overworked or feels burdened. That is one of our keys as women for the 21st century, to demonstrate the power of teamwork.

The SGI, under the leadership of Daisaku Ikeda, is the one organization that has

dedicated itself for 70 years to raising women—women who can speak, who can write, who can talk, who can move, who can self-reflect. And we all know how to work together to accomplish a great goal. This is the most amazing organization. We just have to open up our doors now for the world.

Now that May 3, 2001, is here, we have an opportunity to grasp its historical significance. Each of us, and particularly young people who will be living for decades after this, can make it a significant turning point, a day where we choose our goal, our dream, our hope—whatever change we want to make. It can be a day that we will look back on and say, “That was the day that I decided that I would accomplish all of my dreams.” We can give ourselves our own historical perspective connected to this great movement of kosen-rufu.

May 3, 2001, is a day of resolution, of determination, a day that is part of our individual and collective history.