

## **SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO CANYON SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION WILL CHANGE SOCIETY**

**'The key to creating a society based on human rights,' says SGI President Ikeda,  
'lies in education based on developing character through your own efforts.'**

Principal Patrick Kelleher, respective teachers and students, as a fellow individual who regards education as life's greatest work, it is the greatest joy to be named Honorary Principal together with my most respected friend, Rosa Parks, the mother of American human rights, from your castle of education in California's Moreno Valley Canyon Springs High School.

I am not able to attend today's prestigious ceremony but I would like to send my heartfelt appreciation from across the Pacific in Japan.

I first met with Ms. Rosa Parks at Soka University of America, Calabasas in 1993, and since then have had the opportunity to communicate with her on numerous occasions.

I have also conducted countless dialogues with many champions of human rights such as South Africa's former president Nelson Mandela, Adolfo Perez Esquivel of Argentina, Austregesilo de Athayde of Brazil, B. N. Pande of India, Linus Pauling and Arun Gandhi. All of them were gentle people, and all of them were strong people. They had the strength to endure the hardships of persecution, yet by just meeting them you sensed a warm responsiveness and sensitivity to others' feelings.

Ms. Rosa Parks is another of these gentle yet strong people who embraces those she encounters with gentle and charming eyes.

Ms. Parks has written: "I have never allowed myself to be treated as a second-class citizen. You must respect yourself before others can respect you." These words speak truth. Even at the height of discrimination against African Americans, she refused to ride in the elevators marked "Colored." Unable to compromise with such discrimination, she took the stairs. One hot summer day, her throat was parched, but rather than drink from the "Colored" water fountain, she went thirsty. I am convinced that her dauntless character created the victorious foundation of the civil rights movement.

All of you are now in the process of going to high school, learning the classic and modern wisdom of both East and West, absorbing all forms of knowledge. The key to creating a society based on human rights lies in education based on developing character through your own efforts. It is for this reason I pay my heartfelt respect to you young citizens of the world.

I am a Buddhist, and Buddhism teaches the principle of cherry, plum, peach and damson—that all things have their own unique beauty and mission. Everyone has a right to flower, to reveal their full potential as a human being and fulfill their mission in this world. Buddhism teaches that differences signify uniqueness and that all people are equal and worthy of respect based upon the dignity of life. Consequently, I always share with high school students in Japan that to push others around with narrow-minded hearts, with haughty hearts, jealous hearts, or with self-centered hearts and thereby hurt them is actually an act of hurting yourself. Ultimately, rather than trying to win over others, a life geared towards winning over oneself is the basis for creating peace and human rights. Up until now our world has been full of conflict and violence. The people who will change

this are you who will be living far into the future.

First and second Soka Gak-kai presidents Tsunesaboro Makiguchi and Josei Toda were educators. Today, the SGI has grown to have membership in 163 countries. The goal of these two educators was to create a society that is based on the human being, and they professed that education is the only way to do so. The only way to create a society where the people are happy is to create a society where the people are wise. This is the eternal path of the SGI.

Based upon these ideals of Presidents Makiguchi and Toda, educators who dedicated their lives for the sake of humanistic education, I humbly accept this great honor from your esteemed high school and dedicate it to Makiguchi and my mentor, Toda.

I would like to end today's message with my deepest prayers for the eternal glory of Canyon Springs High School and for the eternal advancement of the teachers and students.

*March 6, 2001  
Daisaku Ikeda*