

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MARCH 19 SPEECH ALL IT TAKES IS ONE PERSON

‘All it takes is a single individual—one person earnestly striving in the field of his or her mission, prepared to accept full responsibility for it,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘Such a person will be the foundation from which the flames of the victory of justice will burn bright and spread forever.’

SGI President Ikeda's speech at the joint graduation ceremony for Soka University and Soka Women's College, held at the Soka University Auditorium, in Hachioji, Tokyo, March 19.

The great Russian poet Aleksandr Pushkin writes: “My soul is calm and quiet / As on another road I fare.” Congratulations on this first brilliant, hope-filled graduation ceremony of the 21st century!

The renowned Swiss thinker Carl Hilty says: “In the life of a virtuous person, there is always a chapter of suffering. Without it, one cannot become a person of substance.” I have lived that sort of life.

You cannot become a great person if you allow yourself to be defeated by hardships or try to avoid difficulties. I hope all of our graduates today will triumph with firm resolve over all obstacles. I also hope that you will always be strong and healthy, that you will be kind to your parents, and that you will keep moving forward steadily, with patience and determination. Thank you for your hard work during your four years at Soka University and two years at Soka Women's College!

Today, I want to speak to our graduates in an informal, friendly fashion.

Right now in Japan, there are many people deeply concerned about the future of education. The number of school-age children continues to drop, and all schools are having a difficult time surviving. On March 16, I attended the joint graduation ceremony for the Soka elementary and secondary schools. Many of the guests who attended the ceremony expressed their delight at the sight of our lively, hopeful students. Large numbers of very bright, talented students have applied to our Soka schools in both Tokyo and Kansai, and top-notch students from all over Japan and the world are seeking entrance to Soka University. In addition, many eminent professors and scholars have said that they are eager to teach at a university as fine as Soka University.

People around the world are taking note of Soka education. I hope all of you will be proud of the fact that you are graduates of such a highly esteemed school system.

The purpose of Soka University is to uphold truth and justice.

The Zhou Enlai Cherry Tree on the Soka University campus, with which you are all familiar, has survived another cold winter and will soon be in brilliant bloom again. Earlier, I received a copy of a valuable work of research, just completed, from the Zhou Enlai Research Center of China's Nankai University, the alma mater of the late Premier Zhou Enlai. What do you think the title of the book is? I am honored to say that it is *Zhou Enlai and Daisaku Ikeda* [available only in Chinese]. It focuses on the interchange between Premier Zhou, his wife, Madame Deng Yingchao, and myself, and it discusses the historical importance of our relationship from a variety of perspectives.

Dr. Wang Yongxiang, director of the Zhou Enlai Research Center, describes his reasons

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for producing the book: “I wanted to leave an accurate record of the manner in which China–Japan friendship developed. I also wanted to produce a text from which the young people of both China and Japan in the 21st century could acquire a correct understanding of history.” Dr. Wang described the deep spirit of friendship that resonated between Premier Zhou and myself as “a shining chapter in the history of contemporary China–Japan relations.”

Two years ago, Dr. Wang visited Soka University and Soka Junior and Senior High School. A student asked him why he decided to study Zhou Enlai. Dr. Wang replied: “After Premier Zhou died, the Gang of Four took over and tried to conceal his many achievements. As a scholar who studies history, I was determined to record the truth for future generations and make it as widely known as possible, because Premier Zhou’s lifetime contribution to China and to world peace offers an eternal model for us all.”

Dr. Wang greatly admires Zhou Enlai, an illustrious graduate of Nankai University, as a mentor of the people. Burning with a passion for the truth, Dr. Wang denounced the venomous schemes directed against the Chinese leader and composed a precise, uncompromising account of his life.

Soka University is a fortress of peace that holds fast to a true, accurate view of history and works together with our friends in China, South Korea and the rest of the world to create a future where truth and justice prevail.

I hope that you will all read fine books to help you achieve that goal. Mr. Toda always used to warn us quite strictly: “You are young. The future lies before you. Youth is the time to read the great works of literature, the time to study history, the time to read first-rate books! If you only read trashy magazines and such, you will end up a disgraceful, third-rate person!” I hope you will all read first-rate books and become first-rate people.

May you all, as the very first graduating class of the 21st century, go on to follow your personal mission and lead victorious lives free of regret!

Let me congratulate all here today—members of the 27th graduating class of Soka University and the 15th graduating class of Soka Women’s College, as well as our graduate students, our correspondence course students and our foreign students who have come from around the world—on your splendid achievement! Shaking hands with each and every one of you in my heart, I want to praise and thank you for the noble efforts you have made during this time of your youth. Let me also thank your family members who have come from so far away. To those of you watching the broadcast of this ceremony from the Soka University gymnasium, I also offer my sincerest congratulations.

This April 2 is Soka University’s 30th anniversary. I thank the university presidents and faculty members who, over the past three decades, have made Soka University into such a wonderful institution! I also thank the rest of the staff for their unceasing efforts. I appreciate your contributions deeply.

Let me also note the earnest, untiring efforts of the Student Union, which has looked after Soka University so diligently over the years. Please accept my warmest appreciation.

Youth should not stagnate in idleness and comfort.

We are honored to have with us today Chairperson Myeon Young Lee and President Chang Byung Ki of South Korea’s prestigious Hong-Ik University in Seoul. Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here!

The spirit of service to humanity of your fine university, which is embodied in the name Hong-Ik, meaning wide benefit, is truly commendable. The great leader of Korean

independence, Kim Goo, in the past outlined the ideals of Hong-Ik as contributing to world peace through the power of culture and education.

I have the deepest regard and respect for Hong-Ik University, Soka University's "older brother," which has for more than five decades continued to pursue these lofty ideals and sent large numbers of brilliant graduates into the world. Let us offer Chairperson Lee and President Chang a warm round of applause as an expression of our joy and commitment toward a new, hope-filled alliance of culture and education in the 21st century!

I also extend the warmest welcome to the world-renowned Russian scholar of the Lotus Sutra, Dr. Margarita Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, a dear friend of my wife and I; Dr. and Mrs. Modesto Antonio Cruz Lluberer of the Dominican Republic; and representatives of Soka University of America, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century and the SGI-USA. I also offer my deepest thanks to the Soka University exchange-program teaching staff from China and India.

Soka University has reached out through dialogue to form countless ties of friendship with the rest of the world. The year I founded Soka University, 1971, I held a dialogue with Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, leading proponent of European unification, which was carried in the *Sankei Shimbun*, one of Japan's major national daily newspapers. [The dialogue was published as a book in Japan in 1972.]

Since then, 27 dialogues that I have engaged in with leading thinkers around the world have been published—and here you are, the 27th graduating class of Soka University! If all dialogues in which I am presently engaged or am preparing for are included, the total rises to about 40.

In these and future dialogues, I am planning to continue to discuss at length such topics as education, philosophy, literature, culture, futurology, human rights, the environment, and life and the universe. I am doing this in earnest. I am determined to complete even more dialogues with leading world figures.

What can I leave to future generations? I have made this my challenge and my work.

Over the years that you have been students at Soka University and Soka Women's College, we have welcomed many world leaders here and built a proud record of meaningful discussions with them. One of them was Dr. Lawrence Carter Sr. of Morehouse College, the alma mater of that great champion of human rights, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. [In September 2000, Dr. Carter, dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel of Morehouse College, visited Soka University.]

I am deeply honored that Morehouse College has decided to hang a portrait featuring first and second Soka Gakkai presidents Tsune-saburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda along with my wife and I in the Great Nave of the King International Chapel.

It was at Morehouse College that the youthful Martin Luther King Jr. met his mentor, Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, president of the college, and learned the philosophy of nonviolence. He left his alma mater to throw himself into the struggle for social justice.

I hope you will all throw yourselves into something—it is a mistake for youth to stagnate in idleness and comfort. Dr. King was in his 20s when he bravely took leadership in the famous bus boycott in Montgomery, Ala., which was sparked by the courage of my friend Rosa Parks.

If we earn the praise of one great person, we do not need anyone else's.

In the bitter struggle, Dr. King became a target of persecution. He was in such danger that those around him urged him to leave the area, but Dr. King refused, saying, "I would

rather spend ten years in jail than desert the people in this crisis.”

Dr. King’s mentor, Dr. Mays, was overjoyed at his brave disciple’s declaration and wholeheartedly applauded him for it. He was proud above all that a noble young lion, declaring that he would never betray the people’s trust, had emerged from his beloved disciples.

If we earn the praise of one great person, we do not need the praise of anyone else. No matter how many cowards, crafty people, dishonest people, irresponsible and spiritually weak people you gather, you cannot accomplish anything of value. You cannot achieve anything great.

All it takes is a single individual—one person earnestly striving in the field of his or her mission, prepared to accept full responsibility for it. Such a person will be the foundation from which the flames of the victory of justice will burn bright and spread forever.

I, too, am striving single-handedly. I am afraid of nothing. I am dauntless.

Morehouse College later presented Dr. King with an honorary doctorate in recognition of his momentous struggle. Filled with emotion, President Mays told his youthful disciple, “Your alma mater is happy to be the first college or university to honor you this way.”

This is a demonstration of the profound significance of an honorary document as a way to recognize a fighting intellect, an active intellect. As the founder of your university, I have received 100 honorary doctorates and professorships from universities and institutions of higher learning around the world. The total climbs to 123, if those that have been announced but not yet presented are included.

These great honors have come to be bestowed upon me as the result of my fighting ceaselessly as a disciple of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, of my following these two mentors’ instructions to the letter, risking my life and never letting myself be defeated by slander or persecution. These honors also pass on to you, my beloved heirs, the students of Soka University and Soka Women’s College. And I know that my receiving these honors as founder is a sure sign that all of you will lead lives of unsurpassed triumph and splendor, dedicated to truth, as you advance, strive and win on the grand stage of the new century with bright confidence and optimism.

Its graduates reveal the true value of a university. The way they conduct themselves in society is the proof of their university education and is the true measure of a university’s excellence. Today, Soka University graduates are active in all spheres of society, from government and business to mass media.

I will continue to pray for the success of this first graduating class of the 21st century from the bottom of my heart. I have read every one of the graduation determinations that you have sent me. I will keep them at my side, and I vow to support and protect you for the rest of my life.

Please do not be defeated by anything that happens in your life.

As you may know, I have been called a poet laureate. Recently, another highly renowned poet laureate, Esther Gress of Denmark, sent me one of her poems, a wonderful work entitled “Poet to Poet Fighting for Peace.” In it, she writes:

*If you want to change
the world
you must change man*

*If you want to change man
you must make him want to
If you will make man want
to change
you must change the world
Do that*

*One little word
can change a world
for good
One little word
can change
a man
for good
Let's make the Word
change us all
for the good*

Let us make the bells call

Let us sound the bells! This is the spirit of life, the spirit of youth.

I hope that all of you, the first graduating class of the 21st century, will become, without exception, victors in life. I hope you will all become happy. I hope that you all, without exception, will live long, healthy lives crowned with triumph. I pray for this with all my heart.

Defeat is miserable. It is pitiful. It will make your parents sad, and others will mock you. I hope that none of you will be defeated in life.

Be strong and healthy, for all your days! Be kind to your parents!

In both times of suffering and joy, let us continue to meet proudly here at your alma mater! I hope you will join hands with your friends and comrades, leading wonderful lives with no regrets! Thank you for attending today! Please embark on your new journey with energy and perseverance! Thank you again for all your efforts!