

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 5 SPEECH—PART 1 WE MUST FOSTER GLOBAL CITIZENS

‘Unless there is a fundamental transformation within the lives of human beings themselves, we will never rid ourselves of war,’ says SGI President Ikeda. ‘To achieve that, we must foster global citizens, people who are more than merely Japanese, or American, or any other nationality.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 9th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Tokyo, Sept. 5.

The youth division is developing splendidly! The youth division leaders' speeches at this meeting also attest to the division's remarkable growth. A magnificent foundation has been laid for the development of the youth who will shoulder the Soka Gakkai in the future.

Welcome to all our overseas members! Among them are members from France. The French philosopher Alain (Émile-August Chartier) observed that persecution has always made religion stronger. This is one of the unchanging formulas of history.

The American thinker Henry David Thoreau said: “The best place for each is where he stands.” In other words, there is no place like that where we are now.

Buddhism teaches that we all inherently possess the state of Buddhahood. Wherever we dwell, then, is in fact the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. It is the power of the Mystic Law that enables us to transform the place where we are now—the place where we struggle with the daily realities and problems of life—into a place of victory.

Religion without action becomes a sham.

The famous Russian author Leo Tolstoy wrote in his diary: “I'm still tormented by thirst...not for fame—I don't want fame and I despise it—but to have a big influence on people's happiness and usefulness.” This is a perfect expression of the Soka Gakkai spirit. We have no selfish ambitions for personal fame or importance. We cherish the lofty desire to lead others to happiness, and we pray and rack our brains over how we can realize that goal. Tolstoy and other truly great philosophers of his ilk reveal a spirit that is very close to Buddhism.

The French novelist and thinker Romain Rolland wrote: “There can be no whole, vital and genuine philosophy without action.” This is true of any philosophy or religion—without action, they are a sham. Buddhism is action; and action is joy. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood does not act for the sake of kosen-rufu; it is a sham religion, a dead religion.

The ancient Roman phi-losopher Seneca said: “That joy which springs wholly from oneself is true and sound; it increases and attends us to the last.” Joy derived from things obtained without effort, from things conferred out of flattery, from things that have been stolen or obtained dishonestly is a hollow, false joy that will not last. Such joy quickly fades.

Nichiren Daishonin states: “[Chanting] Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the greatest of all joys” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 788). As these words indicate, the supreme joy rises from unshakable faith. It wells up within our lives. The ultimate joy and victory come from living a life dedicated to faith.

In Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, Socrates says: “I awaken and persuade and reproach each one of you, and I do not stop settling down everywhere upon you the whole day.” Socrates

is willing to go anywhere to awaken the people. He sits down with them and makes every effort to persuade them and refute their erroneous views. For us, this is introducing Buddhism to others. It is pursuing dialogue to spread the cause of good and truth. We do not give up, even if we are criticized. For this is the most correct way of life and the most correct action we can take. It is also the ultimate model of humanity left to us by this great Greek philosopher.

We have had a very hot summer here in Japan this year. Now, we are beginning to move into autumn. This time of year the weather is very unpredictable—hot one day, cool the next—so it is easy to fall ill. I hope you will take every precaution to stay in good health. When you are feeling unwell or are very tired, it's all right to simply do a short gongyo [parts A and C] or chant a few minutes' of daimoku. After all, what matters is your sincere commitment to faith and the dedicated efforts you make for kosen-rufu. I hope you will exercise wisdom and enjoy a happy, healthy life based on faith in the Mystic Law.

We have entered the second phase of worldwide kosen-rufu.

SGI members from 50 countries and territories, as well as divisional and group representatives from all over Japan, have assembled for this 9th Headquarters Leaders Meeting. I understand that our Mashiko Community Center in Tochigi Prefecture and our Mii Community Center in Fukuoka Prefecture will have access to satellite broadcasts of the Headquarters leaders meetings for the first time, starting from this month. Congratulations!

I would like to welcome the 450 outstanding young leaders from around the world who have joined us today! Thank you for traveling such long distances. I deeply appreciate all of your efforts. Your gathering together here under one roof attests to the fact that we have entered the second phase of worldwide kosen-rufu—an age when the SGI will move forward in earnest. I and everyone else here would like to give you a huge round of applause to signify our sincere respect and admiration for you and our very warmest of welcomes!

And I am entirely certain that, more than anyone, Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, would shower you with words of praise, appreciation, and encouragement.

In a letter addressed to Shijo Kingo, who traveled all the way to Sado Island to visit him in exile, the Daishonin writes: “For you, a lay person pressed for time in your lord's service, to believe in the Lotus Sutra is itself very rare. Moreover, surmounting mountains and rivers and crossing the great blue sea, you came to visit me from afar. How could your resolve be inferior to that of the man who broke open his bones at the City of Fragrances, or of the boy who threw away his body on the Snow Mountains?” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1069).

The Daishonin lavished the highest praise on Shijo Kingo for his seeking spirit in faith. This kind of seeking spirit manifests itself in lofty action. All of you have gathered from afar with such ardent aspiration for the sake of Buddhism. Your efforts are infinitely noble. You are all emissaries of the Buddha.

Please know that wholeheartedly treasuring and praising people such as yourselves who are working for kosen-rufu is the fundamental spirit of the Lotus Sutra and the heritage of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Should anyone forget this spirit and take your sincere efforts for kosen-rufu for granted or, worse, look down on you, they will be acting against everything the world of faith stands for. Buddhism is a realm of supreme compassion and humanity. High Priest Nikken

Abe and his cohorts have trampled on that spirit and displayed incredible callousness and disregard for others, and we cannot permit this.

You have all come to Japan with profound seeking spirit to attend this first SGI youth training course of the 21st century. I will ensure that your names go down in the annals of kosen-rufu for all time. Thank you!

People around the world are placing great faith in the SGI youth.

Congratulations to the youth division in Japan, too, on your bright new departure! If the youth are strong, the Soka Gakkai will be rock-solid. The members of the youth division proved themselves admirable in our first major campaign of the 21st century. They have grown, and an alliance of awakened youth has been established.

Now, as a new century begins, the human race looks forward to the emergence of a new positive, hope-filled force. Those forces that have outlived their time will fade from the stage of history. In these circumstances, thoughtful, intelligent people around the world are placing great faith in the youth of the SGI, calling them the hope of the future. Some have written this to us in letters, and others state it in their books and speeches.

Dr. David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, with whom I published the dialogue *Choose Peace* [not yet available in English], expressed this sentiment to Masao Yokota, president of the SGI-affiliated Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, and I quote him verbatim: “I’ve met with several different youth groups from the Soka Gakkai and I’ve always been impressed with their spirit. They have very bright eyes and very wide smiles. What that represents to me is their eagerness to learn.... I feel that they are young people who are searching for a way to do something worthwhile and something that’s really positive in their lives, which is a very different approach from a lot of young people who are alienated and looking for ways to rebel against society.”

I assert that this is absolutely true. To all the members of the youth division, I say: “I entrust the future of the SGI to you!” Please proudly continue your dedicated efforts. And please never forget that expanding the ranks of the youth division is expanding the hope of all humanity.

Raise the victory banner high with the conviction: “We are the Soka Gakkai youth division!” I hope you will build an ever-stronger, ever-larger force of SGI youth dedicated to the cause of good who will earn the admiration of the entire world. I hope you will inspire and rally together many, many young people.

The foundation for kosen-rufu in Japan is solid. Next we must focus on the world. Let us build an unshakable alliance of people of integrity and conscience. That is the mission of the youth of the SGI.

Dr. Krieger also commented: “It’s inevitable that the younger generation will come up to roles of leadership and therefore the future will depend upon how they are educated and what kind of choices they make about the future. One act of hope for us is to be good mentors and good educators of the next generation.... Hopefully, with education and examples like President Ikeda, the pendulum will swing back and the next generation will be more attuned to the Earth and human rights, and to creating a more decent world.”

In spite of Dr. Krieger’s overly generous reference to me, I wanted to introduce his remarks because of the trust they convey for the youth division and for the Soka Gakkai’s efforts to raise capable people.

SUA will foster many global citizens.

Last month saw the opening of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo. Many U.S. newspapers and news organizations took note of this event. [The first entrance ceremony of the new university was held on Aug. 24, the anniversary of the day that the university's founder, President Ikeda, joined the Soka Gakkai. The *New York Times*, one of the world's leading newspapers, ran a front-page article on SUA, while the Associated Press distributed a similar article. To date, more than 50 U.S. newspapers have carried articles on the university, introducing its aims and educational ideals to a wide readership.]

Dr. Krieger has suggested the reasons for this interest in SUA: "The goals and values of [SUA] deserve attention because they represent a different approach to education. It's an approach that says, 'We want to make world citizens. We're consciously setting out to create world citizens, young people who engage with the world and try to make a better world.' That's a model of education for the future. I'd like to see it be a model."

Leading thinkers around the world are looking expectantly to Soka University of America as an institution offering an ideal approach to education for the 21st century. Let us rejoice and take pride in this auspicious start of SUA!

There are many universities and educational institutions in Japan, but none of them has engaged in creating a university in the United States on such a scale. SUA represents the new challenge of Soka Education in the 21st century. I would like to express my high esteem to the United States of America for embracing this new university and this new challenge.

It is human beings who cause the horror of war; it is the insidious, destructive tendency inherent in human life. Therefore, unless there is a fundamental transformation within the lives of human beings themselves, we will never rid ourselves of war.

To achieve that, we must foster global citizens, people who are more than merely Japanese, or American, or any other nationality. We must extend the network of global citizens who possess both a positive philosophy and true capability, and who are dedicated to joining hands with all people on this planet and advancing with them. This was the vision of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founder of Soka Education and the first president of the Soka Gakkai. It is also the grand objective of Soka University of America.

Here today in the Makiguchi Memorial Hall, with this profound shared ideal in mind, I would like to humbly report on the opening of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, to Mr. Makiguchi, our noble predecessor who gave his life for his beliefs.

To be continued in an upcoming issue.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS HUMAN BEINGS CAN TRANSFORM THE PLANET FROM THIS SPEECH:

It is human beings who cause the horror of war; it is the insidious, destructive tendency inherent in human life. Therefore, unless there is a fundamental transformation within the lives of human beings themselves, we will never rid ourselves of war. To achieve that, we must foster global citizens, people who are more than merely Japanese, or American, or any other

nationality. We must extend the network of global citizens who possess both a positive philosophy and true capability, and who are dedicated to joining hands with all people on this planet and advancing with them.

1) When SGI President Ikeda says “it is the insidious destructive tendency inherent in human life” that causes war, what exactly do you think he is talking about? Can you find examples in Nichiren Daishonin’s writings where he talks about this destructive tendency inherent in human life? How can we prevent this destructive tendency from manifesting in our life and the lives of others?

2) President Ikeda continues: “We must extend the network of global citizens who possess both a positive philosophy and true capability, and who are dedicated to joining hands with all people on this planet and advancing with them.” Based on your practice of faith can you think of actions you can take right now to bring about a fundamental transformation away from the destructive tendency toward war? Do you think it is so important to continue taking action to bring about a transformation in society? If so, why? What does the Daishonin say about the way to secure peace in the world?