

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S AUG. 21 SPEECH—PART 1 THE ULTIMATE WAY OF LIFE

‘Nothing is more noble than people dedicated to kosen-rufu,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘They enjoy good health and are fulfilled. They accumulate boundless good fortune and benefit. This is the ultimate way of life.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at a joint training session for leaders of the Hokuriku and Shinetsu regions, held at the Nagano Training Center in Karuizawa, Japan, Aug. 21.

Thank you for your efforts to attend this Hokuriku-Shinetsu joint training session!

The long-awaited completion of the Hokuriku Training Center is scheduled for next month. Congratulations!

To the members of Ishikawa and Toyama prefectures in the Hokuriku region and the members of Niigata and Nagano prefectures in Shinetsu, thank you for the tremendous efforts you have made amidst the harsh climates of your respective areas. [These regions are known for their heavy winter snowfalls.]

Each of you can be confident that your hard work is laying the groundwork for the victory of your entire family. Your efforts are building a solid foundation of faith and kosen-rufu, and creating a great river of happiness that will endure in your family for generations to come. I wholeheartedly praise you as champions of the spirit, benefit and actual proof, the likes of which are without match in Japan — no, the entire world.

Nothing is more noble than people dedicated to kosen-rufu. Such people are devoted not only to their own happiness but also that of others. They enjoy good health and are fulfilled. They accumulate boundless good fortune and benefit. This is the ultimate way of life. And it is the absolute promise of Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato, of whom I am very fond, said, “I cannot but say what appears to me to be right and true.” And the towering German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, from whom I have learned much about literature, asserted: “The truth must be repeated over and over again; because error is repeatedly preached among us.... Everywhere, in fact, error prevails, and is quite easy in the feeling that it has a decided majority on its side.” We must continue to speak out for the cause of good. We must continue to speak out for truth.

Some people struggle in earnest. Some are defeated by struggle. And some give up without even trying. Only those who struggle until the very end can attain Buddhahood. Such people are life’s true winners.

**All of you are advancing kosen-rufu in the place
where you have a profound mission.**

Your efforts have adorned the Shinetsu region, birthplace of first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and the Hokuriku region, birthplace of second president Josei Toda, with a proud victory of kosen-rufu. This year marks the 130th anniversary of President Maki-guchi’s birth and the 50th anniversary of President Toda’s inauguration. I can imagine the joyful smiles of these two great predecessors, who are surely applauding

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all of you.

The Daishonin praised his follower Abutsu-bo, our senior in faith who lived in Shinetsu [which includes Sado Island], saying: “You deserve to be called a leader of this northern province. Could it be that Bodhisattva Pure Practices has been reborn into this world as Abutsu-bo and visited me? How wonderful! How marvelous!” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 300).

Each of you is truly a “leader of this northern province” in the 21st century. I hope you will leave behind an eternal, indestructible history as leaders of our significant movement in Hokuriku and Shinetsu.

The Hokuriku and Shinetsu regions both span very large areas. Day in and day out, the members of the women’s division, in particular, travel far and wide, taking action for the sake of the Law, for friends and members, for society and for the future. In recognition of each of your efforts, I have presented one of your women’s leaders with the words “Hardest Working Women’s Leader in All of Japan.”

The Daishonin says: “A woman who takes this efficacious medicine [of the Mystic Law] will be surrounded and protected by these four great bodhisattvas [Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, Pure Practices, and Firmly Established Practices] at all times. When she rises to her feet, so too will the bodhisattvas, and when she walks along the road, they will also do the same. She and they will be as inseparable as a body and its shadow, as fish and water, as a voice and its echo, or as the moon and its light” (WND, 415).

The path along which you, the members of the women’s division, are advancing is the path of happiness, hope, harmony, good fortune and benefit. And it is eternally endowed with the four virtues of eternity, happiness, true self and purity [which the four bodhisattvas represent].

The Daishonin was well acquainted with the Hokuriku and Shinetsu areas. In addition to Niigata and Sado, places where he underwent severe persecution, he writes of such locales as Tono-oka, present-day Iida City, in Shinano, present-day Nagano Prefecture, Lake Suwa and Tateyama in Etchu, present-day Toyama Prefecture, and Hakusan in Kaga, present-day Ishikawa Prefecture.

All of you are advancing kosen-rufu in a place where you have a profound mission. The Daishonin is without a doubt praising you. There is no question that your lives will be filled with wonderful good fortune and benefit.

It is important that leaders pay tribute to the great achievements of their fellow members.

SUA has received a warm welcome from all sectors of American society.

The first entrance ceremony for Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, is on Aug. 24. Nothing could make me happier than being able to actualize the magnificent dream of President Makiguchi and President Toda, two brilliant educators from Shinetsu and Hokuriku.

Local newspapers in both of these regions have given prominent coverage to the opening of the university. And people from every sector of society in the United States have expressed keen interest in and voiced high expectations for the school.

As you may have heard, *The New York Times*, one of the world’s leading newspapers, ran a front-page story on the school on July 25 (see the Aug. 10 *World Tribune*, p. 1). Similar articles have in fact appeared in newspapers across the United States.

On Aug. 16, the Associated Press sent out an article on the opening of SUA, which was

picked up and used by a total of 40 major media organizations, including CNN, ABC News and *The Washington Post*. The Aug. 17 *Chicago Tribune* ran an article under the headline “New College Touts Global Awareness; Buddhist-Inspired California Campus Hopes to Be Model.”

In addition to introducing the school, the coverage included impressions by members of the first matriculating class, who chose SUA because of its founding principle of world peace. The university’s curriculum and ideals were also introduced, along with reports of the faculty members’ enthusiasm to help realize a system of true humanistic education aimed at fostering global citizens.

On Aug. 19, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a feature titled “A New-View University; Education: Backed by a Japanese Buddhist Group, Soka University in Aliso Viejo Emphasizes Peace and Liberal Arts.” The almost full-page article covered the school’s ideals, facilities, unique system and curriculum. It also included the voices of faculty and students.

The *Los Angeles Times* article described SUA as a college founded on Buddhist ideals, stating: “By starting a college in this country, Soka Gakkai is following an American tradition. Many private colleges in the United States have a religious foundation...even USC (the University of Southern California), which was started by Methodists, or Harvard...”

My appreciation for the warm welcome SUA has received not only from the local community of Orange County but from all sectors of American society.

In Soka education, students are the foundation of the school.

Those who have visited the SUA campus have all voiced profound understanding and approval.

Dr. Linus Pauling Jr., son of the late Dr. Linus Pauling, who attended the dedication ceremony on May 3 earlier this year, said: “The finest building at Soka University of America is the student dormitory, which is situated on top of a high hill. The treasures of a university are the students who study there, graduate and go on to contribute to society. This reflects the spirit of the founder, Dr. Ikeda, who loves young people and entrusts them with the future.”

Students are most important. Students are the foundation of the school. This is the original spirit of Soka education as expounded by presidents Makiguchi and Toda.

For a time, President Maki-guchi served as principal of Shirogane Elementary School in Tokyo. In addition to his administrative duties, he was responsible for teaching language and mathematics, and occasionally ethics and other subjects.

Even as the school’s top administrator, he remained on the frontlines of the education scene, always interacting with his beloved pupils. In fact, many of his students have today recorded their fond reminiscences of him to be kept for posterity.

Experiencing failure and making mistakes are opportunities to self-reflect and advance.

President Makiguchi also taught calligraphy. He once explained the fundamentals of this art as follows: “Since calligraphy is an expression of the individual’s personality, it is natural for each character to vary a bit. At the same time, however, there is one thing they should have in common; they should blaze with hope and optimism for the future.” President Makiguchi always encouraged development and undying hope.

He also often said: “As human beings, we must continually advance. And we must do

so with a sense of purpose. Of course, we will inevitably experience failure and make mistakes along the way. Such times are opportunities to self-reflect. Without self-reflection, we cannot progress. Some people will say that to reflect on oneself is to dwell on the past and therefore nothing positive can be gained from it. However, self-reflection is not the same as regret, even though they are often confused. Nothing can come of regret. Self-reflection leads to advancement.” His words are profound.

At that time, students were required to memorize the *Imperial Rescript on Education*. [This decree was issued in the name of Emperor Meiji on Oct. 30, 1890, setting forth the guiding principles of education in Japan. It served as a powerful instrument of political indoctrination and remained in effect until the end of World War II.] Many teachers aggressively forced the children to learn it by heart.

But President Makiguchi took an entirely different approach. For example, in explaining the article “In a time of emergency, you should courageously offer your life to the State,” he said: “Peace is important. We should focus our thoughts on peace. As long as we safeguard peace, there will be no ‘time of emergency.’”

One of his students reminisced: “Mr. Makiguchi did not teach militaristic education in the least. He taught that peace is the only way. This was completely unheard of back then.” As the world was plunging headlong toward war, President Makiguchi promoted peace education.

In addition to outlining the concept of “humanitarian competition” in his work *The Geography of Human Life*, President Makiguchi articulated an idea similar to the current concept of preventative diplomacy. He emphasized that war could only be prevented by working to build confidence among the parties involved.

President Makiguchi’s greatness lay in his courage, foresight and conviction. The deeper one delves into his life, the more this becomes apparent.

“I will turn even the poorest student into an outstanding one.” “I will enable every student to surpass me.” Such was the unwavering compassion and spirit of President Maki-guchi, and of his successor, President Toda.

I am delighted to see the members of the Education Department, a gathering of teachers who are carrying on this very spirit, standing up and carrying out splendid activities in Shinetsu, Hokuriku, around Japan and throughout the world.

To be continued in an upcoming issue.