



SPEECH

SGI President Ikeda gives a graduation speech at Soka University, Japan.

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1st CEC of New Century Gathers

By **JAMIE LIPTAN**
STAFF WRITER

The 1st SGI-USA Central Executive Conference was held March 30-April 1 at the SGI Plaza in Santa Monica, Calif. The CEC has decided to start the numbering system again at 1 to reflect the beginning of the new century and a new era of the kosen-rufu movement in the United States.

Many important topics were discussed, including the upcoming Zone Family Youth

Culture Festivals, the progress of the Soka Spirit movement, the May commemorative contribution activity and the newly formed District Development Committee.

The DDC was created in recognition of the vital importance of each SGI-USA district's health. As it is the most important level of the organization, success in the district will propel SGI-USA forward. The DDC seeks to empower and strengthen each district through dialogue and new thinking in five key areas: prop-



Kathy Kishi of Hawaii (left) and Michele Higgins of Seattle enjoy a break at the 1st Central Executive Conference, held March 30-April 1 in Santa Monica, Calif.

agation, publications promotion, expanding the number of districts, diversity and Soka Spirit. CEC members divided into these five groups to discuss at length how the SGI-

USA can best advance, starting with the district level.

SGI-USA Youth Leader James Herrmann led a discussion on preparations for this summer's Zone Family Youth

Culture Festivals, which will be held at more than 20 locations across the country. Each zone reported its progress, with ideas ranging from community marches for nonviolence to Victory Over Violence outreach programs in schools.

The discussion of this year's May Commemorative Contribution Activity included an announcement that the SGI-USA can now accept credit card payments for contributions. In addition, a secure page on the official SGI-USA Web site (www.sgi-usa.org) will be set up to accept credit card donations over the Internet. More detailed information will be available in a forthcoming SGI-USA memo.

The Central Executive Committee meets quarterly to discuss organizational policy and direction, as well as report on the activities of local organizations. Decisions of the CEC are officially reported through SGI-USA memos to local organizations. CEC members are nominated by the general director and approved by the SGI-USA Council.

Please see pp. 10-11 for speeches from the April 1 CEC teleconference, in which chapter-and-up leaders across the country participated **WT**

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE 1ST CEC

YOUTH CREATE THE NEW ERA

'The fresh spirit of young, capable people creates a new era,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'For this reason, I ask that you, as leaders, exert your entire strength into developing youth to be our successors.'

My heartfelt appreciation goes to each of you, the members of the SGI-USA Central Executive Committee, for all your untiring efforts. I am always hearing about your great strug-

gles from SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima. I thank you for your dedication from the bottom of my heart.

Because of you, our Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo will be dedicated on May 3. My profound thanks for your unsparing support. At an opportune time, I promise to pay a visit. I am determined to build the solid, eternal foundation of SUA, which shall be the hope for the world. Together, let us create a new history!

The fresh spirit of young, capable people creates a new era. For this reason, I ask that you, as leaders, exert your entire strength into developing youth to be our successors. When members of the men's and women's divisions set the ex-

ample through their own actions, trust youth wholeheartedly, pray for their development and cherish them as if they were their own children—only then will the mighty river of kosen-rufu flow with increasing vigor and strength.

I also ask that members of the youth division sincerely respect their seniors in faith while supporting and protecting them. Please fight with all your passion and power, taking all the responsibility upon your shoulders.

When men, women and youth are cheerfully, harmoniously united in their battle against the injustices that obstruct the spread of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, the hope-filled fu-

ture of America will unfold.

Above all, the 21st century is the era of America. The center of worldwide kosen-rufu is America, and you are its magnificent creators. I am praying with all my heart that each of you will triumph and lead fulfilling, glorious lives free of any regrets.

When you go back to your respective areas, please convey my sincerest regards to your friends. More than anything else, my wife and I are looking forward to the day when we meet all of you on the soil of our beloved America.

Please take care! To the SGI-USA's eternal glory!

March 30, 2001
Daisaku Ikeda

'As Indestructible As a Diamond'

WORDS To WIN By

By DORIS McCLOSKEY
GREAT LAKES REGION WOMEN'S LEADER

From "The Izu Exile." The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 35-38.

Living beings like ourselves have dwelt in the sea of sufferings of birth and death since time without beginning. But they become votaries of the Lotus Sutra, and realize that their bodies and minds, which have existed since the beginningless past, are inherently endowed with the eternally unchanging nature; awoken to their mystic reality with their mystic wisdom; and attain the Buddha's body, which is as indestructible as a diamond. How then



could they be different from that Buddha? (WND, 36)

Human beings are all essentially Buddhas and attain enlightenment just as they are, Nichiren Daishonin teaches. The "sea of sufferings" he mentions above is an early Buddhist metaphor for transmigration through the unenlightened states of life, which common mortals repeat in lifetime after lifetime. Human suffering, like the sea, has unfathomable depths and

is difficult to navigate.

The sea of sufferings can be broadly interpreted as life based upon the nine worlds below Buddhahood (Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization and Bodhisattva), for what these states have in common is that they are all transient. Any happiness based upon them is uncertain, subject to the ever-shifting currents of the sea. It is this effervescent nature, the lack of a solid foundation in both the pain and pleasures of life based upon the nine worlds, that Buddhism deems suffering.

In contrast to this type of suffering is what the Daishonin calls the unchanging nature innate within us. This differs from the other nine states in that when it is solidly established as the basis of life, it is absolute and invulnerable to the waves of changing circumstances.

With the world of Buddhahood, the 10th state, as one's base, one can move with perfect

freedom through the ups and downs of the nine worlds, just as a big ship is strong enough to cross any waves. One can enjoy all the pains and pleasures of the nine worlds, seeing them for what they are, not becoming overly attached to transient phenomena. One can face the grief and contradictions of these states and, instead of being swept under by them, use them as fuel to advance.

In the depths of our lives, we develop an unshakable joy and confidence that exists independent of circumstances. We are able to turn all situations, whether rapturous or painful, into positive value. This is the state of life "as indestructible as a diamond" and the foundation of absolute, lasting happiness. This is the goal of Buddhist practice.

How do we attain this state of life? By becoming votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

A votary of the Lotus Sutra is anyone who embraces the Gohonzon with the same deter-

mination or intention as the Daishonin, devoting him- or herself to sharing it with others. At first, we may do so in order to try to practice correctly, but eventually we do it with the realization that it is the fundamental reason for our existence.

As we chant to the Gohonzon and teach others of its benefit, we gradually "realize that [our] bodies and minds, which have existed since the beginningless past, are inherently endowed with the eternally unchanging nature [of Buddhahood]." This is the true entity of life, or Myoho-enge-kyo, which while manifesting itself as the changing phenomena of life's physical and spiritual aspects (waves) is itself eternal and unchanging (the sea). By chanting to the Gohonzon, our Buddha nature manifests from the depths of our lives, enabling us to emerge from the sea of sufferings and enjoy a state of life "as indestructible as a diamond." **W**

APRIL 28, 1253 — THE FOUNDING OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM

The Day the World Began To Change

SIGNIFICANT DATES

ON MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM AND THE SGI

By JASON HENNINGER
LOS ANGELES

As the sun rose and warmed him on the morning of April 28, 1253, one young man began to change the world with his voice. No one in Kasamagori, nor in any other part of Japan, nor the rest of the world, knew it yet.

He was only 32 years old. He wasn't famous. He had no political power and he was not from a family of wealth or high social status. Yet in just a few breaths he transformed his life and the lives of all who knew him, or would ever know of him. He was the first person to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. By doing so, he declared to the universe that he was the votary of the Lotus Sutra. He was no longer Zesho-Bo Rencho; he was Nichiren, Sun-Lotus. No longer a Tendai sect priest, nor



a priest of any sect, he was alone in his determination to spread the essence of the Lotus Sutra and to correct the erroneous doctrines which abounded.

On April 27, he was just another priest as far as the world was concerned. To his teachers he was bright, sincere and scholarly. The Tendai sect, though not very common, was not unpopular. He could easily have stayed in the comfort of priestly seclusion, whiling away the years studying doctrinal issues and history. But just as Shakyamuni gave up the life of a prince, so did Nichiren Daishonin abandon the leisurely life of the Bud-

dhist scholar for a more vital, and far more difficult, life.

Just how much more difficult was his life after the morning of April 28? At noon that day, he revealed the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to an audience of priests. By that night, he was a fugitive whose life was in jeopardy. By fearlessly declaring the superiority of the Lotus Sutra, he angered the adherents of every other teaching. He told them the Pure Land teaching was slanderous and incomplete, Zen was the work of devils and the True Word school would bring about the nation's downfall. Surely he knew how dangerous it was to say these things, but he said them anyway. After all, he had already spoken the most rare and difficult truth that morning, making a determination not to begrudge his life for the sake of the Law.

From that day until the day he died, his life was never easy or safe. One might think he must have been insane to imperil himself so, but he could never have succeeded as the votary of the Lotus Sutra if he had been

meeq, subservient or self-serving. The greatness of his teaching was naturally met with great resistance, but with the heart of a lion he was never defeated.

For us, living so many centuries later, it might seem that chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is not quite as big a deal. Here in the United States, freedom of religion is a constitutional right, and chanting at this time will not endanger our lives. The Daishonin stood alone, and we now have many millions of members worldwide. But to think that to be a votary of the Lotus Sutra today is any easier, or the effects less potent, or the resistance less strong, is an illusion. The Lotus Sutra states, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this Sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more so will it be after his passing?" This applies equally to the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra today.

When we chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we too are changing the world. Every day, with every daimoku, we take on new challenges and face new

obstacles. We might not face the same magnitude of obstacles that the Daishonin did, but we should be as full of gratitude and pride for each other as we are for him. On April 28, we celebrate the day the world began to change. And through our faith and practice, we continue to change it. **W**

World SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

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EXPERIENCE—FELIX ORTIZ, NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

THE FIGHT OF HIS LIFE

With the support of many friends, and an unshakable conviction, Felix Ortiz defeats a life-threatening illness.

After the 1995 earthquake in Kobe, Japan, I traveled to Japan with a team of 69 Americans to build 300 units of emergency housing. This was also where I met and fell in love with my wife, Hideko. After I returned to California, she was able to join me and we were married in June 1995. She introduced me to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, and three years later, in 1998, I became a member of SGI-USA.

A month after I joined, we opened a Japanese restaurant in the Little Tokyo area of Los Angeles. It started out well, but later the area began to decline, and along with other restaurants around us, our business began to slide. We worked long hours to keep the business going but to no avail. We were committed to a five-year lease but every day that we stayed open created additional bills we couldn't pay. We didn't want to go back on our lease commitment and yet our debt was continually increasing. After chanting for the best course of action, we decided to close the restaurant rather than continuing to run up additional debts.

Soon after closing the restaurant, creditors and the building owner started demanding that we reopen, pay the note and past due rent or face lawsuits. We were sued for breach of contract and back rents. The combined debts totaled \$68,000.

There was such tremendous pressure, I worried that we would lose everything. I was so upset I told my wife to go back to Japan and leave me to deal with this alone. She didn't go. Instead, we chanted together and studied SGI President Ikeda's guidance and the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, specifically, "Happiness in this World."

In August, our lawyer advised us to file for bankruptcy, and we did. We wanted to keep our home, our belongings and a plot of land we owned, but



Felix Ortiz and his wife, Hideko.

the attorney said the creditors would probably want to take everything. Again, we continued to chant and study.

On the day we appeared in court, we were amazed that none of our creditors or the building owner's agent appeared. The judge initially ruled that we didn't qualify for Chapter 7 bankruptcy because my income was too high. (By this time, I was working as a deputy inspector.) Our lawyer then pointed out that income is not a factor in a Chapter 7. The judge agreed and no additional hearing was scheduled.

Two months later, again continuing our daimoku campaign, we received a Notice of Discharge from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court. We were able to keep everything that we first thought we were going to lose. We had completely changed things around. Yet, as this financial upheaval was ending, another challenge was developing.

Discovered that I had a large tumor on my left testicle. I sought out medical help, had surgery and the tumor was removed. Shortly thereafter, I had a CT scan that showed positive signs of a rare testicular cancer, seminoma. The doctor said that the cells of the tumor had traveled upwards, very close to my

kidney, and would have to be treated with chemotherapy.

I couldn't believe that I had cancer. The doctor explained that I would have up to six months of chemotherapy, which also meant that I would not be able to work for six months. I was becoming increasingly concerned because I knew that we could not live without my income for that length of time, and I didn't know what would happen to my wife if I did not survive.

But at the same time, because of everything I had learned from being in the SGI and our challenge with the restaurant business, I was ready to challenge the situation and can honestly say that even though the situation was unnering, I had complete confidence that I would overcome the illness. I can remember leaving the doctor's office with a smile on my face.

My wife took it very hard. Every time she would look at me, she would start to cry. Every night she would cry herself to sleep. Even though she had 17 years of practice, she was suffering.

We shared our struggle with the members of our district and we all began to move into action. Our district leader arranged for other leaders to

speak with my wife and me. I shared my goals (no radiation, no further treatments) and at every chanting session, the members would chant for me. Other members came over to our house and chanted with us.

I started chemotherapy in December. I lost all my hair and my fingernails turned dark. There was daily nausea and I lost my appetite. But I continued chanting and tried to keep my life-condition high. In January, the doctor told me that my CT scan showed no evidence of cancer in my vital organs, but it did show a five-centimeter growth (about the size of a tennis ball) near my kidney. I resolved to chant even harder.

Gradually, my blood tests began to show improvement. The doctors even eliminated one bag of medicine per day, which meant less time at the doctor's office. Not once did I ever feel sad, depressed or sorry for myself. My wife became stronger and began saying, "We have already won."

After the third treatment, the doctor told me: "This is your last treatment. Your blood test is already showing good results. We need to take another CT scan. If there is anything left, we will take care of it with radiation." I returned to work full time a little over two months after I started treatment. We had survived without suffering any severe financial problems.

In March, we received the news that there was no trace of the tennis ball size growth. It was gone. The doctor also said that I no longer needed radiation. It would do me more harm than good.

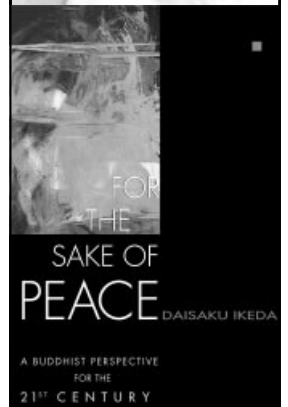
I cannot tell you the joy I feel for having overcome this tremendous obstacle. And again, I could not have done it without the prayers, support and friendship of fellow members.

I am still a relatively new member, and since I joined the SGI-USA, my wife and I have experienced one setback after another. But we've never given in. This is one of my biggest benefits.

My hope is to share this practice, not only with cancer victims, but with others suffering from different health conditions.

I want to work for kosen-rufu, enjoy life and get ready for the next challenge. **WT**

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 30 MESSAGE

Parents and Children Practicing Together

‘When parents and children practice correct faith together,’ SGI President Ikeda says, ‘they can be born together in lifetime after lifetime, enjoying an unsurpassed state of being. Only when our children carry on faith does the ideal Buddhist path of the oneness of parent and child become possible.’

SGI President Ikeda's message to the Tokyo General Ward Leaders Meeting, held at the Soka Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Jan. 30.

To the general ward leaders of Tokyo — an area that is making such valiant strides forward: Thank you for all your hard work! As a token of my profound respect and appreciation, and in commemoration of this gathering of outstanding leaders, I want to share some thoughts with you today.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda once said: “The way to kosen-rufu is to take the lead in steadily carrying out what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, with tenacity and courage. I say, ‘Cowards be gone!’”

Today, Jan. 30, marks the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's death. Gandhi, who fought throughout his life to construct an ideal India, declared, “There is no place for cowardice or making excuses.” He also said, “I am not a man who would, after having formed any intention, leave it easily.” And he asserted, “Someone who cannot boldly announce a determination and resolutely carry it out following the dictates of his or her conscience cannot be called a person of courage.”

I hope you will all be courageous people of action, who leave a brilliant mark on history.

The essence of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is to chant both for oneself and others.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, “Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, the daimoku that Nichiren chants is different from that of previous ages — it is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that encompasses practice both for oneself and for others” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1022).

Some great Mahayana Buddhist teachers of the Former and Middle days of the Law — such as Nagarjuna and the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai — also chanted the daimoku of the Mystic Law. But they practiced only to receive the benefit of the Law themselves, and as such their daimoku was limited to practice for oneself. Since they did not share this teaching with others, it was not daimoku encompassing practice for others.

In contrast, the essence of the Daishonin's Buddhism is to chant daimoku both for oneself and others, and to lead all humanity to peace and happiness in the Latter Day of the Law and for all eternity. This means chanting to help people become happy and advancing with faith that is directed toward realizing kosen-rufu in society.

The daimoku chanted by those who exert themselves bravely and vigorously for this cause — even if just one daimoku — has more benefit and power than 1,000 or 10,000 daimoku chanted without any goal or accompanying action. Having faith that is dedicated to kosen-rufu is what counts.

The Daishonin declares, “My wish is that all my disciples make a great vow” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1003). Elsewhere he explains, “The ‘great vow’ refers to the propagation of the Lotus

Sutra” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 736). The Soka Gakkai, which is advancing in exact accord with the Buddha's will and decree, is the only organization in the world that is working tenaciously, while overcoming countless obstacles, to achieve the great vow of kosen-rufu as the Daishonin had hoped.

To overcome any obstacle with joy and delight — this is faith.

Half a century ago, on Jan. 29, 1952, I attended an urgent Kamata Chapter group leaders meeting in Tokyo. It was an extremely cold night, and the meeting was held at a local assembly hall. I was a 24-year-old chapter staff at the time.

I called to the 130-or-so noble members present: “February is the month of the Daishonin's birth. And Feb. 11 is President Toda's birthday. It goes without saying that we were able to encounter this faith because of the Daishonin's appearance in the world, and also thanks to the fact that President Toda stood up, all alone, for kosen-rufu. Through President Toda's guidance, we have received benefit and become happy. How will we repay this immense debt? The answer is, by introducing others to this Buddhism and expanding the flow of kosen-rufu. Let us cel-

ebate the month of President Toda's birth by realizing a splendid victory!”

The members' hearts blazed with a shared determination to do just that. Some participants set off directly from the meeting place to visit friends and talk to them about Buddhism. This is how the February Campaign, which has since become a Soka Gakkai tradition, started.

I fought with all my heart as a youth and as President Toda's disciple. The youth division, the women's and men's division — everyone united and exerted themselves tirelessly. Members gathered each day in high spirits at the Shiraki residence, the central base for our Kamata Chapter activities. Back in those days, there were still few people who had telephones.

Shizuko Shiraki, the Kamata Chapter women's leader, not only traveled all around Tokyo but to the chapter's regional bases as well, including snowy Akita and areas such as Nagoya, Hamamatsu, Omiya, Funabashi and Yamanashi. [In the Soka Gakkai's early days, new members automatically joined the same chapter as the person who introduced them to the practice, irrespective of where they lived in Japan. This system was known as the vertical-line organization. Later, a localized organizational system was introduced, enabling members to practice in organizational units in the localities where they lived.]

Everyone happily set himself or herself to the challenge of propagating the Daishonin's Buddhism. Even when they met with a hostile or unwelcome reception, they cheerfully reminded one another, “This is just as the Daishonin teaches.”

To dauntlessly overcome any obstacle with joy and a sense of delight, and resolutely advance toward victory — this is the world of faith.

Through this momentous, joyful struggle, we succeeded in increasing Kamata Chapter's membership by 201 households in the course of a single month — a feat that no other chapter had realized. Until then, a propagation level of around 100 households per month had seemed like the maximum that could be achieved.

The full-fledged advance toward the realization of a membership of 750,000 households — the goal that President Toda, at his inauguration on May 3, 1951, had pledged to accomplish in his lifetime — began with this February Campaign.



‘The most sublime, eternal human drama is found in the dynamic transmission of correct faith, philosophy and belief from parent to child, from senior to junior, from mentor to disciple.’

Photo by JEAN PRITCHARD

From that point forward, I always succeeded in achieving the No. 1 results in Japan—in the young men's division 1st Corps, in Tokyo's Bunkyo Ward, in Sapporo for the summer regional propagation campaign, in Kansai, in Yamaguchi Prefecture and in Tokyo's Arakawa and Katsushika wards.

Faith means striving to realize kosen-rufu. If we forget this struggle, our faith is no longer genuine.

Nothing can stop us when we base ourselves on the just cause of the SGI.

Incidentally, the other day my eldest son, Hiromasa, commented on the episode in *The Human Revolution* in which President Toda entrusts me with the goal of realizing a membership of 10 million people.

This episode, recounted in the "Successors" chapter of volume 12, took place on Feb. 10, 1958. President Toda had just overcome a serious bout with illness, but he was still physically very weak. The next day, Feb. 11, he would celebrate his 58th birthday—which would prove to be his last.

I had just returned to Tokyo by overnight train following a three-day guidance tour of Kansai. Directly upon arriving in Tokyo that morning, I hurried to my mentor's home. President Toda was overjoyed when he heard my report on the Kansai members' spirited advance. He told me: "The Kansai organization is firmly established. I think we can say that the foun-

ation for the entire kosen-rufu movement in Japan has now been securely laid."

He asked, "Daisaku, do you think you can accomplish a membership of 3 million households in the next seven years?" Then he mused: "I wonder how far our membership will develop through your efforts? What a magnificent age it will be when we have 10 million people practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism! I cannot wait. I really cannot wait for that day." Achieving a membership of 10 million people was a goal that President Toda bequeathed to me.

Shortly after the great victory of 1956 in Osaka, in which we accomplished what everyone said was impossible [having a Soka Gakkai-sponsored candidate elected for the first time to the Upper House], President Toda and I discussed the 21st century. As though prophesying the future, my mentor said, "Daisaku, in your later years, the Soka Gakkai will no doubt become a vital nucleus of peace and culture for humankind."

He also said: "The Soka Gakkai will undoubtedly become the king of the religious world. As such, it will send people of outstanding ability into all spheres of society, into the political, economic, educational and cultural realms. This is our mission. The great human revolution of each one of these people will contribute immensely to human society in the new century."

That was President Toda's vision for the Soka Gakkai in the 21st century. The Soka Century, exactly what he envisioned, has now begun.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo of China says, "One's body and mind at a single moment pervade the entire realm of phenomena" (WND, 366). In accord with the principle of 3,000 realms in a single life-moment, a strong determination for kosen-rufu exerts an impact on society, the environment and even the universe. Nothing can match the power of our faith and practice when we base ourselves on the just cause championed by the Soka Gakkai.

This February is the first February of the 21st century. It also marks the 101st anniversary of President Toda's birth. As the world's leading proponents of culture and peace, let us energetically strive to achieve another history-making February Campaign toward the expansion of kosen-rufu, President Toda's dream.

Good-hearted individuals deserve the world's greatest respect.

On the night of Jan. 26, a man fell from the platform at Shin-Okubo Railway Station in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward. Two people—a Japanese photographer named Shiro Sekine, 47, and a South Korean student named Lee Su Hyon, 26—jumped onto the tracks in a heroic rescue attempt, but were tragically killed, along with the man who fell, by an oncoming train.

Mr. Lee had come to Japan as a student of the prestigious Korea University, with the dream of becoming a bridge between South Korea and Japan. He was a fine youth who worked part time to support himself while attending a Japanese language school in Tokyo.

He and the photographer, Mr. Sekine, were good-hearted, generous individuals, who could not simply ignore others when they were in trouble. Everyone mourned their noble deaths. I also offered prayers for their repose.

Two years ago in July, an All Nippon Airlines jumbo jet traveling from Tokyo to Sapporo, Hokkaido, was seized by a knife-wielding hijacker, who had forced his way into the cockpit. Concerned first and foremost for the safety of his passengers, Capt. Naoyuki Nagashima, 51, remained calm and collected, speaking quietly to the man throughout.

With great courage, he stood up to the hijacker, who attempted to seize the controls and fly the plane himself. In the process, Capt. Nagashima was mortally wounded, giving his life in the performance of his duties. But through his selfless actions, none of the 503 passengers, who included four infants, were hurt.

It is such individuals, I am sure you all agree, who are deserving of the country's highest commendation.

It is important to help our children inherit faith.

The most sublime, eternal human drama is found in the dynamic transmission of correct faith, philosophy and belief from parent to child, from senior to junior, from mentor to disciple.

The Daishonin cites apparently conflicting sutra passages concerning children. One passage says that children are enemies, who cause their parents suffering and rob them of their very lives, while another says that children are treasures, who lead their parents to enlightenment (WND, 1043-44, 1091).

How important it is to help our children inherit faith! When children embrace faith, we can be assured of having prayers offered for us after we die. Moreover, when parents and children practice correct faith together, they can be born together in lifetime after lifetime, enjoying an unsurpassed state of being. This is what the Daishonin teaches. [In a letter addressed to Nanjo Tokimitsu, the Daishonin writes: "I hear that your father's strong faith in the Lotus

Sutra allowed him, a warrior, to face the final moment of his life with an unwavering certainty of attaining Buddhahood. How the spirit of your late father must be rejoicing from beyond, as you, his son, carry on his legacy through your own faith in the correct teaching. How happy he would surely be to behold your faith if he were alive. All those who embrace this sutra, even though they may be strangers to one another, will be able to meet again at Eagle Peak. In view of this, it is certain that you and your late father, since you both embrace faith in the Lotus Sutra, will be reborn in the same place" (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1508-09).]

Only when our children carry on faith does the ideal Buddhist path of the oneness of parent and child become possible. For it is this that ensures the eternal perpetuation of the Law.

Raising our children to be active in the organization guarantees kosen-rufu's expansion.

Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States, shared a close friendship with John H. Addams, an Illinois senator. Addams was known for his uprightness and impartiality. The corrupt and underhanded feared him and would reportedly try to avoid all contact.

Addams taught and transmitted the essence of his passion for American democracy to his daughter. He even brought his daughter with him to see President Lincoln, whom he deeply admired.

On one occasion, he attended a local gathering of old settlers of a certain regional area with his daughter. During the event, Addams stood up and reminisced about his efforts to drum up support for the construction of a railroad.

As a young man, he had worked hard to convince farmers to support the project financially, but for the most part his words fell on deaf ears. At length, he became discouraged and began to lose hope. His sense of despair was immediately dispelled, though, by the enthusiasm of a woman in a farming community who brightly and vigorously voiced her support. "It's an important project, and I support it!"—this, no doubt, was her conviction. The woman's wholehearted endorsement breathed new life into the railway project, which had become deadlocked.

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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.



SGI President Ikeda speaks at the graduation for Soka University and Soka Women's College, 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 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!

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 Lluberes of the Dominican Republic; and representatives of Soka Univer-

sity 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 Tsunetsaburo 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 non-violence. 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 per-

secution. 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
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! **WT**



Lawrence Carter Sr., dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel of Morehouse College, introduces a portrait of the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents along with SGI President Ikeda and his wife, September 2000. The portrait was unveiled earlier this month in the King International Chapel.

FROM MESSAGE, 5

Later on, no matter how high the position he attained, Addams, a true champion of democracy, never forgot his debt to this ordinary, unknown woman. Having become a leader and highly respected member of society, Addams told the audience about his unwavering sense of gratitude to the woman who had supported him so long before.

Then, something unexpected happened. From within the audience, an old woman called out in a piping voice, "I'm here today, Mr. Addams, and I'd do it again if you asked me." The woman was still alive and well. And she was there at the gathering.

Addams immediately beckoned her to the stage. He greeted the woman, who was now frail and bent with age, with the greatest deference. And he dramatically and proudly introduced her as "one of the public-spirited pioneers to whose heroic fortitude we are indebted for the development of this country."

The entire audience was moved. Addams' daughter, who was 15, was deeply touched by the scene. It impressed upon her the conviction that the people themselves are the true heroes and the driving force that moves a country.

This is also the SGI's spirit.

Addams had instilled in his daughter a noble spirit of respect for the people, a sense of pride in living together with the people and the courage to fight on the people's behalf. Addams' daughter was the famous Jane Addams, who would later champion the cause of society's most destitute, bringing about a renaissance in education and welfare, working untiringly for the happiness of women and world peace. [In 1931, Jane Addams became the first American woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.]

My mentor, President Toda used to say, particularly to women: "Please raise your children to be fine people, and send them out into society to contribute to kosen-rufu. It is important that parent and child advance together with the Soka Gakkai, which is carrying out the Buddha's will and decree."

If our children part ways with the SGI, they themselves will shut off the flow of good fortune that we have striven so hard to accumulate in our family. Raising our children to become active in our organization leads to the great advance of the SGI and the steady, ongoing expansion of our kosen-rufu

movement into the future.

This is a very important point for the SGI's continued development in the 21st century. I want to reconfirm this point today, for the sake of the future.

No one can stop the SGI members' cry of the spirit.

In the letter "On Persecutions Befalling the Sage," the Daishonin writes: "Each of you should summon up the courage of a lion king and never succumb to threats from anyone. The lion king fears no other beast, nor do its cubs. Slanders are like barking foxes, but Nichiren's followers are like roaring lions" (WND, 997).

Commenting on this passage, President Toda said: "The Soka Gakkai's propagation is the roar of the lion king. It is only natural that the villainous should be startled and tremble in fear. Without this confidence, one absolutely cannot be called a disciple of the Daishonin. How solemn and magnificent is this confidence!"

President Toda also declared: "No matter how people might hate us or scheme to bring us down, no matter who might make a commotion, you must have no fear! They are like dogs or foxes. We are lion kings!"

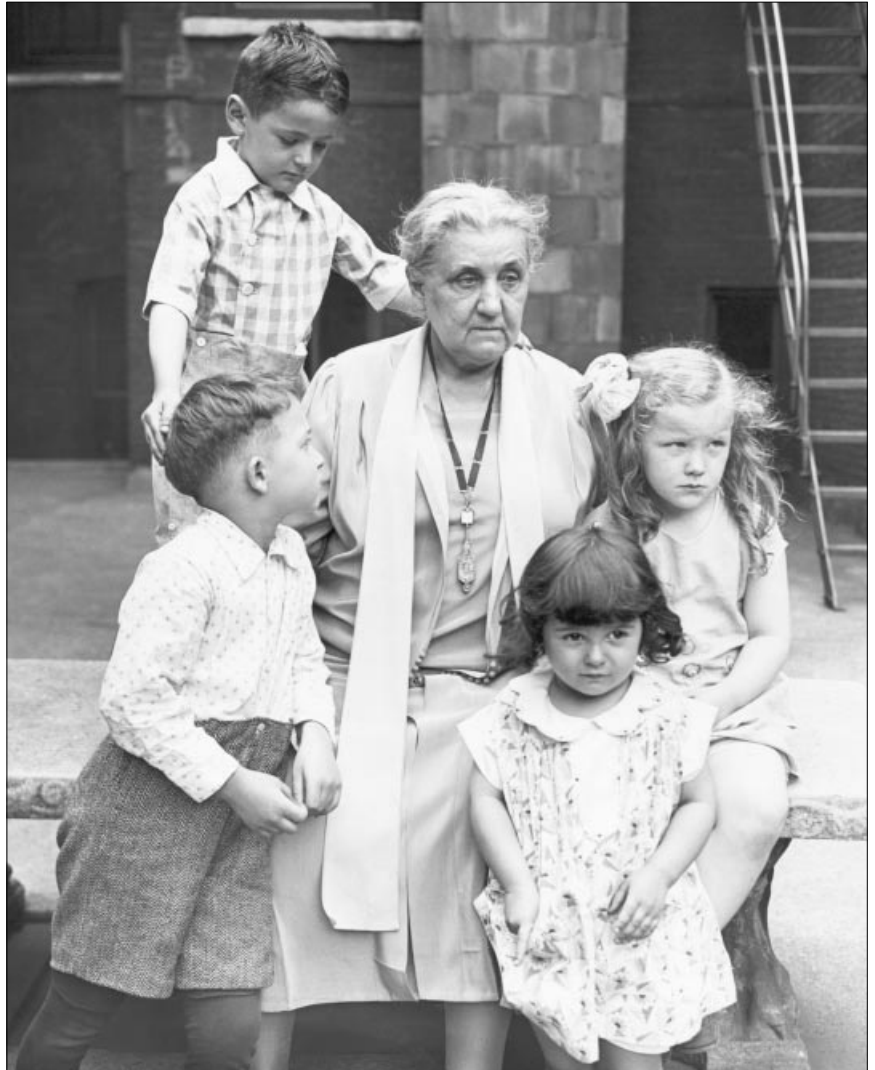
The indomitable courage of the lion king is the Soka Gakkai's eternal spirit. "Advance with courage!"—this is President Toda's legacy.

To close, I want to share some words of wisdom from some great intellects:

- The German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte says, "Let all else abandon me, so long as I don't lose my courage."
- Thomas Jefferson, the father of democracy and 3rd president of the United States, addressing the need to keep a careful watch over the powerful, warns, "Let the eye of vigilance never be closed."
- The British author Charlotte Brontë proclaims, "Neither king nor emperor has authority to silence the inner voice that at times every man hears speaking in his heart."

No one can stop the cry of the spirit. It is by speaking the truth, by speaking out for justice, that we open the curtain on a bright age in which the people are victorious. Japan and the entire world are watching your efforts toward total victory here in Tokyo, the main force of kosen-rufu.

Please convey my warmest regards to all the members in your respective areas. Please stay in good health! **WT**



Jane Addams, champion of society's most destitute, spends time with a group of children.

JOIN THE CLASS OF 2002 AT SUA, CALABASAS

Now in its seventh year, Soka University of America's graduate school in Calabasas, Calif., is accepting applications for its master's degree program in second and foreign language education for the 2001-02 academic year.

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gree with a minimum grade-point average (GPA) of 2.7 or B- on a four-point scale. Applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a minimum score of 600 (on a paper-based test) or 250 (on a computer-based test) and a Test of Written English

(TWE) with a minimum score of 5.0.

Applications for the 2001-02 academic year are due by April 30. For more information, contact the Graduate Admissions Office at 26800 West Mulholland Highway, Calabasas, CA 9102. Telephone (818) 878-8717, e-mail: grad_admissions@soka.edu.

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'SECURING THE FOUNDATION'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 1, PARTS 39-40

'The noblest life is that lived challenging injustice without giving in to obstacles,' Shin'ichi Yamamoto says. 'The boundless life-force and sense of mission this brings forth will enable us to soar into the vast skies of genuine happiness.'

Many members thought of benefit only in the conspicuous sense, and so what Shin'ichi Yamamoto was saying at the inaugural meeting for Amami Oshima General Chapter surprised some. His purpose, however, was to confirm for them the correct attitude in faith.

He continued: "Inconspicuous benefit can be described as how, through practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism, we manifest infinite life-force and wisdom, forge our character, accomplish human revolution and build indestructible happiness.

"I therefore hope that all of you will live out your lives with the Soka Gakkai, always striving to spread Nichiren Daishonin's teachings and to polish and develop yourselves, just as

a tree patiently and persistently sends its roots deep into the earth and grows tall and strong. Then, 10, 20 or 30 years down the line, you will find that you have attained a state of happiness you never dreamed of."

"Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda," Shin'ichi said, "established three guidelines or objectives for our faith: 1) faith for a harmonious family, 2) faith to enable each person to become happy, and 3) faith to surmount obstacles. The family is a microcosm of kosen-rufu. To become a family in which all get along joyfully, a family that people look to in admiration, is to prove the power of your Buddhist practice.

"The purpose of faith is for each of us to be able to say with confidence, 'I am truly happy!' Ultimately, our activi-

ties for kosen-rufu and our Buddhist practice are for our own happiness.

"The only way to achieve such happiness is by overcoming obstacles. They will arise without fail to impede the spread of this true teaching. When we struggle against wrong, we will face challenges as a matter of course. However, just as a kite needs the resistance of wind to rise into the air, we need struggle and opposition to bring our lives to shine with increasing brilliance. The noblest life is that lived challenging injustice without giving in to obstacles. The boundless life-force and sense of mission this brings forth will enable us to soar into the vast skies of genuine happiness.

"Other people can't make us happy. Neither can science or government. We can only attain real happiness through strong determination and a lofty devotion to faith, by which we elevate and open our lives. I conclude today's speech with my hopes that all of you, as champions of faith standing in the vanguard of the times, will pave the way to a life of supreme happiness."

The earth and heavens seemed to shake with thunderous applause.



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

The meeting to establish Amami Oshima General Chapter ended with a resounding chorus of "Song of Kosen-rufu in Asia."

A meeting of this scale on Amami Oshima was big news, even to the public. All the local papers reported it. The next day, on June 23, *The South Sea Daily News* ran a detailed story with a photograph. A column in the *Oshima News* read: "Members numbering more than 7,000, from every village and town on Amami Oshima as well as from the islands of Kikaijima and Tokunoshima, attended the Soka Gakkai Amami Oshima General Chapter Meeting. They seemed to fill Shiohama Beach, fully 'reclaiming' that reclaimed stretch of land, and the one road leading to Shiohama, which runs along the foot of Mount Benten, was packed with people and their vehicles. A group of young men wearing Soka Gakkai armbands deftly guided traffic, leaving the local police with nothing to do but stand around at the main intersection and watch all the activity."

Despite the article's sarcastic undertones, it was true that the people living in the neighborhood were surprised at just how well organized the event had been.

After the meeting, guidance sessions for the leaders of each of the four organizational divisions were to be held. Shin'ichi would join the meeting for men's leaders. In the time between the two meetings, Shin'ichi and his party took the

opportunity to see Naze City with the newly appointed Amami Oshima General Chapter leader Takashi Nogawa and other leaders. On the way, they stopped and took a stroll at Akasaki Point. To the right they could see the houses of Naze beyond the harbor, and to the left was the clear blue East China Sea. A pleasant breeze came off the ocean.

As they looked out at the water, Shin'ichi asked Nogawa, "What is the biggest problem facing the people of the Amami Islands?"

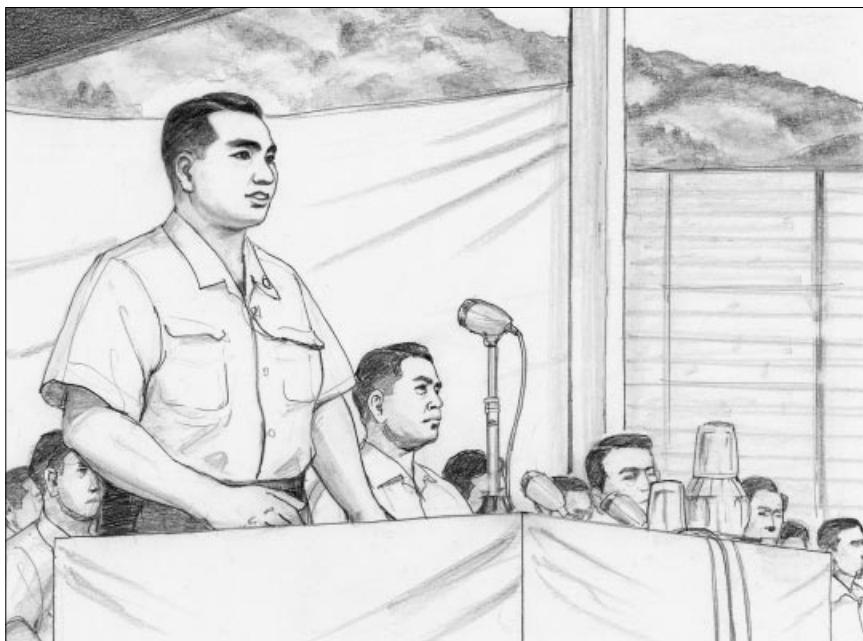
"*Habu* snakes," he replied. "Last year alone as many as 220 people were bitten, and this year it's already been about 50. *Habu* bites must be cut open and drained of the poison and the victim must receive medical treatment immediately. But some areas on the islands have no doctors, in which case these bites can be fatal."

"This is a life-threatening problem," Shin'ichi said, "and the national government should find a good way to deal with it. Why aren't any of your representatives in parliament addressing this?"

"Because the population of our islands is small and our few votes mean little to them," Nogawa replied.

"*Habu* bites, then, are a disaster caused by human negligence," said Shin'ichi.

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1963.



SPEECHES GIVEN AT THE CEC TELECONFERENCE

Every Effort We Make In Faith Brings More Good Fortune

By **DANNY NAGASHIMA**
SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR

We had a wonderful Central Executive Conference with much dialogue on the development of our organization. In one message SGI President Ikeda sent to the CEC, he said: "Please exert all your strength and resources, and make this conference a new departure. It is very important. Now is the chance for America to grow in leaps and bounds."

Yesterday at Morehouse College in Atlanta, the Gandhi, King, Ikeda exhibition, titled "Building a Legacy of Peace," was opened. Martin Luther King III, the mayor and many students came and viewed the exhibit. Your zone leaders will be bringing back and sharing large photographic renditions of the exhibition and an accompanying video.

Today, I want to share some experiences I had while I was in Japan recently. When I visited Soka University, the beautiful buildings on campus reminded me of President Ikeda's tremendous spirit and appreciation to reply to Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, and also his far-reaching vision toward the 22nd century and even the 23rd century. I also thought about the struggles of many pioneers, whose united efforts helped create the university.

The American delegation I was with had a wonderful encounter with Soka High School students at their graduation ceremony on March 16. At the ceremony, as President Ikeda entered the auditorium, he asked the students to throw their graduation caps into the air, which they did jubilantly, and invited them on stage, tapping them on their shoulders, one by one. He told them not to forget their appreciation for their parents, brothers, sisters, friends and teachers. He truly encouraged them.

During the ceremony, I thought about the 120 freshmen who will soon enter Soka University of America. Aliso Viejo, and I deeply felt how America

has a special mission. America is unique in the whole of human history, bringing together every conceivable mixture of ethnicity, lifestyle, political affiliation and economic and social backgrounds. So each of us has an unbelievably important mission to establish peace and happiness in this country.

President Ikeda stated at the graduation that over the last 50 years, he had been sharing nothing but the greatness of his mentors, presidents Makiguchi and Toda. The most important thing is the way of the disciple, he said, for the disciple chooses the mentor. And the greatness of the mentor is determined by what the disciple accomplishes. Because the mentor selflessly leads us to live nobly, we are able to develop unlimited potential and experience what it means to be a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

President Ikeda shared how 36 years ago, he and Mrs. Ikeda visited the site where Soka High School now stands. They relaxed near a creek, ate rice balls and talked about creating a high school there. Through such touching stories, he shared the origins of Soka education.

Now, looking to the far-off

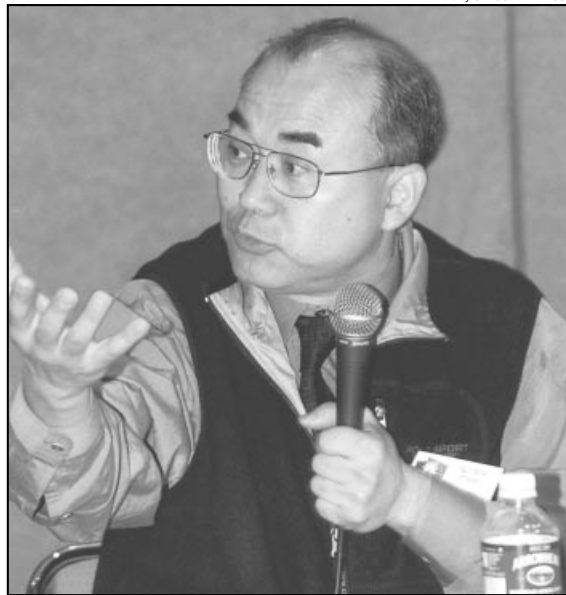


Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima addresses the Central Executive Committee at the SGI Plaza, March 30.

future of the SGI-USA organization, I want to encourage everyone to get involved in the upcoming May Commemorative Contribution activity in this historic year and make a great cause for the future. I wholeheartedly thank you in

advance for your participation.

Please remember that every effort we make in turn creates our own good fortune. Chanting daimoku is the important starting point for all our activities to be conducted in a warm, united family atmosphere.

As we continue advancing in our Soka Spirit movement and propagation efforts, the growth of SGI-USA will naturally lead to the expansion of our districts, giving more people opportunities to develop their faith. Let's also create unforgettable family youth culture festivals this summer.

While you are engaged in all these activities for kosen-rufu, please do not sacrifice any aspect of your daily life or individual happiness. Please make sure that you are taking care of your families. I want you to sleep well and have no accidents.

When you are happy, when you are feeling joy and fulfilling your determinations, you can encourage other people. That is how we can raise the next generation—based on our own growth and serving as great examples to others. Let's continue to focus on what I call our three Soka's: Soka Care, Soka Spirit and Soka University, and visit as many of the members as possible, sharing our joy and struggles with them.

All of our activities this year—our focus on the May Commemorative Contribution, propagation, publications promotion, district expansion and family youth culture festivals—are for accomplishing kosen-rufu. They are for nurturing all different types of capable individuals necessary for kosen-rufu.

I thank everyone for all your efforts. Let's win in every endeavor, and welcome President and Mrs. Ikeda back to the United States. Thank you very much! **WT**

EXPANDING THE DISTRICTS

By **JAMES HERRMANN**
SGI-USA YOUTH LEADER

First of all, thank you to all of the men and women's division members for supporting the youth this year during our March district introductory meetings. I have heard so many unforgettable stories describing your selfless efforts. Because of you, our nationwide results have been staggering!

I want to touch briefly on the subject of district expansion. Some of you may be wondering why we need to expand the number of our districts. The fact is, some of our districts are so large, it has become increas-



Photo by JEAN FRITCHARD

ingly difficult to offer quality care to each individual.

As you know, caring for a single individual is the credo of

our organization. Our organization exists for the sake of the members. Therefore, it's very important for us to look at the size of our districts and assess just how effective they are in offering each member the quality care he or she deserve.

When I worked as a nurse, I learned that the quality of care I gave my patients made a significant impact on their recovery. They each wanted to be treated as if they were the most important patient in the hospital. I noticed that the more patients I tried to take care of at one time, the less I was able to give them quality care. When I devoted my attention to one patient at a time,

that person felt important and empowered, and he or she was better able to fight the illness. And they deserved to feel that way, to have that support.

In the same way, each of our members deserves individual support. In a district, the only thing that matters is the care we are able to provide each member.

As leaders, let's assess the condition and size of each district and it's ability to provide quality care. In cases where the district is too large, let's develop a plan together with the district leaders toward expanding into two or three dis-

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SPEECHES GIVEN AT THE CEC TELECONFERENCE

Creating an Atmosphere of Daimoku This Year

By **MATILDA BUCK**
SGI-USA WOMEN'S LEADER

SGI President Ikeda's message to the Central Executive Committee is invaluable for me because he is so clear on what we should focus on in America. I have found that when I take his words to heart and take action—even a small action in that direction—I can make profound breakthroughs. "The fresh spirit of youth, capable people creates a new era," he writes. "For this reason, I ask that you, as leaders, exert your entire strength into developing the youth to be our successors" (see page 1).

The young, capable people who represent your zones shared so much with us this weekend. They are as diverse as the areas they represent—full of intelligence and heart. I was so moved by their character and commitment as they



Photo by JEAN PRITCHARD

spoke about the upcoming zone festivals that will be spearheaded by the youth.

What is the best way for the men's and women's division members to support these precious successors? Let's begin with a strong prayer every day that each of them will grow and have a great personal victory in faith. Then, as we work together,

let's put the spotlight on them. Let's make an environment where they can shine, where we work behind-the-scenes to secure the vision they have. Let's listen to them, not instruct them toward perfection.

Let's find ways to make their ideas work. We should be available to them spiritually and physically during activities. The respect and love we show to our young people today will determine the future of the SGI-USA.

I would like to share some recent and timely guidance from SGI General Director Eichi Wada. He said that if we cut ourselves, it leaves a scar. We can see it. But words are sharp, too. They can cut like a knife. Careless words can cut another's heart. We can't see the scar, but it remains. He said our words are important because they can give hope and conviction or they can hurt and scar.

Let's become masters of words that encourage our youth.

This year, let's create a very tangible atmosphere of daimoku in the SGI-USA—the feeling that behind everything we do, there is a lot of strong prayer. This is the way to welcome President and Mrs. Ikeda back to America, I believe. The point is not to draw President Ikeda's attention to us, after all, but to create this incredible atmosphere through daimoku in which we can work together with him, shoulder to shoulder. Rather than just waiting for him to encourage America, let's create the environment in which he can lead the worldwide kosen-rufu movement from America.

I know we can do it. We can do it with joy, with style and with great appreciation. After all, as President Ikeda said in his message, we are his "beloved America." **WT**

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districts. Giving birth to many new districts this year—in this new millennium—will bring freshness to our organization and dramatically increase the quality of care we provide for each member.

Now, shifting gears, I want to talk about this year's Zone Family Festivals. In January 2000, while I was in Japan, I reported to SGI President Ikeda about the great success of our 1st SGI-USA Youth Culture Festival in 1999. I told him about the many youth involved in the festival, who, struggling with very serious problems in their lives, had achieved a victory as a result of participating in the festival. I told him that as a result of this transformation, the youth of SGI-USA were now ready to initiate a new wave of propagation across the country. His response was simple and direct: "Wow! That is so great! I'm very happy to hear this. This is the greatest gift you could ever bring to me."

It is amazing what kind of impact one festival can have on the life of a single young person



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

SGI-USA Young Men's Leader Steve Mortan (right) leads a discussion with young men's zone leaders.

and on a generation of youth. Well, this year we're going to have 24 culture festivals across the nation gathering more than 100,000 people. It is truly an unprecedented opportunity.

Just consider a couple of the venues we are considering for this year's festivals: Madison

Square Garden and the Los Angeles Coliseum—imagine the possibilities! We're not filling seats to sell a product. We're not selling tickets to a sporting event. We are initiating the Century of Peace in American society. Personally, I can't wait.

With my deepest respect

and appreciation, I want to reconfirm that the key to this year's festivals is a united, four-divisional effort.

Together, let's usher in a new age by empowering a new generation of youth to take full responsibility for American kosen-rufu. **WT**

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SGI-USA MARCH YOUTH-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES

Invigorating Dialogue Spreads Across the Country

By JAMIE LIPTAN
STAFF WRITER

Throughout the month of March, SGI-USA youth-sponsored introductory discussion meetings at more than 2,000 locations across the country. Tens of thousands of members and their families and friends participated in the gatherings, which were held in commemoration of March 16, Kosen-rufu Day.

At the University of Rochester in upstate New York, the youth of Rochester and Genesee Valley districts sponsored two meetings with a Victory Over Violence theme in the university's Interfaith Chapel. Through their efforts to promote the meetings around the campus and invite their friends, they welcomed 28

guests to their meetings.

"Two years ago, the youth leaders of these districts expressed their desire to share Buddhism here at the university," said Jason Berg, New Jersey Region young men's leader. "Their tenacious efforts led them to this point, and they created an opportunity for the members to joyfully share Buddhism with their friends and families."

In San Francisco, the youth of Lower Haight District created a skit based on the movie *Star Wars*, complete with costumes from the film. "It was great to see the teenage members so excited to be involved in their district," said Jomo Thorne, Northern California Zone young men's leader. "Their enthusiasm created such a joyful atmosphere. I felt spir-

itually invigorated."

"I heard so many amazing stories of youth who made an all-out effort to reach everyone, especially inactive mem-

bers," said SGI-USA Young Women's Leader Wendy DeSouza. "Through these activities, youth are really committed to advancing at the

grassroots level by engaging one person at a time in dialogue. We're truly learning how to care for each person and not give up on anyone." **WT**

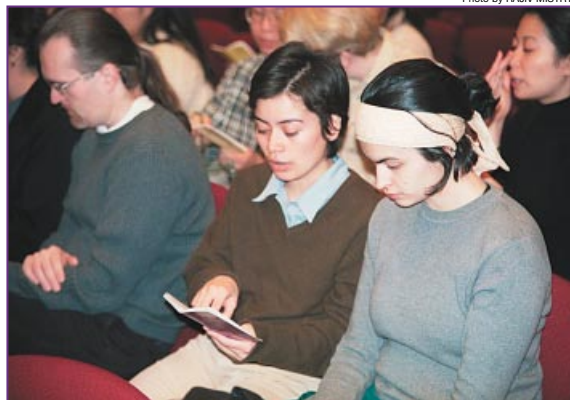


Photo by RAJIV MISTRY

Chicago student division members sponsor a dialogue meeting with a group of international studies students from the University of Chicago at the Chicago Culture Center, Feb. 28.



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUI

Young women enjoy a Kosen-rufu Day celebration in Santa Monica, Calif.



Orlando youth gather at the Orlando Community Center, March 16.



Photo by DIXON HAMBY

Pacific Northwest youth celebrate Kosen-rufu Day at the Seattle Culture Center, March 16.