

## EDITORIAL: A Bold Degree of Trust

Are we unique in that we live in a nation, in a time, when our youth are at crisis? The tides of history have swept away countless societies and civilizations whose eventual collapse was presaged by a decline in the hopeful prospects or character of their youth.

When youth are at risk, the future is at risk. When young people are growing — becoming rich in intellect, character, wisdom and courage — a rewarding and prosperous future awaits. In that sense, the future is here now, living in our youth.

The purpose of our movement is to lead the way to a future of peace and prosperity, an era of genuine humanity — and this is perhaps why we hear repeatedly that it is important to place highest priority on the growth of young people.

One of the six challenges that General Director Zaitso posed to SGI-USA members at the end of last year is to “raise young people by boldly entrusting them with responsibility.”

Certainly, this is a call to action. Nothing could be more irritating or seem more patronizing to young people than to bandy such a phrase about without acting upon it.

But how can we — regardless of our age or organizational division — respond to this challenge?

*To raise* means to elevate. It is the tendency of the older generation to look down on or exclude those younger or less experienced. It was to overturn this tendency that President Toda founded the youth division of the Soka Gakkai. He felt that youth should be regarded eye to eye — that they should be included in all discussions about achieving kosen-rufu, as equally invested, responsible partners to the task.

Adlai Stevenson (1900–65) once said, “Nothing so dates a man as to decry the younger generation.” If so, then nothing instills greater youthfulness than to praise, trust and support the next generation.

In *The New Human Revolution*, SGI President Ikeda expresses his conviction on this point through the novel’s protagonist, Shin’ichi Yamamoto:

He [Shin’ichi] recognized his responsibility to be the pillar that supported the Soka Gakkai after President Toda’s death; not only to support and protect his fellow members across Japan but to educate and nurture young people so that they would become even more effective leaders of kosen-rufu — more effective than himself. Precisely because he felt that responsibility so keenly, he was deeply concerned.

Nothing was more difficult than to keep young people continuously inspired. Shin’ichi knew that the only way to accomplish this was never to lose sight of his own source of inspiration and model — his mentor, Josei Toda. No great river can survive and flourish when cut off from its source.

*Boldly* implies courage, courage that exists only in action. It means a readiness to pull out all the stops and to act against the grain. It is impossible, then, to boldly ask anything of anyone unless we are ready and willing to do it ourselves. To boldly entrust we must first of all boldly challenge ourselves. Young people have no wish to be directed by those who are inert or remiss, or who have ceased growing themselves — those who “talk the talk without walking the walk.”

*Entrust* means to trust. In Buddhism, capability is not measured by age, nor is it defined by tenure or position. Shakyamuni was only 19 when he embarked on the path of enlightenment. Nichiren Daishonin was even younger. Both revealed the substance of their teachings while still in their early 30s. In our movement, President Ikeda assumed full and complete responsibility for every aspect of the Soka Gakkai and kosen-rufu while still a

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young man of 32. Had President Toda not trusted him with all his life, most of us perhaps would never have heard of nor had opportunity to benefit from this practice.

*Trust* and *courage* mean allowing youth to try, and even to fail — but never to lose.

*Responsibility* implies the ability to respond. What does it mean to be a responsible Buddhist? — surely it is not simply a matter of being accountable to a higher authority. All of Buddhism essentially boils down to our ability to respond to the people, to the sincerity, the suffering and the seeking spirit of ordinary people. One who can do so is exemplifying the essence of Buddhism.

To entrust someone with responsibility, then, does not mean simply assigning a task and walking away. It means creating opportunities that will speak to young people's innate desire to take initiative, to their willingness to work for people's happiness and to contribute substantially to the development of kosen-rufu and society, while we are doing the same.

To rise to the challenge of raising the next generation requires courage, the ability to trust and be trusted, and a responsiveness to the sincerity of youth. We may feel lacking in these qualities. But if so, why not pray tenaciously and consistently to bring them forth, tapping the inexhaustible power of the Mystic Law within us? Only then we will have something we can truly entrust to the next generation.

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