

PERSPECTIVE: What Group Do You Belong To?

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After driving my wife to the airport to attend a district leaders conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, SGI President Ikeda really surprised me, or rather the impact of his efforts did.

At the airport, she joined with 32 other SGI-USA members, all bound for Miami. While comparing this small number to those usually found at an international airport on an average day, it doesn't seem like much. "How can such a puny group ever change society?" I thought. (Although I must admit they were definitely in high spirits that day.)

The thought that others throughout the country were also heading toward Miami to receive something powerful to bring back home was an inspiration in itself. I felt an overwhelming pride in just being a part of the kosen-rufu process. Who could imagine that this group shoulders the responsibility of bringing hope and happiness to this country of ours?

The SGI-USA is only one of countless groups that exist within the neighborhoods of America, each with its own agenda. There are groups for women's rights and children's rights. There are political groups for change in the government. There are groups to fight against illnesses, and groups for financial profit. There are groups against other groups, and then there is a group of those who refuse to join any group at all. So I guess we all pretty much belong to some type of group.

As groups go, I don't know how they usually feel toward the future, but our group's future is such a gas. The words *soaring*, *infinite* and *Eagle Peak* (just having studied the "Clear Sake Goshu") come to mind. But the Lotus Sutra already adequately describes the future of this group.

It's been 37 years since President Ikeda, on his first trip to the United States, made his famous comment on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco that in 20, 50 or 100 years, that date, Oct. 5, 1960, would be seen as a significant milestone in the history of kosen-rufu. Thanks to President Ikeda, who carries within his heart the dream of Josei Toda to propagate Buddhism throughout the world, we have the SGI of today.

With the 20 years needed to become an adult behind us, we have already passed 35, the halfway mark between 20 and 50. I choose to interpret President Ikeda's comments to mean that eventually everyone will become aware of the kosen-rufu movement. I also feel the years 2010 and 2060 will somehow be significant, being 50 and 100 years after his 1960 statement. That leaves 14 years and also 64 years for the SGI-USA to make this a reality. Just feeling the force of the SGI alive and well as evidenced by the program in Miami gives me, to use an old phrase, "tremendous hope for the future."

In the SGI-USA of today we may not have back-to-back meetings or phone calls day and night to constantly instill us with hope. We must subjectively learn how to keep in sync with President Ikeda and the SGI peace movement. There are times we alone must face the darker parts of our karma, and then chant with renewed determination to make a difference. The rush I felt returning from the airport, the realization that we really are connected in a profound way, that each person's victory becomes an inspiration to society as a whole, will become part of my inspiration to continue this practice. Thoughts can be so powerful. Once again, thank you, President Ikeda, for never giving up on us, and for your lifetime of showing us that happiness and peace are really possible.

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