

**SIGNIFICANT DATE: Oct. 5, 1960 — SGI-USA Day
On American Soil**

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Sunrise is the gentle moment that proclaims a new world each day. “Sunrise” is also the first chapter of *The New Human Revolution*, SGI President Ikeda’s chronicle of our movement for world peace. And chapter 2 is “A New World,” which unfolds on Oct. 3, 1960, as President Ikeda [Shin’ ichi Yamamoto] and his group travels from Honolulu to San Francisco to meet with waiting pioneers of American kosen-rufu.

After the first-ever discussion meeting on American soil, Oct. 4, the story shifts to the next day — Oct. 5. As the group is returning from a trip to Muir Woods National Monument, they stop at Telegraph Hill. Here they pose in front of the statue of Christopher Columbus for a commemorative photo, and President Ikeda makes a historic statement:

Like Columbus, we have now taken our first step on American soil. But we are engaged in a far nobler undertaking — for we are striving to create here on earth a new world where indestructible happiness and eternal peace reign supreme. With the passage of time — in twenty, fifty or a hundred years from now — today will without a doubt be remembered as a day of profound significance in the history of our movement. (p. 117)

Recently I spoke with two of the participants at this historic moment, Francis Garcia of the guidance division and General Director Emeritus George M. Williams, about their impressions of what President Ikeda said that day. Mrs. Garcia, or Mrs. Gilmore as she is referred to in the story, remembers most how President Ikeda’s “voice was clear and calm as he spoke.” However, she added: “I couldn’t really imagine that what he said could ever come true. We were Japanese in America, and at that time I could barely speak English. But little by little it has come to be just as he said.”

Mr. Williams related two important points about that day 37 years ago: First, the underlying theme of the mentor–disciple relationship, which that day represents. President Ikeda had taken the first step toward fulfilling Josei Toda’s deep desire to someday spread the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin to the whole planet.

Also, Mr. Williams painted the backdrop to President Ikeda’s actions — during those momentous days in October 1960 the world was embroiled in the grips of the Cold War, with heated debates going on at the United Nations. Mr. Williams said that this is our legacy as SGI-USA members: To work for peace, for the future, in these troubled times. Mr. Williams added, “Oct. 5 is a day for the shining American pioneers of kosen-rufu — and *everyone* who has followed, regardless of position or length of practice.”

As I listened to the voices of these two great pioneers of American peace, and imagined President Ikeda’s clear, calm voice on Oct. 5, 1960, I recalled that Walt Whitman once wrote, “Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or he I shall follow.” I was overwhelmed with an incredible, previously unknown sense of humility and joy.

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