

Kosen-rufu Day — March 16, 1958
Passing the Torch
By CRAIG GREEN, Los Angeles Correspondent

It's often said that March 16, 1958, was a "dress rehearsal for kosen-rufu." Actually, these were President Toda's own words. March 16 was his idea.

Toda, whose health was then worsening day by day, proposed early in March that a ceremony symbolizing the worldwide spread of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism be held with youth representatives when the prime minister visited the head temple. The prime minister canceled at the last minute, but March 16 became a turning point in the Soka Gakkai's movement: the last chance for Toda to meet with the youth he had raised; a "passing of the torch" from Toda to the youth, in which the responsibility for kosen-rufu became theirs.

At the head of the 6,000 youth who gathered was Daisaku Ikeda, then 30 years old, in whom President Toda placed overall responsibility for the movement from then on.

A couple weeks later, on April 2, President Toda died, his mission complete. SGI President Ikeda has recently said, "I am convinced that I have lived to see this 70th year [he turned 70 on Jan. 2] because Mr. Toda shared a portion of his life force with me." Indeed, at this juncture of the 40th anniversaries of March 16 and April 2, we can clearly see how President Toda breathed his life into President Ikeda, into the Soka Gakkai youth and into the kosen-rufu movement — in a sense, into each of us.

March 16 is always about successors helping to raise the new generation — the teens and young adults — in our organization. Even though the SGI-USA considers me, gray hair and all, to be a youth, I consider the real youth of our organization to be these young persons 10 and 20 years younger than me.

Raising them to be better than me is the way to put into practice T'ien-t'ai's principle of a blue deeper than indigo itself, which President Ikeda based his 30th anniversary Kosen-rufu Day poem on. The Daishonin explains that this principle means "that something dyed repeatedly with indigo becomes even bluer than the indigo plant itself" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 209).

The SGI-USA is beginning to take steps toward supporting this new generation and passing responsibility on to them. The SGI-USA guidelines for 1998 include nurturing youth as a focus area and some concrete ideas about how to do that.

The *World Tribune* reported that a four-divisional task force will be formed, including professionals from fields dealing with youth, to consider such issues as redefining the age range of the youth division and introducing mentoring programs for the youth. These are new ideas we need and must implement.

And we need more. General Director Zaitu pointed out that "we need to move beyond the usual to new ways of thinking, fresh ideas, clear definitions and renewed determination and prayer" — this is nowhere more important than in regards to the new generation. These young people aren't just new in terms of age. They have new ways of thinking. New ways of communicating. New ways of accomplishing their goals. New standards of trust.

If we are to help them, if they are to trust us, our new ideas are a prerequisite. March 16 is not just about commemorating an event that took place 40 years ago in Japan. It's about nurturing and supporting those that will take the lead in the years to come.

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