

## **SGI President's Message An Era of Friendship**

*The following is SGI President Ikeda's message to various dignitaries upon the opening of the Los Angeles Friendship Center, Sept. 21.*

I express my sincere thanks to you for finding time amid your many important commitments to attend the opening of the SGI-USA Los Angeles Friendship Center.

I was deeply moved to learn of the important recognitions that have been bestowed upon this new center, upon our organization and upon my efforts to promote friendship, understanding and peace:

The proclamation by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors declaring today Soka Gakkai International Youth Day, presented by Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite-Burke. The proclamation by the City of Los Angeles to me, presented by Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas.

The Congressional Proclamation sponsored by Congressman Esteban E. Torres declaring today Daisaku Ikeda — International Cultural Ambassador Day, presented by Mr. Jamie Casso on Congressman Torres' behalf. And U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer's Excellence in Education Award presented on Senator Boxer's behalf by Ms. Vera deVera.

These are truly profound honors and reflect the deep sincerity of those who presented them. On behalf of all SGI members, I accept these honors with the strong determination to further contribute to this community and to the City and County of Los Angeles. I share this joy with my friends in Los Angeles and with all the SGI members in 128 countries worldwide. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Since the first time I traveled to Los Angeles, in October 1960, at age 32, I have visited your fair city on numerous occasions and feel a special bond with Los Angeles and her citizens. It is thus a great joy for me personally that this center has opened here.

I hope and expect that this will be a center for friendship. I hope that members of the local community and their various events and activities will find warm welcome at this center.

I also hope that this friendship center will be the site of open discussion on such issues as education and culture, and that such dialogue will help foster mutual understanding and respect. It is my belief that so long as we keep sight of the goal of human happiness and a sense of reverence for the dignity of human life, empathy and understanding are always possible. This has been my consistent belief over the years.

Rosa Parks wrote these words in the foreword to the Japanese edition of a book of hers: "As human beings who desire peace, we can overcome any racial or religious differences through friendship and spiritual exchange and create great value together."

It is my determination to respond to the expectations inherent in the honors that we have received today. For the sake of the young people whom we treasure, we must make the 21st century an era filled with friendship. Toward that end, I intend, together with our friends here today, to continue to create new ripples of constructive dialogue for peace so that these waves may grow and spread.

I conclude by sharing some lines from a poem I once wrote to my friends in Los Angeles. And I extend my heartfelt prayers for the continued excellent health and well-being of those in attendance today.

Title: Era of Friendship

Subject: World Tribune 10/16/98 n.3213 p.3 WT981016p03

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: Events Facilities Friendship Messages Organization President Speeches

*This rich spiritual soil,  
this great earth alive with the diversity  
of peoples and traditions —  
giving rise to a new culture,  
a new humanity.*

*Los Angeles is a city  
pregnant with future,  
a bridge linking East and West*

*Los Angeles will be  
the eastern capital  
of the Pacific region  
in the 21st century.*

**WT**

Title: Era of Friendship  
Subject: World Tribune 10/16/98 n.3213 p.3 WT981016p03  
Author: Daisaku Ikeda  
Keywords: Events Facilities Friendship Messages Organization President Speeches