

YOUTH CULTURE FESTIVAL BEGINS NEW CENTURY

Sept. 25 was the “first day of the 21st century,” as Jomo Thorne, SGI-USA junior high school division leader, put it. The 1st SGI-USA Youth Grand Culture Festival, held Sept. 25 at the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena, Calif., was the youth division members’ kickoff toward the new era.

The 700 youth performers took on all of human history. The show started with the past: humanity’s violent struggle against itself, depicted through reenactments of everything from the American Revolution to Nelson Mandela’s liberation in South Africa. There was the present: the youth of today taking a stand against the violent world they are growing up in—a world in which guns have even sneaked their way into the classroom. And there was the future: Bodhisattvas of the Earth, the next generation of youth division members, emerging from the earth and expressing through music and dance their determination to take responsibility for our future.

A video presentation on three large screens above the stage also introduced SGI President Ikeda’s worldwide travels for peace, which segued into greetings of SGI youth from around the world and across the country. The festival closed with an original song, “Rise,” penned by SGI-USA members Wayne Green and Brian Potter, which summed up the youth’s resolve: “From the Earth / to the skies / to the stars / we will rise / our time is now.”

— JEFF FARR

EXCERPT FROM SGI PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

It is my conviction that we must make the 21st century a Century of Life. Humankind must focus its attention on the ultimate frontier, that of life itself. We must learn to pull forth from the depths of our beings that awesome spiritual strength that is greater even than the power of nuclear weapons.

It is you, my friends, who have taken the lead in this endeavor as the youthful leaders of a new renaissance who embrace, explore and put into practice a philosophy rooted in life itself.

Buddhism teaches that if you wish to know the effects that will be manifest in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present. In this sense, there is no doubt that each and every one of you is a person of profound and precious mission who will grow and develop extraordinary leadership.

Please know that I respect, trust and believe in you from the bottom of my heart.

No matter what kinds of troubles may assail you, no matter how long the days of frustration, you must not fear, and you must not give up. You have embraced the great, fundamental principle that governs the workings of the universe itself. Your way forward cannot and will not be blocked.