

THE SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSOR
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Recently, I re-read a portion from the “Successors” chapter of the great epic *The Human Revolution*, volume 12. This section details the dramatic final days of President Toda’s life and also talks about the episode of March 16, the day that Toda passed on to the youth division members the responsibility of spreading true Buddhism. There were 6,000 youth present that day when Toda said: “Today, I want to bequeath this mission to you young people. I entrust the future to all of you. I’m counting on you to accomplish kosen-rufu!”

What has been achieved since that day is proof of the mentor and disciple relationship. President Ikeda and those 6,000 youth are the examples of what it means to fulfill the role of a disciple.

In the novel we are invited into some of the last conversations Toda has with Shin’ichi Yamamoto (SGI President Ikeda’s character in the novel). There are two specific instructions Toda gives him. The first: “Shin’ichi, the world is your challenge; it is your true stage.... There are many peoples, many races. Some nations are democratic and some socialist. We’ll have to start thinking about how to disseminate the Mystic Law in such places. After all, realizing peace and happiness for humanity is the fundamental aim of Buddhism.... Shin’ichi, you must live! You must live as long as you can and travel the globe!”

The second: “You must fight adamantly against any evil that takes root within the priesthood. Do you hear me, Shin’ichi? You must never retreat a single step.”

This made me think about a conversation I had earlier this year with a group of junior high/high school members who had just visited the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles — a museum/information center about the history of the Holocaust. They were excited to tell me that the museum director spoke about SGI and the significant contributions President Ikeda has made toward human rights. When I heard about this I thought how well it expressed President Ikeda’s resolve. It’s actual proof of a true disciple who fulfilled the pledge he made to his mentor on March 16, 1958.

Recently, President Ikeda proclaimed that he would build a new Soka Gakkai with the Youth Division. This March 16 the SGI-USA Youth Division has a goal to gather 10,000 Youth Division members and 5,000 guests for our introductory meetings. I ask myself, “Can I be someone whom President Ikeda will depend on to ensure kosen-rufu in the 21st century?”