

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MARCH 16 SPEECH COMPLETE REJECTION OF VIOLENCE

*At the graduation ceremony of the Soka Junior High and High Schools, SGI President Ikeda says that 'the complete rejection of violence is a fundamental principle' of Soka education.*

For me, the happiest, most meaningful days of the year are the graduation and entrance ceremonies of Soka Junior High and High Schools [SokaGakuen] and Soka University.

Though the weather report called for rain today, that gloomy prediction has been overturned. We are blessed with sunny skies. I hear that it is also bright and sunny in the Kansai region. Congratulations!

Let me make a suggestion: Let us have the names of all the teachers from both Tokyo and Kansai Soka Gakuen who are gathered for this occasion engraved on a plaque to be displayed in the new Central Tower of Soka University. I want to praise and commemorate for all time the marvelous efforts of all our teachers, who have made such an enormous contribution to the building and development of Soka Gakuen.

And, as an eternal memorial, let us also include the names of all those whose efforts have been so important from the schools' founding and the names of students who died while enrolled in our schools. I would be most happy if my proposal would be considered at one of the directors meetings in the near future.

I want to start by saying something I hope you will all bear in mind for the future. A recently published book graphically describes school violence in Japan: students insulting and attacking their teachers; teachers harming their students, both physically and psychologically; and students fighting among themselves. But schools are places of learning. They are centers of education, where character is built.

Ignoring their true purpose and turning schools into places of insult and violence is a terrible thing. Such behavior reflects the state of Animality. If places of learning in Japan and the rest of the world are reduced to arenas of violence, the future of humanity can only be one of never-ending violence.

Students are in school to learn from their teachers. I believe that students should respect their teachers. To this day, I still feel tremendous respect for my elementary school teachers.

People who can respect their teachers throughout life are truly "good students." On the other hand, those who fail to respect their teachers are nothing more than "talented animals," as Nichiren Daishonin would say.

The complete rejection of violence is a fundamental principle of Soka Gakuen. If a violent person should appear in the schools' midst, I hope you, the students, will make an effort to discuss the problem and join together to protect your schools from violence.

The same holds true for families. How sad it is for parents who have devoted their lives to raising their children only to have them turn on them violently as they grow older!

There is a story in the Buddhist scriptures about a son who killed his father — this is the story of King Ajatashatru. After encountering Buddhism, Ajatashatru felt deep remorse for his actions and reformed himself.

The way of true humanity is to love and care for your parents and to avoid worrying or troubling them. You may think your parents are always nagging you, but try to take it in

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stride, with composure and a big heart. Say to yourself, for instance: “He’s under a lot of stress and doesn’t have any other way to let off steam!” “She’s having a hard time, so I’ll let her rant and rave, if it makes her feel better!” Be kind to your parents, and make an effort to create a happy, cheerful home life.

### **When the times are fraught with difficulty, one must go where the need is greatest.**

At the beginning of the 19th century, there lived a great Swiss educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. When I was young, I wrote an article on his life and achievements. Pestalozzi addressed the graduates of the school he founded as follows: “You have received a fine education! You have become outstanding people! You are now ready to serve humanity, and you are taking the initiative in doing so.... My friends, perfect yourselves in your own chosen course of endeavor!”

In that same spirit, I offer my praise to our graduates, who have achieved such astonishing growth. My congratulations to all of the graduating classes of Tokyo and Kansai Soka Gakuen, as well as the Soka Elementary Schools! You all worked very hard. Today is a victory celebration, a gathering of young men and women who have won the crown of learning. You are all winners!

As of today, Tokyo’s High School has graduated 10,215 students, and Kansai’s High School 7,602 students. A solid flow of talented individuals has been established. Soon the 21st century, the Century of Soka, will begin.

Graduation certificate number 10,000 has been presented to Ms. Yuriko O’uchi. She commutes two hours to school every day from Funabashi in Chiba Prefecture, and she is very active in the Koto [Japanese Zither] Club. One of her younger sisters is also a student at Tokyo Soka Gakuen and another younger sister will enter the school this April. My congratulations also go to Noriko Udagawa and Yoko Oshikane, recipients of graduation certificates 9,999 and 10,001, respectively. I am aware of your activities as well.

Indeed, all of you graduating students without exception are ever present in my thoughts. Therefore, please continue, with confidence, to make excellent progress in your endeavors.

In June 1996, just a few months after this year’s graduates started junior high or high school, I visited Cuba. At the time, there was tremendous tension between Cuba and the United States, and many opposed my visit. Several of my American friends expressed their concern. But I am a lion.

It is precisely when the times are so fraught with difficulty that one must go where the need is greatest. This is my view of life. For the sake of the people, for the sake of peace and for the sake of the future of humanity, I have always acted according to my beliefs, with complete sincerity and utter lack of fear of any consequences. I want you all to be lions, too.

While in Cuba, I received an honorary doctorate from the University of Havana, a highly esteemed institution of learning with a proud 270-year history. Incidentally, in just the last three years, I have accepted, as the founder of your alma mater, 26 honorary doctorates and similar awards from universities and institutions around the world. If future conferrals of which I have been notified are included, the total number of such honors comes to 82.

Mentor and disciple are one — this means that all these honors have also been conferred

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upon you, our students. I am the means; you are the end. I am only here for your sake.

The conferment ceremony for the honorary doctorate from the University of Havana was held in a grand hall. Beautiful murals on the walls and ceiling symbolically depicted the joys of learning. Then, in the midst of the ceremony, a violent thunderstorm began, which led me to say, as I stepped up to the podium: "What marvelous thunder! It is the music of the heavens, the resounding drum, the resplendent symphony of the skies, congratulating the progress of humanity toward the victory of peace. And what wonderful rain! The skies are telling us that we must not allow ourselves to be defeated by trouble! We must advance courageously through the storm of adversity!"

*President Ikeda's spontaneous remarks on that occasion won the warm applause of the audience and transformed the mood of the ceremony.*

In that address, I spoke of the great Cuban hero José Martí. He was a champion of independence who fought and risked his life for freedom and justice in Latin America in the latter half of the 19th century.

A dialogue that I am conducting on the subject of José Martí, incidentally, will be serialized in the monthly magazine *Ushio* from the June issue. My partner in this dialogue is Dr. Cintio Vitier, the founder and president of the Center for the Studies of José Martí in Havana.

As you know, I have published dialogues with many of the leading intellectual lights around the world, in which we have discussed such subjects as peace, human rights, philosophy and education. And I continue to engage in such dialogues — why? Because life is short. And the challenge is to see how much one can do, how much one can put one's mind to good use. I wish to continue creating as much value as I possibly can.

### **Through studying hard, we can repay our parents' sincere love and devotion.**

José Martí, who saved his nation and changed history, was the eldest son of an ordinary Cuban family. He had seven younger sisters. His father was frequently out of work, and the young Martí was forced to quit school just before his elementary-school graduation to work in a grocery store. But he was still determined to study, and at 12 he went to the nearby junior high school and asked to be allowed to study and work at the same time.

Today, the unveiling ceremony of a bust of the world-renowned scientist Linus Pauling was held at Tokyo Soka Gakuen. Dr. Pauling also came from a very poor family and lost his father at an early age. Because of his family circumstances, he had to work his way through school.

Affluence does not necessarily equal happiness. In fact, great people may be more likely to come from poor families. When one is surrounded by the comforts of wealth and takes them for granted, one tends to be spoiled and unmotivated.

Japan today is experiencing an unprecedented period of economic hardship. I hope that you all appreciate the tremendous efforts your mothers and fathers are making to enable you to attend Soka Gakuen. Let's give them all a hearty round of applause right now!

I hope that in the future, you will all try hard to ease the burden of your parents. I hope you will be big-hearted and do something special for them. Take them on a trip overseas, or treat them to an evening meal in the restaurant of a nice hotel.

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Most of all, to repay your parents' sincere love and devotion, which are as deep as the ocean itself, I hope you study as hard as you can and cultivate your abilities to the utmost. Learning is a human prerogative that no one can take from you. The harder you study, enduring all pains and sufferings, the broader and better a human being you will become. You will become a deeper, richer person.

Animals cannot study as humans do. Even among human beings, evil people lack the spirit of learning in the truest and best sense of the word.

### **Stretching our intellect stretches our humanity.**

On March 14, I met and talked with the president of Queens College of the City University of New York, Dr. Allen Sessoms, who is also a leading physicist. With immense pride, he told me that he believed that the pursuit of learning involves difficult challenges. And he added that when we stretch our intellect, we stretch our humanity, too.

Let us return to the story of José Martí: He was able to make an arrangement with his junior high school to work and study at the same time. He lived at the school, assisting the teachers in preparing for their classes and doing janitorial work. And he studied diligently.

It was at this school that he met his great mentor in life, the school's principal, Rafael María de Mendive, a man of outstanding personal integrity and character. Martí's mentor had tremendous intellectual breadth and was also a poet and a passionate man of action. At the same time, he was strongly committed to justice for the people, and he actively opposed, with his full energies, the arrogant authorities who oppressed them.

I believe that the same can be said of all the teachers and staff of Soka Gakuen.

Students are the first priority. True educators regard their students as more important than their children, their own family.

The youthful Martí completely devoted himself to his mentor. He absorbed all that his mentor had to offer. He read voraciously and polished his language skills until he possessed a brilliant command of words and became a warrior of free speech.

He also assisted the principal in his work. He recorded and collected Mr. Mendive's lectures. The "Discussions on Youth" series — conducted between myself and leaders of the high school division in Japan, which came out in book form today in Japan — is also a work compiled by similar behind-the-scenes efforts.

### **Victory is attained by enduring tests and trials — and surviving.**

When Martí was only 15, his beloved mentor was baselessly attacked, accused and imprisoned. Martí's school was shut down.

But in the midst of this turmoil, the loyal disciple did not quaver. He visited his mentor daily in prison. He comforted his mentor's terrified wife, saying: "Please don't worry. I will have revenge on his enemies. Just you wait and see!" How well I understand Martí's state of mind at that time. I served Mr. Toda with exactly the same devotion.

Last December, when we had a commemorative photograph taken together, all of you sang "Atsutamura," a song about Mr. Toda's hometown of Atsuta Village in Hokkaido. Your voices still ring in my heart.

Today is March 16. Forty-one years ago today, just a short time before Mr. Toda's death, an important ceremony was held. Mr. Toda had invited the Japanese prime minister to

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attend that ceremony, but though the latter had agreed to do so, he failed to show up.

However, today, I, Mr. Toda's disciple, have deep relations of trust and friendship with presidents and prime ministers around the world. On March 12, Prime Minister Vasily M. Vlasov of the Sakha Republic of the Russian Federation visited me, bringing with him an official invitation from President Mikhail E. Nikolaev to visit that country.

I want all of you to be active on the world stage, too. The Japanese people, with their narrow "island mentality," tend to be jealous of the achievements of others. There is no need to concern yourself with such a petty-minded world.

The hand of the oppressive forces of authority soon reached out for the young Martí. He was imprisoned, driven from his native land and exiled to Spain. All this took place in his late teens, when he was about the same age as all of you, our young graduates today.

How significant are things such as being scolded by your teachers or having difficulties with your studies when compared to being exiled from your homeland? Endurance is the key. Victory is attained by enduring tests and trials — and surviving.

Martí endured and survived numerous trials. He called out: "Why do we live? So that we may become stronger than all the obstacles and difficulties that we face!" He maintained that there can be no victory without strong determination. He firmly believed that "the presence of one just person is stronger than an entire mob that is unconcerned with justice."

Our society today is rudderless and lacks a solid philosophy and principles. That is why I urge every one of our students to build a self that is brave and unshakable! Stand up like a towering Mount Fuji!

Martí valued sincere friendship over any treasure, regarding it as the most valuable thing in life; this constitutes an immortal drama. He was determined not to live a life that fades into the darkness like the lives of base traitors but to live facing the sun and fighting hard as a decent human being to the end. He lived with this spirit throughout his life.

Rector Zhou Li Gao of the University of Macau, who is attending our Kansai ceremonies today, experienced the cruel barbarism of Japanese forces invading and occupying his hometown during his childhood. Yet he weathered that adversity and later studied at China's Tsinghua University. He has gone on to work for peace on a global scale, earning the respect of all as a person of wisdom and courage.

At just about the time that Rector Zhou was born, future Chinese premier Zhou Enlai and his wife, Deng Yingchao, were engaged in a ferocious struggle for their nation. They were "rank-and-file soldiers," along with many others, in the battle for a new China.

Deng Yingchao used to encourage her comrades: "Let's do our best. We have the conviction and ideals of our revolution. We refuse to be defeated. If we give in to fear, all is lost. We are right, and right is never defeated."

The new century is right before our eyes. You are all suns of Soka, rising at the dawn of the new century. You have no need to feel sad, dispirited or alone. I hope that — whatever you face in life — you will always be strong, honest, upright and positive, as you make this noble life one of regal triumph.

May you all mount white chargers and gallop forward on the long journey into the 21st century with perfect health and limitless glory! That is my daily prayer for you all.

I will conclude my speech with two poems for you:

### *The talented students*

*Of our schools  
Are leaving the nest.*

*Our children  
Leave their nest  
And take flight  
Into the sky of their mission.*

Everyone graduating today receives a Founders Award. You are all equal. You are all proud, fine individuals. You are all very, very dear to me. When you get home, declare proudly to your parents that you have received the Founders Award!

Congratulations!

*SGI President Ikeda's speech at the Tokyo and Kansai Soka Gakuen graduation ceremony, March 16. (President Ikeda, the schools' founder, attended the Tokyo ceremony, which was televised live to the Kansai campus.)*

### Topics for Discussion Meetings

#### **Endurance**

From This Speech:

**Endurance is the key. Victory is attained by enduring tests and trials — and surviving. Cuban hero José Martí endured and survived numerous trials. He called out: “Why do we live? So that we may become stronger than all the obstacles and difficulties that we face!” He maintained that there can be no victory without strong determination. He firmly believed that “the presence of one just person is stronger than an entire mob that is unconcerned with justice.”**

1. Have you experienced achieving victory through endurance?
2. What were the things that helped you to endure?
3. What does it mean to you to “become stronger than all the obstacles and difficulties that we face”?
4. Do you have an experience of achieving justice in your life?