

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE CULTURE FESTIVAL A GRAND HUMAN NETWORK OF TRUST

In his message to the 1st SGI-USA Youth Grand Culture Festival, SGI President Ikeda says, 'I hope that you will continue, always with bright smiles and high spirits, to be good friends to one another, to share and encourage one another as you build a grand human network of trust.'

My heartfelt congratulations on the 1st SGI-USA Youth Grand Culture Festival, an event that has opened the path to the 21st century.

Truly, this was a celebration of peace filled with hope; an expression of the vibrant creativity of youth, overflowing with joy! In my heart, I have crossed the Pacific, flying to the Pasadena Civic Auditorium to be with you, to sing and to dance together with your vivacious, energetic spirits. And now I join my voice with yours in a cheer of victory.

You have forged in your lives the experience of taking on the noble challenge of youth. You have left your lasting mark in the history of culture and creation.

Friends from 128 countries worldwide join me in offering you their thunderous applause, celebrating the drama of the victory won by the American youth division members, whom I cherish and respect.

Images of this Grand Culture Festival will be broadcast and seen throughout the world. I wish to declare that from this site, the dawn of a new, glorious America has broken, bright and brilliant in the skies of the new century.

We have been honored today with the presence of a number of distinguished guests. Please accept my heartfelt gratitude for the time you have taken from your pressing schedules to attend this event and for the warm support that you have extended the performers.

What path has humanity tread to this day? And what path will we take into the future? The 6 billion inhabitants of Earth have begun to seek in earnest for a clear future direction. This was the urgent question that I sought to find answers to in my discussions with Dr. Linus Pauling, this century's greatest chemist who, alongside his wife, Helen Ava, worked tirelessly to create a world of peace.

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.

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Buddhism teaches us that it is powerful resistance and opposition—even more than friendly support—which enables us to grow. In the same way, it teaches us that when various difficulties and obstacles arise, the wise person will rejoice and the foolish person will retreat.

Thus you should, with serenity and wisdom, rise above any present difficulties and continue to advance, one step at a time, moving forward, always forward, with strength and perseverance.

You yourself must become strong and wise. With profound confidence, continue the work of forging a diamond-like state of life that nothing can defeat or destroy. When hope is not to be found, create hope!

The great writer Aldous Huxley had a profound interest and knowledge of Mahayana Buddhism. His belief was that genuine transformation comes not from without but from within the individual.

I express my appreciation for the youth division's Victory Over Violence signature-drive campaign, which has been held in localities throughout the United States. Through your efforts, you have shared the philosophy of nonviolence and respect for the sanctity of life with your friends, fulfilling your mission to create new waves of shared feeling and understanding.

Wholehearted commitment opens the path to victory. Earnest sincerity has the power to move people's hearts. Nothing is more potent than the solidarity of ordinary citizens. You, as young people dedicated to justice, have demonstrated this truth.

As the great champion of non-violence Mahatma Gandhi declared, the most powerful rebuke one can deliver evil is to expand the unity of genuine friendship into the world.

I hope that you will continue, always with bright smiles and high spirits, to be good friends to one another, to share and encourage one another as you build a grand human network of trust. Please continue to shine in your communities, your schools and your places of work, as you energetically engage in activities to make society a better place for all.

My young friends, filled with strength and hope! I want to share with you some stanzas from a poem by the great African American poet Langston Hughes. In this poem, Hughes, while declaring his struggle against fierce discrimination, expresses his continued hopes for America:

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man may be crushed by one above.

We, the people, must redeem
Our land, the mines, the plants, the rivers,
The mountains and the endless plain—

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All, all the stretch of these great green states—
And make America again!

The final, culminating undertaking of my life is education. The Orange County campus of Soka University of America, which will open on May 3, 2001, represents the fulfillment of a grand dream entrusted to me by our mentors, presidents Makiguchi and Toda. I am determined to continue the solemn work of creating venues and opportunities for you to enact the grand drama of your lives.

Together let us live out lives of true greatness!

Together let us create a grand America!

Together let us build an ideal world of harmony such as has never been seen in human history!

I close by offering my heartfelt prayers for the continued health, happiness and success of all who have been so kind as to come and participate in today's event. Please also convey my warmest regards to all your family members.

Congratulations on your great success!

Congratulations on your grand victory!

I salute the youth division of the United States, a driving force for the entire world!

September 25, 1999

Daisaku Ikeda

President

Soka Gakkai International