

NATIONAL YOUTH TELECONFERENCE

In January of this year, James Herrmann, SGI-USA youth division leader; Renu Jiandani, SGI-USA YWD leader; Cory Taylor, SGI-USA YMD leader; and Daisaku Leslie and Wendy DeSouza, SGI-USA student division leaders, traveled to Japan where they met with SGI President Ikeda and other leaders.

On Jan. 23, youth across the country gathered at local community and culture centers to attend a national teleconference where they shared their impressions from the trip. The following are key points from the teleconference.

Wendy DeSouza shared that she gained a deeper understanding of how to create UNITY in Buddhism. “The key to creating unity,” she reported, “is the mentor–disciple relationship. Nothing should interfere with this direct connection. We should always be asking ourselves, ‘what would President Ikeda do?’ Unity isn’t just a horizontal connection between friends and comrades; it is also a vertical connection between the mentor and the disciple.”

Daisaku Leslie relayed an exchange he had with President Ikeda. Daisaku had expressed to President Ikeda his concern for youth in their 20s who suffer from psychological problems by asking, “How can we instill hope in these youth?” Daisaku shared what he felt he learned from President Ikeda by saying: “While politicians, teachers and parents should be responsible for resolving these problems, fundamentally the only way to resolve this problem is SHAKUBUKU. Let’s expose youth to good books. Let’s care for them. Let’s bring them to discussion meetings.” Daisaku went on to share what he said he learned about prayer: “There is not a night on Earth that isn’t followed by the dawn. Morning always comes. When we are in the ‘night’ of our own struggles, we should pray with absolute confidence that the ‘dawn’ is coming. Believing in the ‘dawn’ is itself faith.”

Cory Taylor shared that two things had become clear to him on this trip; the era of America has arrived, and that President Ikeda has placed his greatest trust in the youth. “I feel President Ikeda is urging all of us to advance so that each one of us can say, ‘I have done my best,’” Cory said. “President Ikeda asked us how it was that the allies had been able to secure victory on the beaches of Normandy (D-day) in WWII,” he continued. “What I learned was this: The average age of the Nazi soldier on the front lines was 45 years old. In contrast, the average age of the Allied soldier was 25. The allied soldiers, together with their leaders on the front lines, shared a singular determination: We have to win! It was then that I realized that President Ikeda wants us all to have the same spirit.” Cory went on to share that President Ikeda impressed upon him the importance of focusing on youth in their 20s. “If we cherish them,” he added, “no doubt, we will have victory in the 21st century.” Cory concluded by saying that our March 16 introductory meetings are the “D-day” effort of the new century.

Renu Jiandani shared her impressions of what she learned by saying: “The YWD must help each other. If the YWD are united and strong, then they can create a foundation for the kosen-rufu movement and unite all of the members. This is what I feel President Ikeda is telling us.” Renu added that President Ikeda wrote a poem to the YWD for the new year, tentatively translated as *The YWD are the ones who will be creating the Century of Happiness*. “I truly felt that President Ikeda has a great expectation for the YWD all over the world,” she said, “especially for America to be the center. It is our greatest fortune and mission to be able to be YWD at this time and work for kosen-rufu along side our mentor. This time will be our greatest treasure. Our very first victory will be the March 16 introductory meetings. As young women, this is our opportunity to begin creating this Century of Happiness by praying for and truly encouraging even one person to understand the greatness of this philosophy.”

James Herrmann relayed an exchange he had with President Ikeda where he reported to the SGI leader about the victorious youth who participated in the Grand Youth Culture Festival. After thanking President Ikeda for creating the opportunity to have this event, James shared with him the many struggles the youth were facing, (drugs, depression, family problems, etc.), and that they were able to win over themselves. Continuing, James reported to President Ikeda that the youth of the United States will be holding introductory meetings for March 16 — initiating a natural shakabuku movement across America. James conveyed that President Ikeda was very happy to hear this report and that he mentioned that he will be praying for our success. In addition, he felt that President Ikeda was urging us to pray that no youth stop practicing. Continuing, James shared what he learned about human revolution: “It isn’t complicated. Let’s say you don’t read often. But you decide you’re going to read a book and share what you learned with another person. That is human revolution. The accumulation of daily efforts to improve oneself is human revolution.”

Regarding March 16, James relayed that our nationwide goal for attendance is 11,000 members and 5,000 guests. He said: “Shakubuku should be fun. Let’s create a joyful atmosphere. At the same time, shakubuku begins with a determination. Our SGI-USA theme ‘The Power of One’ is based on how we can make others happy. We need to make a strong determination to do this. For good or for bad, we can never underestimate the power of one. For instance, one person can commit great evil, like Hitler. He killed millions. But in contrast, one person, if he or she is determined to do good, can help thousands or even millions of people.” James concluded by saying that victory can only be achieved through arduous, all-out efforts...not by pretending to work hard. “Let’s conduct ourselves in a way best suited for America. Let’s be joyful and unrestrained.”

KEY POINTS:

- 1)** The key to creating unity is the mentor-and-disciple relationship.
- 2)** While in the “night” of your struggles, pray with absolute confidence that the “dawn” is coming.
- 3)** Advance so that you can say, “I have done my best!”
- 4)** Wage your struggle with the determination “I have to win!”
- 5)** Create a century of happiness.
- 6)** Our daily efforts to improve ourselves is human revolution.
- 7)** Shakubuku begins with a determination.
- 8)** Let’s be joyful and unrestrained.