

**PHILADELPHIA UNLEASHES
'POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT'
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More than 3,000 members and guests filled the Pennsylvania Convention Center on Oct. 1 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the SGI movement in the United States. People came from all corners of the region, including West Virginia, Pittsburgh, Delaware, Williamsport, Poconos, Harrisburg and Atlantic City, N.J., to participate in this historic meeting.

In preparation for the event, performers and speakers worked extremely hard to ensure that members and guests alike had an enjoyable and inspiring afternoon. The room was filled with song, soothing music, energetic dance routines, the sharing of moving experiences and words of encouragement throughout the afternoon.

The celebration, titled "Unleashing the Power of the Human Spirit," was kicked off with a song by a 56-member chorus singing "America the Beautiful," followed by commemorative messages from SGI leaders, including SGI President Ikeda. Karen Lewis and Daniel White III showed members and guests actual proof of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism through their moving experiences.

A video documenting SGI-USA's triumphant history reminded members about the pioneers who sacrificed so much to propagate this Buddhism in the United States. "From a two-bedroom apartment on Chestnut Street to community centers in Philadelphia, South Jersey and Pittsburgh," the members of Philadelphia Region continue the pursuit of worldwide peace, the video narrator said.

Collectively, the musical presentations reflected the diversity of Philadelphia Region and the SGI-USA. Performances included traditional Japanese and Korean folk dances, performed by some of the SGI-USA's pioneer women, a children's performance group, a Latin salsa routine, a chorus, youth rappers and hip-hop dancers and a men's conga drum group that provided the exciting background rhythm for a brightly costumed African dance troupe. An orchestra and jazz band supported the festival with musical accompaniments.

In their remarks to the group, both Mid-Atlantic Zone Men's Leader Ronnie Smith and SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck commented on President Ikeda's reference to "liberty's bell" in his recent poem, "Soar — Into the Vast Skies of Freedom! Into the New Century!" (The Liberty Bell is displayed near Independence Hall in Philadelphia.) In the poem, President Ikeda writes:

*These fifty states —
Pioneering a new history,
Resounding with the peal
of liberty's bell,
Here our cherished
Bodhisattvas of the Earth
Have made their stand!*
— (Aug. 11 *World Tribune*, p. 5)

In the poem, Mrs. Buck said, President Ikeda was clearly praising the faith of American

members. She called the 40th anniversary celebration a new departure for the Philadelphia Region.

Prior to the meeting, participants had a chance to visit booths on subjects such as the history of Buddhism, Buddhism and health, SGI's contribution to world peace and basic principles in Buddhism. Each booth, which was set up and staffed by outlying areas in the region, featured a table-top display and literature.

Title: Philadelphia Unleashes 'Power of the Human Spirit'
Subject: World Tribune 11/03/00 n.3318 p.12 WT001103p12 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 10/01/00
Author: Stephanie Arnold
Keywords: 10/01/00 Festivals Human National November Pennsylvania Philadelphia Power Recitals Shows Spirit Tribune Unleashes World