

REBELS AND NON-CONFORMISTS, HEAR THIS!
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Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "The hope of a secure and livable world lies with disciplined nonconformists, who are dedicated to justice, peace and brotherhood. The trailblazers in human, academic, scientific and religious freedom have always been nonconformists. In any cause that concerns the progress of humankind, put your faith in the nonconformist" (*Strength to Love*, p. 26).

What is a disciplined nonconformist — an aimless rebel or a person of conviction? Dr. King was a nonconformist. So was Mahatma Gandhi. And, SGI President Ikeda, by opening up new paths and spearheading our peace movement, can also be called a nonconformist. What do their lives tell us of disciplined nonconformity?

The disciplined nonconformist chooses justice over compromise and lives with purpose. And when a mentor refuses to compromise, dedicating his or her life to challenging injustice, the relationship between mentor and disciple becomes the unmistakable path of disciplined nonconformists.

We, the youth of SGI-USA, are also a gathering of disciplined nonconformists. We are striving together to understand our mentor's heart and put it into action. That means sharing our beliefs with others and taking action to help our friends based on a philosophy in which we believe.

We don't conform to a society that is indifferent to the sufferings of ordinary people, a society that shrugs its shoulders at teen violence, a society that discriminates based on superficial appearances and a society that is unconcerned with its young people's future. We are reaching out into our society with the solid conviction that "the human revolution of a single individual can transform the destiny of all humankind" (Forward, *The Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. vii).

To paraphrase Dr. King, we nonconformists are not like thermometers, parroting society's current temperature. We are like thermostats, transforming society's climate!

March 16, Kosen-rufu Day, is our opportunity to make history, to make a statement to the world that the youth of SGI-USA, united in purpose with President Ikeda, are determined to work selflessly for the happiness and welfare of all. As we commence this new wave of propagation in March, let us conduct our meetings with the spirit that President Ikeda himself is in attendance at every single gathering.

MARCH DISTRICT INTRODUCTORY MEETINGS

At every district gathering during March, the youth will take responsibility to prepare an introductory meeting designed to share our philosophy with many people. At each of these meetings, we'd like to suggest that the youth prepare a report to President Ikeda.

Please send all of these reports to us at the SGI Plaza via fax, (310) 260-8917 or email, seize@sgi-usa.org. We will compile them together with a record of the number of members present and every guest who came to each meeting.

This collection of youth effort and four-divisional accomplishment will then be sent to President Ikeda as evidence of our determination to inherit his spirit.

MARCH 16: ALL YOUTH GATHERINGS

In addition to our district introductory meetings, on the actual day of March 16, a Friday, we will gather all over the country for ceremonies to commemorate this historic day and to launch an all-out effort to win in our struggle.

Much like March 16, 1958—when 6,000 youth gathered together with second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda and pledged to take full responsibility for kosen-rufu—several thousand youth in America will gather on the exact day, 43 years later, to express our pledge to our mentor President Ikeda. Imagine such unity—youth throughout the country, meeting on the same day.

For those who can attend—who don't have work, school or other conflicts—this is a grand opportunity to feel the mystic connection of an entire nation of youth division advancing toward one common goal: we'll make March a month of triumph for the people.

This is also a unique opportunity to record the names of each participant who attended, thus documenting a crucial moment in history. We would like to also compile these name lists too, as an eternal record of the people who gathered and celebrated on this first March 16 of the new millennium. This day will generate momentous energy, which we shall take to the districts and use to fuel the fire of action.

This year, all of us will commemorate March 16 with President Ikeda. Celebrating with him doesn't mean that we need to be physically next to him. But it does mean to inherit his vision and share his commitment to creating a new history for the United States and the world. The world won't change by itself. If we want a different society, then we have to be the ones to make it happen.

So this March, let's stand together—every youth in every district across America—to share this Buddhism with our friends and to create a new America, together with our mentor!