

GET REAL!
BY JOMO THORNE, SGI-USA HIGH SCHOOL LEADER
IT'S UP TO US!—PREPARING FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE

“Life is chaos, a tangled and confused jungle in which man is lost. But his mind reacts against the sensation of bewilderment: he labors to find ‘roads,’ ‘ways’ through the woods, in the form of clear, firm ideas concerning the universe, positive convictions about the nature of things. The ensemble, or system, of these ideas, is culture in the true sense of the term; it is precisely the opposite of external ornament. Culture is what saves human life from being a mere disaster; it is what enables man to live a life which is something above meaningless tragedy or inward disgrace” (*Mission of the University*, José Ortega y Gasset, quoted by SGI President Ikeda in *Proposals For The 21st Century*, pp. 32–33).

This summer, representative members of the junior high and high school divisions gathered in Florida to celebrate the fifth conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. The theme of this year’s conference was “It’s Up To Us: Preparing For A Culture Of Peace.” Today’s SGI teens will lead our youth division for the next 20 years. They have already become the engines of the more than 40 SGI-USA Family Youth Festivals taking place nationwide this year. As they continue to live out their lives, today’s teens will literally create the history of the 21st century. By the end of this second cycle of seven bells, they will be the same age President Ikeda is today.

In thinking about the mission of today’s teens and the theme of our FNCC conference, I wondered about the future of the wonderful junior high and high school members that are so active today. What kind of kosen-rufu movement will they lead? How will their actions lead to the development of a culture of peace in the world? And just how will they go about doing this?

In the book *Proposals For The 21st Century*, President Ikeda says, “Culture is ‘the system of ideas concerning the world and humanity (or human existence)’ which is applied by one’s inner self to guide him in living this real life”(p. 32). It seems to me like President Ikeda is saying that a culture of peace is really the system (and the application of) beliefs that guide people to create value. In other words, as today’s teens develop their character and create internal harmony, they will exert an incredible influence on society.

So where do today’s teens start?

We can start by exerting ourselves to do joyful and natural shakubuku. Everything we enjoy in the SGI today—the size and diversity of our membership, our great community centers and other facilities—has been made possible through the efforts of previous generations of SGI members. If we are to take our kosen-rufu movement to a new level, we need to take responsibility for doing shakubuku. We should seize the opportunities presented by this year’s activities to share Buddhism with our friends and family.

We can also make a strong determination to become self-mastering individuals. This means learning all about our basic tendencies and determining that we will recognize and change our negative tendencies the moment they manifest themselves.

Trees prepare themselves to bud and flourish during winter, but their efforts aren’t apparent until the spring. We need to be confident that all the causes we make through our Buddhist practice are profound, even if they seem subtle. We can create a culture of peace by the little things we do everyday that enhance our lives and the lives of those around us.