

**SIGNIFICANT DATES**  
**MARCH 16, 1958—KOSEN-RUFU DAY**  
**IT'S MARCH 16—ARE WE LISTENING?**  
**BY STEPHANIE CELANO, SANTA MONICA, CALIF.**

**March 16, for Stephanie Celano, is an opportunity to listen and ‘act on even a single word’ of her mentor.**

Historically, March 16—Kosen-rufu Day—is a time in the SGI to celebrate youth. The day derives its significance from March 16, 1958, when 6,000 youth gathered at the foot of Mount Fuji to hear second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s spirited words. President Toda referred to this day as a historic “dress rehearsal” for kosen-rufu.

I imagine that on that cold day those youth, warmed by steaming bowls of pork soup that President Toda had provided, must have felt a tremendous bond with one another and with their mentor. Though it’s impossible to know what each of them was experiencing, one determined young man went on to share with us in detail what he was feeling on that day.

That young man is Dai-saku Ikeda. In reading his essays on March 16, it’s clear that President Toda’s words penetrated his life that day. He says: “When I heard him call out ‘Let’s fight!’ ...I was electrified. ... I resolved anew to fight intrepidly for kosen-rufu” (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, p. 40).

He described March 16 as a day to eternally honor the selfless spirit of President Toda, who lived in complete accord with the Daishonin’s teachings. “At the same time,” he continues, “it was a private ceremony between just the two of us—a ceremony of the oneness of mentor and disciple—in which Mr. Toda transferred the seal of succession, the mission to achieve kosen-rufu, to me” (March 27, 1998, *World Tribune*, p. 10).

Among those 6,000 youth, SGI President Ikeda took it as his personal responsibility to carry out the mission of kosen-rufu, to create peace through sharing the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

In just over 40 years, he has led the effort to spread Buddhism to 163 countries and territories. And among other accomplishments, he’s established the Soka school system, founded many cultural institutions, written numerous books and fought to preserve the truth of Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings from the distortions of High Priest Nikken Abe and the Nichiren Shoshu sect.

More important, President Ikeda has made constant efforts to personally encourage people through his guidance and by his example. This is an important reason why I and more than 12 million others are practicing today.

How did he do this? President Ikeda has said, “When a person earnestly committed to a cause takes a stand, he or she can manifest the strength of two, three, 10 or even 100 people” (Jan. 15, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 7).

He also says: “The mentor–disciple relationship is strict. Everything depends on how earnestly one can accept and act on even a single word of the mentor” (January 2000 *Living Buddhism*, p. 31).

Based on President Ikeda’s profound respect and earnest effort to put into practice every word of President Toda’s guidance, he was able to accomplish many seemingly impossible things. This is a direct example of the mentor–disciple relationship. He says, “I have accomplished everything that President Makiguchi and President Toda set out to achieve”

(April 3, 1998, *World Tribune*, p. 8).

We, too, can accomplish seemingly impossible things. We have all the tools: the Gohonzon, Nichiren Daishonin's writings and a great mentor. But have we asked ourselves how closely we are listening to what President Ikeda has been trying to say?

March 16 is an opportunity to take a stand and to follow our mentor's guidance as earnestly as he followed President Toda's. With Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo opening soon, the Soka Spirit movement building momentum and in preparing for our March 16 introductory meetings, we can use this day not only to determine to achieve our personal goals but also to dig deeper to contribute to the foundation that President Ikeda has already built.