

## FROM SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR DANNY NAGASHIMA STANDING ALONE, ADVANCING TOGETHER

**‘The second Seven Bells must begin with each of us committed to realizing our own happiness,’ says SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima. ‘This is the only way, I believe, to fulfill the pledge we made in the remote past as Bodhisattvas of the Earth—to strive for the happiness of all humanity.’**

Congratulations on the beginning of a new era of our kosen-rufu movement! For decades, SGI-USA members have dreamed of May 3, 2001. This day, which begins the second set of Seven Bells, has been a guiding light for our organization, keeping our gaze fixed on the future. I cannot begin to fully express my gratitude for your unbelievable efforts up to this point.

The first set of Seven Bells—seven consecutive seven-year periods—began in 1930 with the foundation of the Soka Gakkai and continued until President Ikeda’s resignation as Soka Gakkai president in 1979. This period established the founding of Japan’s kosen-rufu movement, with millions of members advancing the values of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism into society.

In 1966, SGI President Ikeda first shared his vision for a new era that would begin on May 3, 2001. From this time, the second set of Seven Bells would see the securing of the foundation for peace throughout the world.

This first half of the 21st century, therefore, is the most crucial time in the development of our movement in the United States. How do we proceed from here? We have been preparing for this time for many years. Do we know how to begin?

During almost 30 visits to America over the last four decades, President Ikeda has consistently emphasized that we should naturally, joyfully advance, while we grow into our true selves. He has constantly spoken of our becoming capable people and encouraged us to go to the forefront in every area of our lives and society.

I believe he has been telling us that it is our personal struggles and triumphs that will propel our movement forward. We must win in everything—our relationships, our careers, our education, our self-esteem, our health—and become beautiful examples of the brilliance of the Dai-shonin’s Buddhism in action.

We often talk about building unity in our organization, whether it’s in our districts, our community outreach activities or planning a culture festival. But building unity based on our individual victories is the key. Only through our own experience of winning in faith can we contribute something concrete to our movement.

“Unity is not just huddling together in a cozy flock or leaning on one another for support,” President Ikeda says. “True unity is the joint struggle of courageous individuals who share and put into action the stand-alone spirit. In such unity lies the key to achieving the unprecedented undertaking of kosen-rufu” (May 15, 1998, *World Tribune*, p. 9).

So the second Seven Bells must begin with each of us committed to realizing our own happiness through our Buddhist practice and achieving our dreams; whether you want to open your own business, find someone to share your life with, get your master’s degree—whatever it is. This is the only way, I believe, to fulfill the pledge we made in the remote past as Bodhisattvas of the Earth—to strive for the happiness of all humanity.

Title: Standing Alone, Advancing Together

Subject: World Tribune 03/30/01 n.3339 p.1 WT010330p01

Author: Danny Nagashima

Keywords: Advancing Alone Danny Director Encouragement General Guidance Guidelines Happiness  
Nagashima Peace Standing Together Tribune World

Through each of us standing on our own and displaying the Mystic Law in our own unique way, we will create a beautiful unity as true disciples of President Ikeda, naturally spreading Buddhism to every area of society. In my travels across the United States, I have seen our members on the frontlines, leading the way in government, in education, in the entertainment industry—everywhere in society. Our friends, co-workers, family members—they're waiting for us to shine, to illuminate the path to happiness.

For both second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda and President Ikeda, May 3 was the day to stand alone, the day to declare to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas that they would accomplish kosen-rufu, on their own if necessary. It was this determination, and their efforts to realize the dream of their mentors, that has brought us to this grand stage. May 3, 2001, is our opportunity to do the same, to begin our own new era based on our mentor's vision and revolutionize our lives, while we help our families and friends overcome their sufferings.

In his beautiful poem “Soar—Into the Vast Skies! Into the New Century!” dedicated to the SGI-USA members, President Ikeda writes:

*Toward the civilization  
of the 21st century;  
for the sake of the young leaders and scholars;  
for the sake of the  
peace, prosperity and joy  
that come from humanistic education!  
Soka University of America  
has been constructed...*

He has dedicated his entire being to bringing us to this moment, pouring all his energy into developing capable people. Because of his efforts and the efforts of so many wonderful pioneers here in America, our members are capable of accomplishing anything. And Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo is the crystallization of these efforts, a place from which many young leaders will emerge.

He goes on to write:

*For the sake of  
these free, young spirits,  
I have determined to spend  
the culminating years of my life  
in this America I love,  
together creating infinite memories,  
sounding the reverberant trumpet of the dawn.*

I feel strongly that it is from America that this great wave of peace—of *myoho*—must begin. America is unique in the whole of human history, bringing together every conceivable mixture of ethnicity, lifestyle, political affiliation, and economic and social condition. Because we come from such a diversity of cultures and experiences, Americans can identify with the sufferings of others more acutely than anyone else does. When the recent, devastating earthquakes struck El Salvador and India, millions of Americans felt the pain of those who have lost love ones and rose to action in organizing a response for

those in need.

What each of us can accomplish here in America will naturally ripple throughout humanity. This victory in each of our lives is “the reverberant trumpet of the dawn” that President Ikeda is talking about. This May 3, with the dedication of the SUA, Aliso Viejo campus, our mentor’s dream, and the beginning of the second set of Seven Bells, it is now our time to take full responsibility for the next stage of our movement for kosen-rufu.

For my part, I will continue to strive together with all of you, creating the most beautiful people’s movement in history from America. Together, let’s make the first half of the 21st century an unprecedented, unforgettable time of growth for ourselves and all humanity.