

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA’S MESSAGE TO THE
SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
AN INNER TRANSFORMATION OF EACH PERSON**

‘Only through seeking an inner transformation for each person, based on the ideal of respect for individual life, can we achieve a fundamental transformation of our society,’ SGI President Ikeda says.

Congratulations on holding your historic and momentous SGI-USA Family Youth Festivals and Victory Over Violence activities!

Our SGI friends in 165 countries throughout the world have been praising and lauding your courageous progress in standing up to create a society based on mutual respect for our shared humanity that is free of violence.

I especially want to acknowledge the youth of SGI-USA, who have been working hard at the core of this movement. You have developed splendidly! Without a doubt, you have achieved victory! Nothing could make me happier! To the youth, I offer my utmost respect and applaud each one of you!

To the men and women who have constantly supported these young people, sharing in their struggles, I offer my sincere appreciation.

I extend my gratitude as well to all those who are gathering and to the many individuals and organizations who have honored us with their assistance and support of the Victory Over Violence project. Thank you all very much!

Seven hundred years ago, Nichiren Daishonin established the basis for world peace with the spirit of securing the peace of the land by establishing the truth (Jpn *rissho ankoku*). He asserts, “Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 15). By “this one evil” he means the fear and hatred that lies within the people’s hearts.

Our activities to overcome violence, which begin with transforming and expanding the capacity of our hearts, constitute a magnificent peace movement to challenge those social misconceptions and distortions of the human heart that give rise to violence. Victory Over Violence accords precisely with this spirit of Buddhism. I am absolutely convinced that this movement, led by trailblazing global citizens, is instrumental to broadening the solidarity of courage and virtue necessary to surmount violence in today’s society.

When we look at the reality of today’s world, it is evident that honest, ordinary people are most frequently the victims of violence. In addition, people who possess the least social position or power are the ones who suffer the most from discrimination.

What will end people’s suffering? The fundamental solution lies not in politics, economics, government, the media or in the law alone. Only through seeking an inner transformation for each person, based on the ideal of respect for individual life, can we achieve a fundamental transformation of our society.

When we tolerate violence, both the victim and the offender will suffer, and clouds of anguish will envelop their hearts. In contrast, when we rise above violence, both are able to rejoice from the depths of their lives. In his lyrics for the song “Ode to Joy” from Beethoven’s 9th Symphony, the German poet Friedrich Schiller exclaims: “O Friends no more these sounds! Let us sing more cheerful songs, more full of joy!” Just as Beethoven expressed his triumph with this song, your joyous gatherings this summer are your own

songs of triumph to be heard throughout your communities!

This summer, more than 100,000 courageous hearts throughout the United States will join to celebrate their shared humanity by singing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," a song that resounds with a universal message of equality. Together, let's pave the way for a hope-filled 21st century!

My dear friends, I am always praying for your good health and happiness.

Daisaku Ikeda