

**CHICAGO YOUTH JOIN FAMILY PARADE
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SGI-USA! SGI-USA!” was the spirited call and response from SGI-USA members gathered along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive to cheer on the SGI-USA youth in Chicago’s 72nd annual Bud Billiken Parade, Aug. 11. It was the first time that the SGI-USA participated, and the theme, “A Global Family—Celebrating Victory Over Violence,” fit in perfectly.

The SGI-USA contingent included hundreds of performers, with the Music Corps playing a spirited rendition of “Survivor” to the determined waves of the Flag Corps and lively moves of the Era of Humanity dancers. All of this took place in vibrant SGI red, yellow and blue, except for the gleaming bunch of well-behaved SGI Kids dressed in costumes representing cultures from around the globe. Rounding out the performances were the energetic, precision steps of the Marcher/Steppers to a perked-up version of “Ode to Joy.”

The Marcher/Steppers is a four-divisional group, and members of the men’s and women’s divisions have supported the activity from the very beginning. “This was an opportunity to help nurture the youth by encouraging them and participating right beside them,” said Royce Knowles, a women’s district leader who supports the Era of Humanity dancers.

The Bud Billiken Parade has developed considerably since its humble beginnings. This year, it consisted of more than 270 units and floats, many from out of state. Close to 1 million people lined the streets, sat on lawn chairs along the park median or on building stoops to watch the parade, creating the feel of a giant outdoor festival.

Amidst all the fun, SGI-USA members talked with several parade supporters about the SGI-USA entry’s theme. “This is the theme of the parade as well,” noted *Chicago Defender* Publisher Eugene Scott. “We are one world family. We can’t really progress in the world unless everybody progresses. So it’s all about family, young people and unity in the community.”

Local SGI-USA leaders also spoke with Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, who responded to the SGI theme as well: “When we talk about family and violence, we all have to look at what’s happening to society and what’s happening to our children and families. So I think [Victory Over Violence] is an appropriate sponsorship that will help stop the violence, not only outside but within a family.”

Summing up the spirit of the youth to challenge themselves through the parade activity, Chicago Region 3 Young Men’s Leader Corey Powe noted during one of the practices that “SGI President Ikeda often talks about human revolution, about overcoming the lesser self. Personally, I have come to understand that the routines we’re doing are not the extraordinary part of this activity. It’s the process that we go through inside each of us to reach the end result—world peace.”