

Mrs. Kaneko Ikeda's Message to the Women's and Young Women's Division

To all my dear women's division and young women's division members around the world, thank you so much for your tireless efforts to advance kosen-rufu "day by day and month after month" (WND-1, 997).

I receive inspiring letters from members throughout the world on a daily basis reporting on the wonderful progress being made in our movement for kosen-rufu. In every region, together with the impressive growth of our successors in the youth division and future division, the dedicated and steadfast activities of you, the women's division and young women's division members, stand out with special brilliance. As a result, my husband has also lauded your dedication, stating that the new era of worldwide kosen-rufu is above all a new era of Soka women.

I send you this message as an expression of my sincere gratitude for your incredibly noble efforts.

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First of all, I am happy to report that my husband continues to enjoy good health and busily devotes his days to working on *The New Human Revolution* and other writing projects, while warmly watching over the many members from throughout Japan and the world who visit the Soka Gakkai Headquarters complex in Shinanomachi each day.

He has also been asked to write a yearlong series of articles for a group of five regional newspapers in Hokkaido, the northern Japanese island where the Soka Gakkai's first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, spent the early part of their youth.

In the first installment (published in January this year), he recorded his memories of Atsuta, which he visited with Mr. Toda in 1954. At that time, Mr. Toda said to him: "Beyond this ocean are vast continents. . . ." In that conversation, Mr. Toda entrusted my husband with forging a path around the world and creating solidarity for peace through the power of dialogue.

No matter how time goes by, my husband continues to cherish Mr. Toda in his heart. He composed the following poem:

Traveling the world
creating history
together with my mentor.

Six decades have passed since Mr. Toda handed him the baton for worldwide kosen-rufu in Hokkaido. Steadfastly committed to fulfilling his vow to his mentor, my husband has spread the Soka movement for peace, culture, and education around the world.

Today, our movement encompasses 192 countries and territories, and stones collected from each one of them have been placed in the base of the altar in the main prayer hall of the newly completed Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu. Enshrined in

the hall is the Gohonzon, bearing the inscriptions: “To Be Permanently Enshrined in the Soka Gakkai” and “For the Fulfillment of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu through the Compassionate Propagation of the Great Law.” I am filled with deep emotion at the thought that the lion’s roar of members of the Soka family chanting before this Gohonzon envelops our planet day after day.

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Recently, sharing her goals and fresh determinations on being appointed SGI-USA women’s leader, Akemi Bailey-Haynie proclaimed: “We must win in our homes, in our families, in our jobs, within our community, and within the SGI organization. . . . We will become the sun that illuminates everything we touch!”¹

Mrs. Bailey-Haynie is the daughter of an African American father and a Japanese mother who survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945. From a young age, she suffered one illness after another, and also often felt disconnected because she didn’t fit into any ethnic group owing to her mixed heritage.

After joining her mother in practicing Nichiren Buddhism, she steadily transformed each trial and obstacle she encountered, changing poison into medicine, and eventually succeeded in creating a happy and harmonious family. Out of the belief that peace starts from the human heart, from within the life of each individual, she has been dedicating herself to the field of humanistic education, earning a PhD along the way, and making outstanding contributions to American society.

I was delighted to hear how she is taking the lead, in beautiful unity with her women’s leader predecessors, to expand our joyful movement, while also encouraging the youth of the next generation.

Life is filled with untold difficulties and struggles. Society continues to change dramatically, and there is also the ever-present threat of natural disasters. However, in “The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra,” a letter addressed to one of his female followers, Nichiren Daishonin writes: “*Myo* means to revive, that is, to return to life” (WND-1, 149). He promises that no matter what their circumstances, women who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo can definitely revive the Buddha nature within their own lives and the lives of others, and show actual proof of attaining Buddhahood in this existence.

In accord with this teaching of the Daishonin, Soka women around the world are splendidly actualizing renewal and revitalization in their lives and their communities.

As one admirable example, members in the Philippines, where a powerful typhoon caused great destruction and devastation last year, continue to work together tirelessly with SGI-Philippines General Director Hisako Alcantara to support relief and reconstruction efforts following the disaster.

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Often when members report to my husband about their or one of their family members’ struggles with illness, he offers words of encouragement and good wishes for the person’s

¹ *World Tribune*, October 11, 2013.

recovery, citing various passages from the Daishonin's writings. One passage he frequently quotes is from "On Prolonging One's Life Span" [addressed to the lay nun Toki]: "When I prayed for my mother, not only was her illness cured, but her life was prolonged by four years. Now you too have fallen ill, and as a woman, it is all the more timely for you to establish steadfast faith in the Lotus Sutra and to see what it will do for you" (WND-1, 955).

Recently, my husband sent the following message to a sincere women's division and Young Mother's Group member who has been courageously struggling with illness: "Because you have striven so diligently in faith until now, you are experiencing the karma of sickness in a much lighter form and are in fact being protected. You will definitely be able to overcome it. In order to make a breakthrough, please chant and pray with even stronger resolve. My wife and I will continue chanting for you, too."

My husband and I are always praying above all that our members everywhere will enjoy long, healthy lives and always be safe and secure.

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Nothing gives my husband and me greater joy than seeing a steady stream of young people growing and developing vibrantly into the future.

In the chapter "Young Seedlings" (tentative translation) of *The New Human Revolution*, my husband shares an episode related to a musical performance by students at the Tokyo Soka Elementary School in 1978. After a bright and lively instrumental performance on piano, organ, accordion, xylophone, and other instruments, my husband, the school's founder, called to his side the students who had played the triangle in one corner of the room. After asking them to show him how to play the triangle, he went on to say to them: "Although you may be playing in a corner at the back, your instrument is important for the performance. There's no need for you to feel small or left out, or to compare yourself unfavorably to those playing other instruments."

After this installment of *The New Human Revolution* was published last year, one of the triangle players wrote a letter to my husband expressing her appreciation and renewed determination. She said: "Your encouragement at that time brought a fresh surge of hope and energy into my life, especially since I had been feeling down because of my lack of ability and confidence. I am filled with deep gratitude knowing that you have been watching over me these past 35 years. I will do my best as a women's division district leader to contribute to the welfare of my fellow members and the local community."

My husband was delighted to receive her letter and sent the following response: "I am so happy to hear you are doing well, and proud that you are striving as a women's division district leader. Please take care of your health and keep forging ahead serenely, confident that all the efforts you make based on faith are a source of the greatest happiness. I am praying for your family's happiness and well-being."

Our SGI activities and the bonds we share as members of the Soka family are the epitome of genuine human harmony, creating an environment where we can learn from and encourage one another as fellow human beings who are all equally precious and

irreplaceable. Our SGI districts and local communities, which form the front lines of our activities for kosen-rufu, can be regarded as the wonderful stage upon which we each proudly sing a joyful ode to life and together perform the music of happiness and harmony.

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I have heard that, in Europe as well, the Buddhist teaching that the lives of all people are endowed with the supremely noble Buddha nature is imparting great hope.

In her capacity as SGI-Europe Women's leader, Suzanne Pritchard has had the opportunity to speak with many members and non-members. She notes that while people have different problems—some struggling with illness, financial hardship, balancing work and raising a family, or relationships with coworkers or neighbors, and the like—on a deeper level many of them seem to share a common tendency to doubt whether they really have the power to change their lives through their own efforts. Listening sincerely to each person's concerns, she talks to them about the Buddhist philosophy of human revolution and warmly assures them that they can indeed change their lives.

The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is a wellspring for developing our infinite inner potential. It is a philosophy of empowerment for winning over difficulties and creating value in society through the power of faith. In Europe, in the Americas, in Asia, in Oceania, and in Africa, we are seeing more and more people practicing and studying this great philosophy of infinite hope.

This year, which marks the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I, let us joyfully and confidently engage in dialogue and share our convictions with an even stronger determination to contribute to peace.

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You, our young women's division members, are destined to open the gateway to the future for worldwide kosen-rufu. As such, it is my dearest hope that during the time of your youth, when you can engage in SGI activities freely to your hearts' content, you will accumulate immense good fortune that will serve as the foundation for your lifelong happiness.

Encouraging young women's division leaders making dedicated efforts for kosen-rufu, my husband has said: "Please continue to lead triumphant lives based on daimoku, adorning your lives with daimoku."

As we continue to resonantly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the "greatest of all joys" (OTT, 212), let us warmly encourage all those around us and, welcoming one new friend after another to our movement, advance victoriously together into the new era of Soka women in harmony and good cheer!

Kaneko Ikeda
SGI Honorary Women's Leader