

LET'S WIN RIGHT NOW, LET'S WIN TOGETHER
Message From SGI-USA Women's Leader Linda Johnson

You Have the Power to Change Your Destiny

We all witnessed a historic occasion when our country elected its first African American president. The television showed people of all races and ethnicities filling the streets of large cities. Many of them had tears streaming down their faces. The mood was one of celebration, one overflowing with unlimited hope and great expectation. The fact that Barack Obama had succeeded proved, in itself, that anything is possible.

Amid this time of immense hope, our country is facing very challenging times. We are at war and the economic fabric of our society seems to be fraying. How are we going to turn this around? This is the question facing each one of us.

Quoting from his mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, SGI President Ikeda says: "No matter what situation you find yourself in, when you base yourself on deep and powerful faith, you'll be able to overcome everything. When you yourself change, grow and take responsibility, you can win in all things. It all comes down to you. Be responsible for your own life" (Nov. 7 *World Tribune*, p. 4).

I personally feel an urgency for us to spread Nichiren Buddhism precisely because of the serious issues facing our society. It is time to awaken people to the tremendous treasure house that exists within them and give them the tools by which they can reveal their limitless potential. There is no greater gift than giving each human being the power to change his or her destiny.

I urge all of the SGI-USA women to join me. Let's embark on a spiritual revolution, one in which the happiness of every woman becomes our single-minded objective. This will require our ceaseless effort to awaken every woman to the fact that she can achieve any dream, overcome any problem and develop an inner state of life in which she can enjoy each day along the journey.

To achieve this, we will need to engage each woman in sincere and open dialogue. Let's hear what is truly in her heart. Does she have personal goals that she is challenging? If not, let's encourage her to make a "bucket list." This is a list of goals that reflect everything she wants to change and accomplish in this lifetime, including all those elusive wishes and dreams she has forgotten about or almost given up on, and most especially those things she thinks she cannot change. We practice Buddhism to become happy. We must never forget this prime point.

During this dialogue, it is our challenge to infuse her life with deep conviction that, through sincere and powerful faith, she can be victorious. We must awaken her fighting spirit and also teach her that our vow for *kosen-rufu* includes our efforts to share this Buddhism with others. It is the combination of our determined prayer and efforts to share Buddhism with others that enables us to reveal our Buddhahood from within and reveal our full potential.

President Ikeda reminds us: "Do our lives brim with fighting spirit? Do we shine with an undefeatable spirit? This is what decides victory in any endeavor" (Nov. 7 *World Tribune*, p. 4).

Let's encourage each woman to select at least one item from her "bucket list" that she will challenge toward the February district discussion meeting. Our goal is to have every woman advance her life and deepen her experience in the power of faith to transform her destiny. I personally cannot imagine a nobler endeavor for the SGI-USA women.

Rather than spending our time planning a separate women's meeting in February, let's use this precious time to engage in dialogues aimed at helping every woman advance one step forward. These heart-to-heart exchanges will provide us on a regular basis with what we love most about getting together as women—our ability to connect with one another.

Toward 2010, the entire SGI-USA is focused on creating a rhythm in which life-to-life dialogues are the primary focus for each month—otherwise known as “calendar revolution.” Each division has agreed that in February, March and August, rather than having divisional meetings that are separate from the monthly district discussion meeting, each division will instead lead the district meeting in their respective month.

This February will be the women's opportunity to lead the first district discussion meeting under our new “calendar revolution.” I would like to suggest that we plan a district meeting that models what a great discussion meeting should look like. Let's work together to create a meeting that deeply awakens the faith of every person—from the pioneer to the new member—as well as inspires our guests to join. Wherever possible, let's plan to have Gohonzon conferrals at the meeting.

Let's also invite the men and youth to join us in our dialogue and “bucket list” challenge aimed at helping every single person develop his or her life through faith. Together, our power is unlimited. Through four-divisional unity, our goal in February is to have the greatest number of people joining the SGI-USA ever attained in a single month.

We also want to have the largest attendance ever at the February district discussion meeting.

But there is a major difference in the way we will achieve these results. Our aim is to awaken every person's self motivated practice. In other words, each person will share Buddhism with others out of their own determination to change their life and the lives of others rather than merely to achieve an organizational goal. This way, we will enjoy the magnificent expansion of many, many joyful people as we simultaneously advance *kosen-rufu*. The purpose of Buddhism, after all, is to enable each person to become indestructibly happy.

Our mentor, President Ikeda, says, “a life dedicated to working for *kosen-rufu* is a journey of unlimited self-improvement. Filled with appreciation and pride at this good fortune, let's continue to make our way on this path with even greater energy, imparting courage and hope to our fellow members as we go” (Nov. 7 *World Tribune*, p. 5).

Let's make treasuring every person a reality. Together, let's actualize the 2009 women's theme: Let's win right now—Let's win together!