

**Message from the Founder**  
**On the Occasion of the Eleventh Commencement Ceremony**  
**Soka University of America, Graduate School**  
**Calabasas Campus**  
**Wednesday, December 14, 2005**

We are honored here today by many distinguished guests, families and friends, and students from the Calabasas and Aliso Viejo campuses of Soka University of America. Your presence on this celebratory occasion and your loving support over the years are sincerely appreciated and in many ways have made today possible. I should like to recognize the faculty, administration and staff of SUA for their untiring dedication to the work of fostering a new generation of gifted leaders for the world.

To the eleventh graduating class of Soka University of America, Calabasas: I offer my heartfelt congratulations on this day that marks a defining point of your life achievements thus far and the commencement of your journey into society with the brilliant light of Soka education.

The compelling words of Virginia Benson, Executive Director of the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, speak well to this moment. Let me reiterate them: "Heart-to-heart dialogue...has the power to transform the impossible 'other' into the possible 'we.'"

A dialogue that reaches from heart to heart mines one's capacity for language and one's strength of character. In plying yourselves to gain expertise in language education while engraving in your hearts the spirit of Soka education, you are the very ones whose mission it is to lead in the century of dialogue and harmonious coexistence so eagerly awaited by humanity.

Among my fondest memories of the Calabasas campus is the vivid scene thirteen years ago of welcoming, together with my young friends, the mother of the American Civil Rights Movement, Mrs. Rosa Parks. Under the vast skies of southern California we stood hand in hand with Mrs. Parks in a circle, singing the spiritual "We Shall Overcome." On October 24th of this year her noble life, eternally engraved in human history, came to a close at the age of ninety-two. Nurtured by Provost and Dean Takahashi, the friendship that blossomed with

Mrs. Parks will live on ever radiantly as an eternal treasure in the history of Soka education.

As you all know, it was Mrs. Parks' courageous act that sparked the historic Montgomery bus boycott exactly 50 years ago this month. A bus driver had ordered Mrs. Parks to give up her seat and go to the back of the bus, what was then designated the "Negro section." Mrs. Parks boldly refused, steadfast in her conviction that we cannot remain silent in the face of discrimination. For her defiance Mrs. Parks was arrested.

The action of one determined individual has the power to move many. People rose in solidarity with the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and changed the course of history: One year after the bus boycott, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the discriminatory practices of the public transportation system were unconstitutional. Dr. King had summed up this struggle for human rights and social justice, in saying:

He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it.

The challenge is here. To become the instruments of a great idea is a privilege that history gives only occasionally.

Dr. King's thoughts bring to mind Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, father of Soka education, also a person of conviction and courage who fought against the social ills of his time. Mr. Makiguchi asserted that Soka education provided the way to break through any social deadlock. He appealed forthrightly to educators to strive not merely for their own happiness but to take on both the sorrows and joys of their friends as their own. He believed that educators must be to students models of dauntless action for justice.

The Lotus Sutra, said to be the quintessential distillation of Eastern philosophy, recounts stories of ideal actions that are, I feel, especially insightful today. Among them are the examples of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound and Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds.

Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, understanding and in keeping with the capacity and nature of the people, takes on various forms to alleviate their suffering and

give encouragement with his voice and the wondrous sounds he makes. For the penetrating voice that rose from his great life force, he was also known by the name Wonderful Roar. This bodhisattva makes a spectacular appearance at an assembly on Eagle Peak, filling ears, hearts and minds with wondrous sounds. The scene can be taken to symbolize what we today might term the ethos of a culture of peace, one that is in perfect accord with the vibrations, or sounds, of the universe. Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound represents the scene's protagonist, who freely makes use of speech, dialogue, wisdom and sensitivity in the cause of justice which prevails in an ethos of harmonious coexistence among cultures and civilizations.

Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds is described as a champion of compassion, a listener to all sounds and voices of the world, especially to the voices of those suffering. He fully embraces them, to the point of understanding and sharing in their suffering, and acting in concert to overcome their suffering. This bodhisattva confronts the evils that seek harbor in the powers of authority and amidst society, that cause conflict, violence, abuse and discrimination. In other words, this bodhisattva confronts the injustices that cause people to suffer. He strives to create a society in which people can live with peace of mind. It is for this reason that Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds is also described as a bodhisattva who bestows fearlessness.

The actions of these two figures suggest to us the requisite qualities of leaders and educators in the 21st century.

Professor David T. Hansen of Teachers College, Columbia University, former President of the John Dewey Society, proposes that it is not enough for educators to react to the pressures and problems of circumstances; they must learn to respond imaginatively, creatively and reflectively. This brings to mind the fact that the word "responsibility" derives from the word "respond."

I would hope that you listen with compassion, just as Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, to the voices of the people, especially youth, and the desperate cries of the times. I would hope that you respond with all sincerity and devote yourselves to the creation of a peaceful world, a world in which all enjoy human security and freedom from fear. I would hope that you freely employ dialogue, engage and interact with all people, just as Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, to create harmony among the world's cultures and civilizations. I would

hope that you become protagonists in nurturing a culture of peace. Herein lies the responsibility of leaders and educators of the 21st century.

“He is a poor disciple who does not excel his master.” So wrote Leonardo da Vinci, a man of unending quest and creativity. If you are a disciple, become a great disciple and excel your mentor! — Such is the fervent spirit I feel in the words of this giant of the European Renaissance. These words, this spirit I dedicate to you, dear friends of Soka.

To prepare the stage from which you are able to fulfill your role in the 21st century is the final undertaking and mission of my life. My greatest joy and hope lie in your growth and success.

A parting thought to my young friends, the 11th graduating class: Live each day with vigor and spirited challenge! Fill your youthful days with worthy action!

Daisaku Ikeda  
Founder