

ACTIVITIES FOR PEACE

S GI launched the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition in September 2007 to mark the 50th anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's call for the abolition of nuclear weapons. It also marked a half-century of efforts toward nuclear abolition, in the form of petition campaigns and opinion surveys, awareness-raising efforts such as seminars and exhibitions, the publication of the stories of *hibakusha* (survivors of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), as well as broad-based activities to promote nonviolence and create a culture of peace.

At the core of all these activities lies the belief that it is the citizens of this planet who must seize the initiative in the effort to rid the world of these inhumane weapons of mass destruction, which endanger what Toda described as our "inviolable right to live." Every exhibition showing, every petition signature, provides an opportunity for dialogue, empowering individuals to take action and make their voices heard.

The People's Decade aims to foster a global solidarity toward nuclear abolition, calling upon citizens, governments and civil society to work together to create a grassroots movement that can no longer be ignored.

The decade has seen the launch of the antinuclear exhibition "From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit." It is this concept of



Collecting signatures calling for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, Hiroshima, February 2010



Viewing the antinuclear exhibition "Transforming the Human Spirit," UN Headquarters, Vienna, October 2010

"Peace, according to Soka Gakkai Buddhists, begins with individual peace and happiness, and spreads as enlightened individuals become active in the cause of peace at the local, national and international levels."

— Soka Gakkai in America by Phillip E. Hammond and David W. Machacek



Volumes of recollections of the horrors of war recorded by women and youth of Soka Gakkai



At the launch of the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition, Cooper Union, New York, 2007

transforming the human spirit that underlies SGI's activities for peace. As Daisaku Ikeda has said: "The real enemy that we must confront is the ways of thinking that justify nuclear weapons; the readiness to annihilate others when they are seen as a threat or as a hindrance to the realization of our objectives."

The exhibition highlights how nuclear weapons are at the top of a pyramid of violence, and promotes human security: a people-centered view of security which holds that securing fundamental human needs is the key to national, regional and global stability. The abolition of nuclear weapons is part of the larger process of transformation at the heart of the SGI movement, which also encompasses efforts to promote sustainable development and human rights, grassroots education and interfaith dialogue.

For more information: www.sgi.org

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80th ANNIVERSARY OF SOKA GAKKAI

1930 - 2010

A BUDDHIST MOVEMENT FOR EMPOWERMENT AND PEACE

November 18, 2010, marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of Soka Gakkai, a network of lay Buddhists dedicated to individual empowerment in the cause of peace. What began as a small group of reform-minded educators in Tokyo, Japan, has expanded into a grassroots network of socially engaged global citizens who share the conviction that lasting peace and security can only be achieved through the inner transformation and social contribution of individuals in all walks of life. Today, Soka Gakkai International (SGI) has members in 192 countries and territories around the world.

SGI members practice the Buddhism of the 13th-century Japanese monk Nichiren (1222–82), who identified the Lotus Sutra of Shakyamuni Buddha as encapsulating the essential message of Buddhism—that all individuals possess limitless positive potential.

One of the defining concerns of the more than 12 million members of SGI around the world is the abolition of nuclear weapons, a consistent theme of the movement's activities for more than half a century. SGI's advocacy of this cause has concentrated upon galvanizing and awakening actors at the grassroots, inspiring a commitment to creating a culture of peace in the hearts and minds of individuals.

This form of advocacy has been most recently expressed through the "People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition," which was launched in 2007 based on a proposal by SGI's president, Daisaku Ikeda. The People's Decade aims to create a global solidarity of the world's people in support of nuclear abolition and of a Nuclear Weapons Convention as a means to achieve this goal.

"A culture of peace is born from one person standing up, taking courageous action, and engaging widely in dialogue. The foundation is to empower each person to the greatest possible extent."

— SGI President Daisaku Ikeda



Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (front row, center) with Soka Gakkai members in Fukuoka, 1941



SGI members, USA
Schoolchildren view the "Seeds of Change" exhibition in India

ORIGINS

Soka Gakkai traces its origins to November 18, 1930, and the publication in book form of founder Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's theory of "Soka" or value-creating pedagogy. Makiguchi (1871–1944) was an author and educator, a practitioner of Nichiren Buddhism who was passionately dedicated to the reform of the Japanese educational system.

The group he founded together with his close associate Josei Toda (1900–58) initially consisted of reformist educators attracted by Makiguchi's practical, child-centered educational philosophy, which emphasized independent thinking over rote learning and self-motivation over blind obedience. The group gradually attracted a larger membership seeking to improve their lives based on the principles of Buddhism.

However, as Japan came increasingly under the control of militaristic nationalism during the 1930s, the government cracked down on all forms of dissidence. The refusal of Makiguchi and Toda to compromise their beliefs and support the extreme form of Shintoism imposed by the regime led to their arrest and imprisonment in 1943 as "thought criminals." Despite attempts to persuade him to renounce his principles, Makiguchi held fast to his convictions and died in prison on November 18, 1944, at the age of 73.

Josei Toda was released from prison just before the war ended. Toda was convinced that the practice of Nichiren Buddhism offered a direct route to self-empowerment, and



Josei Toda lecturing on the writings of Nichiren, 1954



Tsunesaburo Makiguchi
Josei Toda calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons, 1957

set out to rebuild Soka Gakkai amidst the devastation of postwar Japan.

Toda taught that the process of challenging and overcoming the problems of everyday life can become a source of personal change and growth, which results in a change in one's relationships and community. This process, which he named "human revolution," enables each individual to develop the confidence and courage needed to confront the obstacles to their own happiness and the well-being of the society in which they live.

Toda identified nuclear weapons as the embodiment of the most negative, destructive forces that exist in the human heart: the wish to annihilate others. In a speech delivered in September 1957, he called on the members of Soka Gakkai, and especially the youth, to strive for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and this became the starting point for the organization's peace activism.

By the time of his death in 1958, Toda had transformed Soka Gakkai from the near oblivion of wartime suppression into a vibrant movement with membership of 750,000 households in Japan.

DAISAKU IKEDA

Daisaku Ikeda was born in Tokyo, Japan, on January 2, 1928, to a family of seaweed farmers. He witnessed the senseless horror of World War II as a teenager and this experience fueled his lifelong determination to work for peace. In 1947, at the age of 19, he met Soka Gakkai leader Josei Toda, spending the next 10 years learning from the man who he came to consider his mentor in life.

On becoming the third president of Soka Gakkai in 1960, Ikeda immediately set about building the foundations of an international Buddhist movement which offered people the chance to transform their own lives and contribute to building a peaceful world. Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was founded in 1975 and is now acknowledged as one of the most significant and diverse associations of engaged Buddhists in the world.

Ikeda recognized the need to seek universal expressions of Buddhist values in the realms of education and culture, with the overarching goal of peace. He has founded cultural, educational and peace-related institutions to give shape to his vision and promote dialogue and cross-cultural exchange, such as the Min-On Concert Association and the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research.

Ikeda has devoted himself to building bridges of understanding among people of different cultures and faiths, and worked to restore trust between Japan and China and with other countries in Asia that suffered from Japanese



Daisaku Ikeda meeting with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, 1974



Daisaku Ikeda

militarism during World War II. From the time of the Cold War, he frequently visited both China and the Soviet Union, determined to establish bonds of mutual understanding.

Moscow State University was the first to award Ikeda an honorary doctorate in 1975. Since that time universities around the world have honored Ikeda for his contributions as a peacebuilder, educator, philosopher and champion of dialogue who has made the teachings of Buddhism relevant to the challenges of today's world. He has now been awarded 300 honorary doctorates and professorships by academic institutions in over 50 countries and territories.

Believing that dialogue holds the key to peace, he has engaged in discussions with a wide range of thinkers including Nelson Mandela and Wangari Maathai. Fifty of these dialogues have been published to date. He has also submitted detailed peace proposals to leading figures at the UN every year since 1983.

Perhaps Ikeda's most enduring legacy is seen in the contributions of the individual members of SGI, who have been inspired by his interpretation of Buddhist humanism to strive to make a positive difference in the realm of their own lives and communities around the world.

"Ikeda is, in my opinion, the most seasoned dialogical partner in the world today. Since his celebrated dialogue with Arnold Toynbee . . . he has been the champion of cultivating world peace through dialogue, which entails the art of deep listening. Through dialogical encounters with many public intellectuals from all corners of the world . . . Ikeda has helped extend intellectual horizons and deepen critical self-reflectivity of dozens of thinkers of our time. His contribution to the life of the mind throughout the world is enormous."

— Professor Tu Weiming, Harvard University

"The Gakkai's greatest achievement lies in unleashing the power of the people, of those at the very lowest strata of society, and in revitalizing their lives . . . Helping people become self-reliant is precisely what the Soka Gakkai has done."

— Mimpei Sugiura, Japanese social activist

1930

Publication of "Soka kyoikugaku taikai" [The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy] by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi



1943

Makiguchi and Josei Toda imprisoned as "thought criminals"



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1957

Toda delivers his declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons

1960

Daisaku Ikeda inaugurated as Soka Gakkai president, embarks on creating a worldwide movement



1975

Publication of *Choose Life*, a dialogue between Ikeda and British historian Arnold Toynbee



1983

Ikeda submits the first of his annual Peace Proposals to the United Nations



1998

13 million signatures in support of the "Abolition 2000" campaign to eliminate nuclear weapons are collected



2007

Launch of the "People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition"