FOREWORD

In the following pages, George David Miller offers a rigorous treatment of the educational philosophy of Daisaku Ikeda. Traversing the broad borders and unearthing the rich content of Ikeda’s cosmic humanistic philosophy, the book examines vital issues such as the spirituality of wisdom, the integration of compassion and intellect, inner revolution, cosmic citizenship, peace and cooperation, self-esteem, violence, nihilism, and apathy. Miller’s account is bright and pithy, tracing the Buddhist and twentieth-century humanistic roots of Ikeda’s philosophy and illustrating how Ikeda’s notion of human or inner revolution is applicable to the vital contemporary concerns of educators.

One of the most vital concerns of educators in democratic societies is how students can become active participants in the democratic process. On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America became a reality with this pronouncement: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men [and women] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

When the founding fathers of the United States of America penned these words 225 years ago, they pointed the world in the direction of democracy and inclusiveness. Since then, there have been those among us who keep bringing us back to the grand and noble idea of democracy.

Mohandas Karamchand “Mahatma” Gandhi once said: “Civilization is the encouragement of differences. Civilization thus becomes a synonym of democracy. Force, violence, pressure, or compulsion with a view to conformity is, therefore, both uncivilized and undemocratic.” The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the leader of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, also understood the deep well of democracy and wanted the world house to drink from that well. King said:

We have inherited a large house, a great ‘world house’ in which we have to live together—black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem and Hindu, [Buddhist and Bedouin]—a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace.

How do we learn to live in peace? How do we learn to live the lessons of democracy? Thomas Jefferson said democracy cannot survive with an ignorant population. For centuries, we have depended on our institutions of higher education to teach us community, humanity, service, and happiness. W. E. B.
DuBois once remarked:

The function of the university is not simply to teach breadwinning, or to furnish teachers for the public schools or to be a centre of polite society. It is, above all, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization.²

And so for the sake of democracy envisioned by our forefathers; for the sake of civilization as conceived by Gandhi; and for the sake of civil rights imagined by King, we need new educational institutions to teach us Daisaku Ikeda’s civility for the uplift of all human personality and the environment. Ikeda’s philosophy of education can help us grow up into democracy’s crown. Ikeda’s educational theory is founded on the use of the power of education to promote respect and peaceful coexistence around the world.

Today, more than ever, we need a certain kind of educational institution that promotes international exchange, cross-cultural dialogue, and environmental justice for all of us to blossom and self-actualize to the maximum. Benjamin Elijah Mays, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and Daisaku Ikeda all had extensive international, interracial, interdisciplinary, and interreligious educations through a worldwide dialogue. All of this dialogue has the goal of freedom, liberty, equality, equity, coherently critical thinking, ecological responsibility, peace, nonviolence, happiness, value creation, and the building of a new world humanitarian order. This change has the goal of inclusive democracy.

Some of the language today which points to the moral frontiers of this profound change in our evolving democracy for the next century includes: civility, diversity maturity, the vertically challenged, gender justice, global excellence, quality control, integrity, the physically challenged, gender-neutral, inclusive language, sustainability, religious pluralism, multiculturalism, cloning, communication between silos, universal human, smoke free zones, profanity free zones, homophobia, distance learning, issue sensitive, time sensitive, quantum leap, xenophobia, and value creation.

The American Civil and Human Rights Nonviolent Movement was a time of open struggle for international democracy, and uniting our divided world house. In this Movement, we rehearsed for the democracy that is to be. The Civil Rights Movement turned the stupid, stumbling South into the sunshine states because, “A moral person cannot patiently adjust to injustice.” That is where Gandhi, King, and Ikeda are different. They have all taught the necessity of inclusiveness.

The cause of Civil Rights, which began as a point of entry for excluded minorities into the larger society, helped revitalize the American
Democratic ethos, as Martin Luther King, Jr. had intended. That rehearsal time broke down barriers for women all over the world. The notion of men being leaders and women backing us up is not in the spirit of democracy. Women and men should work side by side on the front lines—women are also leaders. Women in Montgomery, Alabama, for example, stayed up overnight and printed 35,000 flyers outlining what happened to Rosa Parks.

We certainly have enjoyed much progress since the Civil Rights Movement. Today, our challenge and our responsibility are to grow into the crown of our possibilities. We must grow into the crowns of civilization, civil right, and civility. We must grow into the crown of democracy. We must be the change we wish to see, as Gandhi challenges us.

Through his educational philosophy, Ikeda has placed a crown of civility above the heads of global citizens with the hope we will grow tall enough to wear it. “Education must foster love for humanity, develop character, and provide an intellectual foundation for realizing peace and empowering people to contribute to society.”

Ikeda emphasizes an education that calls for a revolution of the inner life. A human revolution that does not confuse knowledge for wisdom, but develops compassionate wisdom, by focusing on the deepest and most universal dimensions of life, resulting in a natural empathy toward life in its infinite diversity. The failure of empathy makes violence possible. Our goal as “spiritual beings, planetary citizens, and human incarnations” must be diversity/maturity. We arrive at this global end by using the methods of what Ikeda calls “soft power,” dialogue, and cooperation.

We have in the twentieth century a near triumph of liberal democracy. Vincent Harding helps us ask some relevant questions: How do we expand democracy in the poorest communities in this country? What is democratic economics, democratic health care, democratic distribution of the wealth? Where are the centers for democracy? How shall American democracy be redeveloped and expanded? How do we achieve the political and spiritual deepening of democracy into education, religion, science and the arts? How do we create a multi-racial and international democracy? What kind of democratic practice will give the world peace? America is still a developing nation, maybe even ethically a third world nation when you consider how frightened we are of differences that we have created.

By happiness, Daisaku Ikeda, like Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, does not mean mere pleasure, indulgence, self-seeking, cowardice, indolence, or complacency where the development of personality ceases. From these egoistic perspectives, we are left with immature and arrogant individuals, unable to grow out of their childish ways of never listening to others. Ikeda talks about an attitude of creativity, exhilaration, joy, accomplishment, deep fulfillment, purpose, and enlightenment that evokes creativity in students.
Happiness is obtained through fully realizing our potential, while not being swayed by circumstances, but seeking to tower above misfortune.

Freedom is a constant creation of value. Freedom is not a gift. It is an achievement. If our dreams for democracy are to be actualized, every citizen in our nation is going to have to be educated to the limit of his or her capacity. And I don’t mean accommodated, adjusted, amused, exercised, or trained. Ikeda’s proactive educational philosophy of hope inspires us to hold freedom seminars around the many meanings of freedom, and also institutionalize intergenerational seminars and conversations about new careers on how to live together peacefully across racial lines, as well as how to save the environment.

Freedom has a purpose. Freedom is for the pursuit of happiness and service. It is for the development of the individual and of society. Freedom gives us the release from the great burden of uniformity, and releases value creation. If two people agree on everything all the time, says Vincent Harding, then one of them is unnecessary. It is only when we are in dialogue that we are most human. There is something special about multi-lateral dialogue, one in which we are all minorities.

We are citizens of a world that does not yet fully exist. The future is an infinite succession of present moments. We must learn to live together now what we believe to be the best of the ideals we treasure. We must abandon anti-democratic and uncivil practices. Daisaku Ikeda holds a crown above our heads with the hope that we will grow tall enough to wear it. He encourages us in Gandhi’s words to “be the change we wish to see.”

And when we have grown up into democracy’s crown, we will have answered the anguished echo from all of the wisest humane reformers: Roger Williams’s call for religious liberty; Samuel Adams’s call for political liberty; Henry David Thoreau’s denunciation of coercion; William Lloyd Garrison’s demand for emancipation; Eugene V. Debs’s cry for economic equality; Robert Maynard Hutchins’s insistence that democracy requires liberal education for all; Martin Luther King, Jr.’s dream to be judged by the content of one’s character and not by the color of one’s skin; Nichiren Daishonin’s call for perceiving the Mystic Truth inherent in all living beings; and Daisaku Ikeda’s challenge that we be the highest seat of learning for humanity, the cradle of a new culture, and a fortress for the peace of humankind.

Then we will be able to live together in a great world house in peace, respecting the worth and dignity of all human personality as sacred. This is the raison d’être for Ikeda’s educational philosophy and the institutional embodiment of it (most recently in Soka University of America), as we attempt to wear democracy’s crown in a new century and millennium that will emphasize the greatest ideals of democracy—civilization, civil rights and civility—when the grand idea of democracy envisioned in the Declaration of Independence blooms for everybody around the globe.

In Peace, Value, and Wisdom, George David Miller illustrates what a perfect fit Ikeda’s educational philosophy is for democracy’s crown.
Foreword

Democracy flourishes only when the populace is enlightened, can dialogue and cooperate in spite of differences, and build a society of hope pointing toward the ultimate goal of peaceful co-existence. Ikeda's philosophy of education can be an indispensable tool for educators on all levels to begin molding our spirits and public policies to fit into that crown.

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