

I am now pleased to introduce our first candidate for the Honorary Degree of Humane Letters. President Simone, members of the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff and honored guests, I am pleased to present Mr. Yohei Sasakawa. Mr. Sasakawa, please step forward.

(Pause - lead applause)

Sasakawa san, as chair and president of The Nippon Foundation of Japan you have made the elimination and control of leprosy a major mission of your life's work. Since 1985, by your effort, 15 million patients have been cured. In collaboration with the World Health Organization, you have helped achieve a truly remarkable reduction of the incidence of this disease worldwide, the number of endemic countries has been reduced from 122 to 5. Additionally, you were appointed by the WHO to serve as its Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination.

Sasakawa san, you have worked to address peace in the Asia/Pacific Basin and around the world. For example, in the cause of international understanding you founded:

- The Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund
- Japan-China Sasakawa Medical Fellowship
- The Nippon Foundation Fellowship for Asian Public Intellectuals

As importantly, in 1997 you co-founded Forum 2000 with Vaclav Havel and Elie Wiesel. This ongoing annual gathering of world leaders, intellectuals and artists has worked diligently to identify ways of promoting global peace and justice. Parenthetically, President William Jefferson Clinton was an esteemed participant in the 2001 Forum.

Mr. Sasakawa, you strongly believe that it is best to help people help themselves and you have done so by supporting programs that enable those who are 'disabled' to become productive members of society. To this end, in 2001 you funded the establishment of the Postsecondary Education Network International (PEN-International) at RIT's National Technical Institute for the Deaf. PEN-International currently works to improve the postsecondary education of men and women who are deaf in Japan, China, the Philippines, Russia, Hong Kong, Viet Nam, South Korea, Thailand and the Czech Republic.

Further, Mr. Sasakawa, you have been a pioneer in funding the documentation of indigenous sign languages in Southeast Asia...an area long overlooked and ignored.

Stan McKenzie's introduction for Sasakawa

President Simone, Dr. Hurwitz, Dr. Mayberry, and Mr. Morley, would you please join us at the podium?

(Brief pause)

President Simone, Trustees, Faculty, Staff, Students and Guests, for these and myriad other contributions to the betterment of humanity, I am please to present Mr. Yohei Sasakawa to you for the award of a Doctorate of Humane Letters from Rochester Institute of Technology.

(Brief Pause, applause. Dr. McKenzie steps back from the podium, Dr. Simone steps up to the podium)

DR. SIMONE: Yohei Sasakawa, by the authority vested in me by the Regents of the State of New York – and the Board of Trustees of Rochester Institute of Technology, I now confer upon you the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters – as recommended by the faculty – with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto – in recognition of which we now vest you with this hood – and present you with this diploma.

Stan and Alan will hood Mr. Sasakawa as Dr. Simone confers the degree. The degree is on the table with the hood. Mr. Sasakawa is presented with the degree and Dr. Simone, Stan, Alan, Kit, and Mr. Morley offer their congratulations.

(Applause)

Then, Stan, Mr. Sasakawa, Alan, Kit and Mr. Morley take their seats; Dr. Simone to the center podium to introduce Mr. Clinton.)