VICTORY OVER VIOLENCE 2000
DIALOGUE – FOSTERING NONVIOLENT ACTIVISM IN YOUTH

The SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee (YPC) was formed in 1991 by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and charged with the mission of supporting the United Nations and fostering youth who will become leaders of the 21st Century. In August 1999 the YPC, together with the junior high and high school division of the SGI-USA, launched the "Victory over Violence" campaign. The objective is to spark dialogue and heighten awareness regarding nonviolent activism and to provide opportunities for youth to become nonviolent activists. The project package includes a video, information kit, nonviolence pledge, and Victory over Violence bookmarks and buttons.

The United Nations has named the year 2000 the year of a Culture of Peace, and the UN General Assembly has named the first ten years of this decade the International Decade of A Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for Children of the World. And SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's 2000 Peace Proposal is titled, "Peace Through Dialogue: A Time to Talk." Based on these themes, the YPC felt it was fitting to begin to dialogue with other organizations committed to the goals of nonviolence and fostering capable youth.

The participants in this dialogue all work with youth and all are active in the area of nonviolence. They are (from upper left) Jennifer Case and Rajmohan Ramanathapillai of the Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence (Memphis, Tennessee), Hiro Sakurai of the Soka Gakkai International United Nations Office (New York), Janet Garfinkle of the Simon Wiesenthal Center and Museum of Tolerance (Los Angeles), Carah Ong of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (Santa Barbara, California), Edward Feasel of Soka University (Aliso Viejo, California), and Yvette Y. Edmond of the SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee, (Santa Monica, California).

Ed: I think the theme of today's dialogue, "Fostering Nonviolent Activism in Youth," is wonderful. We're seeing an increase in violence among youth and an increasing tendency to turn to violence to try to solve the difficulties, controversies and conflicts they face. We have to resist this trend and educate youth in different methods of solving conflicts. Any effort to increase the awareness of nonviolent means in solving conflicts is important.

Janet: I think two issues are important. One is early intervention. The earlier that we start working with youth, which obviously has an impact on the family, the better. The second is to model behavior we want youth to emulate. Youth today are bombarded with violent images by the media. It seems the motion pictures that make the most money are the ones that are the most violent.

If we are going to be responsible adults and good stewards of our children, we need to start modeling the behaviors that we want to see them carry forth, and I do not think that we are doing a good job of that.

Jenny: I think it is particularly important that we focus on youth because as they transform themselves, and as they take on positions of responsibility in society, they will transform others as well.

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Raj: This is my sixth month in the United States, so my perception is quite different. I am still digesting and absorbing things. I come from Sri Lanka, which is a war zone where youth are viewed as capital for the war industry. Youth have become a target for the guerrilla and army forces. Youth are targets because the warring parties feel that they can capture and mold young minds to hate and fight the enemy. When I came to this part of the world, I did not see that pattern. I did see a pattern of youth feeling alienated from the main social structure. They are not fully connected.

There is a lot of stress on parents and in many cases both parents work and can not play a major role in the development of their children. So, that feeling of alienation contributes to isolation and idleness, such that young people's minds become attracted to certain forms of violent entertainment, such as video games. I think this contributes to youth violence. I would like to suggest that we need to focus less on teaching or preaching to youth and more on being part of their lives.

Yvette: Of course, it would be wonderful if all children were raised in homes where nonviolence was modeled. However, since that is not the case, we need to reach children before they accept violence as a way of life. What do you feel is the crucial age to reach out to them?

Jenny: The author SuEllen Fried of the STOP Violence Coalition in Kansas City, Missouri, works with schoolchildren on the topic of bullying. She says both physical and verbal bullying behavior seem to emerge as early as third grade, thus this may be a crucial time in the lives of children.

Janet: Vivian Pauley is an author and teacher in Chicago, Illinois; she wrote a book titled, *You Can't Say You Can't Play*. She wanted her kindergarten students to be inclusive and tried to help them focus on this one rule, "You Can't Say You Can't Play." In this way everyone could play with each other without exclusion. The way she envisioned this working is that when a child came up to a group of other children playing, the group couldn't tell that child to go away, that they couldn't play. This turned out to be an extraordinarily difficult thing to have children as young as five to six year old be open and receptive to other children. For whatever reasons, I don't think she really was ever able to determine exactly why children were very exclusive. Pauley thought that at that early age, they would be very inclusive, but there seems to be something about human beings that makes us want to stake out our territory.

I think that language plays a big part in violent behavior as well. One of the things we stress here in the Museum of Tolerance is that we have personal responsibility over the use of words. Acute cataclysmic events in human history like the Holocaust did start with the words that people chose to use. Therefore, I would say from birth we need to instill nonviolent behavior in our children. In very subtle ways language seems to influence human behavior. It seems to me that we need to create an environment where children are cherished and where it's OK for parents not to have all the material items that they think that they have to have. In this way, perhaps mom or dad could spend more time with the family or work out a schedule so adults have more time to do the modeling for their children. I truly believe that we need to work with children from birth to help them develop a respect for nonviolence. We definitely need to prioritize in terms of our children.

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If children are really our most important asset, which is, of course, what we keep saying, then we're going to have to allocate resources to enable parents to have the time to be with their children, to help parents understand how to parent, to help them understand child development so that they know what ages and stages are appropriate and what expectations are appropriate for children. Obviously, we don't teach algebra to kids who are eight years old because it's an abstract concept. We teach it when they're 13 when their brains are ready to accept abstract ideas. That doesn't mean you can't start laying the framework for algebra much earlier. The same is true with nonviolence.

Ed: I agree, I think at different ages the approach could be different in terms of how we try to infuse this spirit of tolerance and understanding. I grew up in a very poor area in San Diego, and there was a lot of gang activity. It seems to me that from elementary school on up there was an increasing number of episodes of violence. While there was some violence in my elementary school, it was actually in junior high school when it peaked. This is when friends started breaking up into different cliques and often resorted to violence to solve conflicts. I agree we need to start right from the beginning just teaching simple things like having everyone participate in games, and not excluding others because of differences. As time goes on, we can get more sophisticated in the way we share with our youth how to resolve conflicts that might arise from differences.

Raj: At the Gandhi Institute we have a program called "Kindness is Contagious." We are working with 1200 children from three different elementary schools, and one of the successes of this program is that, compared to some workshops that they did with junior high school and high school students, they find that working with elementary school children, teaching them to be kind to each other, and helping them through that process is easier. The program has been quite successful. The schools have reported that in the five years since we have been providing this program, the complaints regarding student violence have continued to decline. The earlier age is the best time to foster attitudes of nonviolence and help children develop behavior that is inclusive and builds relationships with other children and the community.

Yvette: It seems that a lot of responsibility is being placed upon the school system and yet some of the most recent youth violence has occurred within the school setting. What do you think this suggests about the education system in America?

Ed: I don't think we can blame the educational system. I think a lot of teachers are facing very difficult circumstances working with youth in schools. Our schools in many cases have become unsafe environments. I think the situation in our schools reflects society, as opposed to the problem being created in the school system. At the same time, I think education can do a lot to reverse this trend.

Janet: I would not blame the schools either. The word "kindness" came up, and I think that's a very important word. The younger the children you look at in school, the kinder you find the environment. In other words, if you go into a preschool or nursery school setting, that's probably where you're going to find the largest quantity of kindness. At that level school is usually a very loving environment. For some reason we tend to lose that because there are so many demands on teachers' time. They have to meet standards. The

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kids must know X, Y and Z to meet the appropriate standards. I'm not saying standards are a bad thing. Somehow we should be able to incorporate achieving those goals along with maintaining that atmosphere of kindness. This goes back to modeling. If the kids don't see it done, we can talk all day about it, but without actually having nonviolence and kindness modeled for them, they're not going to know how to do it, and how to replicate it in their own lives.

Yvette: So it sounds like it's everyone's responsibility to be a proper role model for youth. However, in today's society, youth spend a lot of time in school, and yet there are very few schools that really emphasize nonviolent activism or teach youth to live a nonviolent lifestyle. What would you hope to see in the future as far as the education system actually teaching nonviolence?

Raj: I hope that we aren't going to restrict education or the learning experience for children only to the schools. Gandhi often said that children learn from their environment. Therefore, we all have to educate children and not leave it solely to the school system. My feeling is that although none of the schools in the United States are teaching violence, most of them are not attempting to teach nonviolence. So, it's important that we formally introduce some sort of program to teach youth nonviolence and how to build healthy relationships.

Jenny: I do not think it is right to think of nonviolence as a lifestyle as if it were an alternative to other lifestyles; but rather, I think of living nonviolently as living well in the moral sense. Everyone, regardless of lifestyle, ought to lead a moral life. Thus, if leading a moral life equals living nonviolently, schools should teach youth how to live well, that is, live nonviolently. Part of the role of schools should be teaching youth how to be good people and how to live well. SuEllen Fried has said that there are some things teachers can do to help students cope with forms of violent behavior that they experience among themselves. For example, she says teachers can encourage students not to keep quiet when they find themselves victims or witnesses to violence. Students should also be taught a distinction between tattling on somebody and reporting. As one student said, according to Fried, tattling is when you're trying to get someone in trouble and reporting is when you're trying to get someone out of trouble.

Another thing teachers can do is try to break alliances that sustain patterns of violence among students. Teachers can do that among young children by rearranging students' seats on a regular basis and also by asking certain students to become special friends to students who are typically the targets of violent behavior. Fried also advised teachers to invite school staff and other adults into their classrooms for interviews so that students will learn to see cafeteria workers and bus drivers, for example, as full-fledged people with regular lives. This makes students less likely to make trouble in the cafeteria or on the bus. Fried also urged teachers to share personal stories about their own lives with their students. I think the goal is to help students see the humanity of all people, adults and young people, in their lives, which helps people live well, or nonviolently.

Ed: Someone once said that human beings are social animals that like to constantly interact with each other. If so, then war or resorting to violence is like a disease because it essentially breaks down our ability and desire to be sociable. I believe the key is dialogue,

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being able to discuss the issues that we may disagree on. In schools we should teach the art of dialogue, being able to discuss even controversial issues, to disagree with each other while still having respect for each other's opinions, and, in the end, coming away having learned something from each other. Instead of a unidirectional conveyance of knowledge, classes could be more of a dialogue setting where we don't shy away from heated issues. Often, students don't get to discuss these types of issues until college or late in high school. But there are a lot of issues that we need to be able to talk about early on, even in elementary school. In discussing these issues, youth can come to understand that they can have different opinions and still get along, and through dialogue, even learn from each other.

The founder of Soka University, Daisaku Ikeda, has said that Soka University of America will be a University of human rights. I think this concept of respecting, treasuring and defending human rights is a spirit that schools can also impart to our youth through various examples such as Gandhi, Rosa Parks, and so many others. When students understand the value of human rights and what people have sacrificed to gain those rights, they can start to treasure them and understand that they should defend them — not only their own, but others' rights as well.

Yvette: As part of the Victory over Violence campaign, the Youth Peace Committee created a video to spark dialogue about various forms of violence. Some of the images in the video include Gandhi, King, and Rosa Parks. Upon showing the video to a group of teachers, one teacher complained that the video should include people that youth currently view as role models. Immediately, the other teachers in the room disagreed. The majority of the teachers felt it was better to show the images of Gandhi, King and Parks because it helped keep that history of nonviolent activism alive and helped them teach students about those nonviolent activists. The youth of the SGI-USA have been doing Victory over Violence presentations since August 1999, and the response has been overwhelming. More than 2,200 presentations have taken place, and we've collected about 100,000 pledges. Young people are really interested in nonviolence. The next step would be to create youth peacemakers within the junior high and high schools. However, I have noticed that although young people are receptive to us coming into their schools, they don't find it very "cool" to be called a peacemaker, or to be known as nonviolent. How can we make it "cool," make it positive, for youth to be nonviolent activists?

Hiro: Unfortunately, violence gets people's attention. This point was discussed at the international NGO conference held in Seoul, Korea, last October. Our challenge is to make peace more fascinating and more exciting than violence. The media has to portray the human drama of people who present alternatives to violent means of resolving conflict. We need more portrayals of courageous people standing up to those who use violence. At the same conference, we had a workshop on women leading the way to a culture of peace. One of the participants, an NGO representative from India, suggested that we need to use the media to portray courage in a graphic way.

Raj: One of my experiences when talking to counselors or teachers is that there is a kind of resistance or exhaustion on the part of teachers whenever we take a new nonviolence program to them. Teachers are always being given all kinds of programs, all kinds of curricula to teach, and they don't have much time to prepare. This may be one of the

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dangers or challenges that we have to overcome in presenting nonviolence in school settings. This may be one reason that teachers don't make efforts to teach nonviolence because so far they have not had much time to invest in that kind of education. I wonder if we provided mentors trained in nonviolence to work along with teachers and counselors whether that could be part of the solution?

Ed: I think that's a very good point, Raj. I think teachers are quite taxed in terms of their responsibilities and the amount of resources that they bring to try to meet those responsibilities. It's interesting, at school the teachers are taxed, and at home the parents are taxed because they're both usually working, so where does the student get that mentor, or that person who spends time to teach them these tools and methods of nonviolence?

Janet: Unfortunately, in California one of the things that we are supposed to be doing is reducing class size. Smaller classes would create a better environment for students and allow teachers time to address issues like violence and model appropriate behaviors. If you were to take data on the amount of actual contact that the teacher has with a student in a class, the teacher only addresses about thirty percent of the children by name or by recognition during the class period. That means seventy percent of those children are going without some sort of recognition. They might as well be invisible. You can imagine if you were a student in that seventy percent and you went through your entire day without ever being recognized by another human being, what that does to you, particularly when that happens year after year. It's a sad thing to say that while we say we value our children and cherish them, we're not willing to put our money where our mouths are.

Yvette: One thing that the Victory over Violence campaign tries to focus on is the realities facing youth, in school, in society, and at home. I mentioned earlier that youth from the SGI-USA have making presentations on nonviolence. The goal is to create dialogues and relationships with their peers. Through this, other youth see that it is okay to be nonviolent and see their peers modeling this behavior. In addition, in these interactive presentations, the students get exposure to nonviolent methods of dealing with frustrations and conflicts. In light of today's society, what can we do in our work for nonviolence to foster this kind of activism in youth, to reawaken youth to their power to change our world?

Jenny: I have heard that there is an organization in Japan that is thinking about an alternative to CNN called PNN, which stands for the Peace News Network. They would focus on airing stories from around the world about acts of nonviolence, or kindness, or conflict mediation. This would be a way of getting out the word that there are alternatives to the kinds of violent behavior that we so often hear about. I think the media is very powerful and really does a lot to change our understanding of ourselves and our world. That may be one way to start.

Carah: Well, one of the things that was brought up earlier was the issue of money and the media. It is vital to reach out to the media and show them the financial incentive to teach peace and to convey peace. Our focus for Abolition 2000 is directed towards communities and educational campaigns that reach children and their families directly. We have found that we must also empower youth with responsibility to themselves and others. Also, it is vital that we teach peace from the moment a child is born because it is to children

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that we will pass the torch, empowering them to make a difference. Here at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, we believe in the power of one to make a difference. The Foundation has prepared a "Student's Guide to Achieve a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World." Youth are encouraged to educate themselves and others about nuclear weapons and the human suffering and environmental degradation that have been the legacy of the Nuclear Age. Students are also encouraged to share the information they learn with their peers and family. Abolition 2000 also has an International Petition, with more than 13.5 million signatures to date that students can circulate on their campuses. We invite students to be creative and initiate their own form of participation, perhaps by starting an organization on their campus.

Yvette: What are some of the programs that you present to the media that make nonviolence attractive?

Carah: One of the things that I have seen done in the past is alternative cartoons. Children have contact with TV before they have contact with other children, and that's their first impression of life. I believe that children today experience a numbing of the consciousness at a very young age. Certainly the media can be used to present less violent cartoons at the earliest stage of childhood as one alternative. We need to support this kind of media and we need to show that peace is profitable. Also, the media feeds off of consumerism. Youth must be given the power to understand the effects of buying into this type of thinking.

Raj: I believe that we cannot understand the concept of war and violence in a vacuum. Violence always has a context. That context is a political issue, or social injustice, or inequality, such as class, gender, race, and so forth. I think it is important to create awareness of the issues of class, race and gender, and examine how these injustices came about and their impact on society. This type of contextual teaching of nonviolence is one of the things that really interested me during the SGI-USA's Grand Youth Culture Festival. The festival had a holistic approach. It documented nonviolent activism in a historical context, using history and illustrating the struggle for equality and nonviolence in the context of race, class and gender. I think those are the kind of models that we should provide enabling youth to understand the issues that exist between justice and peace versus violence and war. If we could inspire youth to understand those notions, then passionate activism will naturally follow. We cannot do activism for its own sake. It has to evolve from some sort of a passion for an important issue.

Carah: Raj has brought up a good point. We need not only to teach children but also to learn from them. We need to view the issue from their perspective and find out what works for them. One of the things would be to find out what interests them and make peace exciting from their point of view. Keeping up with current technologies would be one way to approach this. Children are very smart; they're very perceptive about new technologies, especially with the Internet. Children spend quite a few hours a day on the computer, and so we must make nonviolence attractive in the media that appeals to youth. As a way of empowering youth, they must also be allowed to come up with their own projects. Many children are aware of the issues, they know what's going on in the world around them, and we must let them think for themselves and offer suggestions to us, rather than us telling

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children what they should do.

Ed: That's a very good point. When we who are older come to youth, they can often sense that there's an agenda on our part. It's important for us to be role models and inspire others through our own action, which I think all of us are trying to do. Oftentimes, even the language we use is unappealing to youth. We have to let youth come up with their own language. You know, "activism," "peacemaker," sometimes these things just don't speak to this generation. Each generation has its own issues that they're dealing with, and we can't force youth to follow a path that we're setting. I think what Raj mentioned is absolutely important; we should educate them about issues, then allow them to give expression to that issue in their own unique way.

Recently Daisaku Ikeda met with the president of Queens College of the City University of New York, Allen Lee Sessoms. They talked about the issue of youth and the malaise of the spirit of youth. President Sessoms mentioned that the youth of his generation had the Vietnam War, corrupt authority like the Nixon administration, and clear abuses of civil rights that they all rallied around to change. But he feels that today one of the difficulties is that the issues confronting youth do not provide a clear "enemy" to challenge. Issues such as class, race and gender are difficult for youth to get a handle on. Maybe what we can do is to bring these issues to youth, help educate them about these issues and be moderators of dialogues, where they can start to discuss among themselves and develop their own perspectives and courses of action to make a difference. We need to continue to inspire them and help them understand that they are the ones who are going to change this.

Yvette: In preparing for this dialogue I was reading a book called *Subverting Hatred*, published by the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century. This book suggests that religions have been used to separate people and create wars while most of their teachings have a peaceful message and seek to bring people together. What role does religion and/or philosophy play in fostering either violence or peace?

Janet: I think we can clearly point to the fact that more lives have been lost in the name of religion than for any other cause. This makes us ponder exactly what religion is asking us to do. I think it's a double message in terms of people being asked to take up the sword against a supposed enemy in the name of religion. But the message that also resonates is that if you look, from a Judeo-Christian perspective, at the Ten Commandments, you can find those same threads throughout every major religion. That is what we tend to want people to subscribe to and to practice in their daily lives. However, it seems to be very difficult to do.

Hiro: I think one of the roles of religion is to be engaged in social issues for the betterment of society. I would like to share the experience that a friend of mine had recently. It tells you how one individual can help change society. My friend is an SGI-USA member in New York. While walking through a housing project, he saw a young boy standing in front of the project. He had a conversation with this eight-year-old boy and began talking about Buddhism. The little boy began asking the following questions about Buddhism, "If I chant, can I kill somebody?" "If I chant, can I get crack cocaine?" and "If I chant, can I have sex?" My friend was shocked. He wanted to do something to help this boy

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and help change this situation. He shared this experience with his friends and gained their support. Then he decided to hold a Victory over Violence meeting within the housing project. It turned out that eighty to 100 people participated and studied together the importance of nonviolence. So it occurred to me from this example that peace is not something that can be achieved by one person, but yet it has to start with one person's determination. We must not turn away from the challenges youth present. We must educate and positively redirect them.

Raj: I come from a country where religion plays a major role in violence. One of the interesting things Gandhi said about religion is that "so long as we have proselytization, there will be no peace in the world." I think religious ideas have been a major cause of intolerance and violence. However, religion also has a history of contributing to nonviolence and peace in society. When it comes to philosophy, we have heard from the Greek philosophers, such as Heraclitus, that war is useful to stir up society and remove the bad elements. Hegel said that war is inevitable. For Hegel, war was an ethical movement that allowed society to progress from one historical stage to another. Karl Marx said that violence is the midwife of social change or revolution. So we have these big-name philosophers preaching about war. We also have thinkers like Clausewitz teaching that war is an important extension of politics. I think that we need to teach youth about alternative philosophies, like Gandhi, Martin Luther King and others. Of course, both religion and philosophy can be used or abused for many reasons. We need to find the usefulness and goodness in religion and philosophy in order to promote nonviolence and peace.

Ed: We have seen in the course of history many atrocities committed in the name of religion. We have also seen some of the most peaceful people emerge because of the philosophy they practice. It really becomes a kind of compass for a person's life. Both religion and philosophy lead a person in a certain direction. It has been said that religion is about the sacred, and what people hold sacred, and so when religion teaches value for life and value for individuals, it is very powerful.

Over the years, we have seen that religion has been a major force to inspire people to live beyond just providing for themselves, but also to care for others. This is a very positive aspect of religion. But of course, when religion teaches people to look down on others, then we can see detrimental results. So, clearly what we need is to have people understand the positive aspect of religion, its influence to inspire people to care for one another, and emphasize this part. Daisaku Ikeda said, "Education is the religion of the 21st Century." When I first heard these words I thought long and hard about their meaning. I really feel that religion has the power to inspire others to help create a better society. I think, similarly, education has the power to inspire people to tap their true potential to build a better society. So I think that's the positive aspect of religion that we need to emphasize and that people should embrace — that sacred part where we come to treasure all life.

Yvette: As we come to the close of our dialogue, please share with us what you think are the most important actions we can take to foster nonviolence in youth.

Janet: I think the bottom line is early intervention and creating a sense of community. Creating a place where everyone can belong is critically important, and more important than that is the behaviors that we model. The behaviors we model are the behaviors that

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we're going to get back from youth.

Carah: One of the key elements we use to foster youth activism is listening to children and really trying to understand where they're coming from, and then taking it to the further step of asking them to help us in our work and empowering them to do so. In addition to reaching out to schools through our Peace Education Project, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation also invites youth to come participate in activities sponsored by the Foundation. We also offer volunteer and internship programs for youth in our offices, working on the website, counting petitions and individual projects that are tailored to youth's specific interests.

Hiro: I think that violence is a common challenge for anyone, regardless of where they live, and I think that youth and children, and women too, are the most vulnerable to it. Since this year the United Nations is celebrating the International Year of a Culture of Peace, and the decade that will follow that, we would like to create activities which will promote and support this idea of peace and nonviolence for the 21st Century.

Jenny: I would like to affirm something that Janet said about the importance of helping children feel a sense of belonging by establishing communities for them to join. At the same time it is important that while creating communities we do not encourage children to see those who belong to other communities, or who don't belong to any communities, as alien. I also think it is important to help youth feel the urgency of the need for nonviolence in both proactive and reactive forms. Proactive forms of nonviolence have to do with living nonviolently, building constructive relationships, and speaking in ways that do not foster violent behavior. We engage in reactive nonviolence when, instead of tolerating injustices evident in our surroundings, we combat them directly yet without resorting to violence.

Raj: Gandhi often said that our body represents violence because in order to sustain our body we consciously or unconsciously commit violence. But then he also said that we have the mind or soul part of our nature, and the soul represents nonviolence. What we need is to foster the Culture of Peace, the "culture of the soul," which Gandhi says represents nonviolence. Sunanda Gandhi, co-founder of the Gandhi Institute, recently answered a question from a youth who was struggling to forgive another child who had been violent toward her. She asked Sunanda for help in dealing with this situation. Sunanda said it is important at this point in our culture to have a positive child-adult partnership. I think such partnerships could help students who are lost in conflict or who get angry or have fear. Such a partnership would allow us to create a Culture of Peace and a nonviolent culture in our communities. I think we need to start these partnerships.

Ed: As you know, we are currently in the process of creating a new university, and in fall 2001 we will open to our first class of 100 students. We are creating an environment here at Soka University of America that brings international perspectives and has an international community. The mission of the university is to foster global citizens who will go out and have an impact in society. Our aim is that our students will lead what Tsunesaburo Makiguchi called a "contributive life." Mr. Makiguchi, a Japanese educator whose writings laid the foundation for Soka education, stressed that for a person to be

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happy, it wasn't enough to develop a strong independent self, but that we needed to take that next step and contribute to society, contribute to others and create value. Not just value for oneself but value for society. So, we're really excited about this opportunity to open the first new university in the 21st Century, from which a new generation of leaders for peace will emerge.

Yvette: I want to thank each of you for participating in this dialogue. As we, the SGI-USA and the Youth Peace Committee, continue with our Victory over Violence campaign, we want to emphasize a philosophy that celebrates our uniqueness as individuals while cherishing our interconnectedness as human beings. We will continue to go out to schools and communities to dialogue about nonviolence and work to find solutions to the problems youth face. Thank you. ❑

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The participants in alphabetical order:

Jennifer Case is the Executive Director of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Haverford College and a Master of Arts and Doctorate in Philosophy from Washington University.

Yvette Edmond is Co-Director of the SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee and is a staff member of SGI-USA. She has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Master of Science in Industrial and Labor Relations from Loyola University of Chicago and a Juris Doctorate from Southern Illinois University School of Law.

Edward Feasel is Professor of Economics and Dean of Students at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Yale University and a Doctorate in Economics from University of California at Berkeley.

Janet Garfinkle has her undergraduate degree in history and experience as a public high school special education teacher. Since 1993, she has been the Coordinator of Museum Education in the Museum of Tolerance's Multimedia Learning Center. Ms. Garfinkle directs all aspects of the Multimedia Learning Center operations. She is responsible for staff training, and she develops and implements new programs such as the Holocaust survivor outreach program, the Once Upon a World Storytelling program, and the Once Upon a World Book Award.

Carah Ong is the Coordinator of Abolition 2000 and the Renewable Energy Project for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish and Global Peace and Security studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Carah has worked in Mexico, Guatemala, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

Rajmohan Ramanathapillai is the Program Director and Developer for the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence. He is a native of Sri Lanka where he was engaged in human rights until forced to flee the county. He has a Masters of Arts in Religious Studies and a Doctorate in Philosophy from McMasters University.

Hiro Sakurai is the Deputy Representative of the Soka Gakkai International United Nations Office and a bureau member of the Committee of religious NGO's. He has a Bachelor of Arts, and a Master of Arts from Soka University of America. He previously worked for the Consulate General of Japan's New York office.

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