

**VOV WEEK AT UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
BY DAVID KREMER  
MICHIGAN CORRESPONDENT**

SGI-USA members in Michigan, along with several student organizations, celebrated 40 years of SGI-USA history with a stirring weeklong Victory Over Violence Festival at the University of Michigan during the first week of October. There was an illustrious list of lecturers, including Dr. Lawrence Carter Sr., dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College. The festival culminated in a spectacular concert on Oct. 7 by Super Sounds, which includes eight world-renowned jazz performers who are also SGI-USA members.

The festival was the realization of the dreams of members of the SGI-USA Michigan student division to take a strong stand against the pervasive influence of violence that now permeates our society.

More than 100 people attended the opening ceremony at the Student Union building on Oct. 1. The mayor of Ann Arbor, Mich., Ingrid B. Sheldon, proudly read a proclamation announcing Victory Over Violence Week for Oct. 1–7. She expressed her appreciation and admiration that youth are taking the initiative in this campaign.

On Oct. 3, Dr. Carter, who had just met with SGI President Ikeda in early September, spoke eloquently about nonviolence and reflected on the connection among the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and President Ikeda.

Two panel discussions were held on Oct. 5, including Dr. Grace Lee Boggs, author and peace activist for more than 55 years; Renee Farris, director of Michigan Institute for Nonviolence Education (MINE); and Hilliard Hampton Jr., mayor of Inkster, Mich. Attendance at the meetings ranged from college students to senior citizens.

Just six days before the festival began, Dr. James Yamazaki, author of *Children of the Atomic Bomb*, and Taro Yamasaki, a Pulitzer-prize winning journalist, were invited to lecture at the conference. Taro Yamasaki began his Oct. 6 lecture by presenting a series of powerful photographs of human suffering. Despite the heart-wrenching images that Mr. Yamasaki displayed, there was a clear message of hope and compassion about being able to turn the tide in even the most desperate circumstances.

Dr. Yamazaki was a U.S. soldier captured by the Germans in World War II. As a prisoner, he experienced the intense Allied bombing of Germany. Back in the United States, his family was in internment camps surrounded by barbed wire. After the war, he was sent to Japan to study the children born of women exposed to the atomic bomb. He also discussed the impact on children of nuclear tests in the Pacific Ocean.

The finale of the weeklong festival was a cultural celebration on Oct. 7. After a wonderful performance by 40 children drumming the West African welcome song “Sanga Alafia” and congratulatory messages, Shingairai Chitanda, director of the University of Michigan Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center and honorary chairperson of the VOV Festival, delivered a impassioned speech with the theme “Protest Without Violence.”

The final event was a 90-minute concert by the Super Sounds band. The musicians included Mike Clark on drums, Larry Coryell on guitar, Onaje Gumbs on piano, Bennie Maupin on saxophone, Shunzo Ono on trumpet, Nestor Torres on flute, Buster Williams on bass and renowned vocalist Ernestine Anderson.

Throughout the astounding concert, the audience was thrilled to see each member of the

band perform virtuoso solos, stretching themselves and their instruments to inspiring levels of musical expression. Capping a magical evening, Ms. Anderson led the audience in a moving rendition of all seven verses of the civil rights anthem “We Shall Overcome,” a fitting end to a very special week.

After the festival was finished, student division member Masakazu Sueda commented: “I would like to dedicate our victory in the weeklong festival especially to the SGI-USA members in Michigan. They have raised me for 14 years, and it is so wonderful to see the bright smiles on their faces. We have now reached the starting line for the 21st century, and we will continue to grow together joyfully.”