

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA’S MESSAGE TO THE GANDHI, KING, IKEDA
COMMUNITY BUILDERS PRIZE CEREMONY
PAVE THE WAY TOWARD A NEW CULTURE OF PEACE**

‘A Buddhist scripture states, “If the spring is inexhaustible, the stream will never run dry,” writes SGI President Ikeda. ‘We must never let the copious flow of the awakened spirit run dry. We must ceaselessly refresh its springs, sharing and conveying it to the generations who will shoulder the challenges and promise of the future.’

Respected President Walter E. Massey of Morehouse College; Dean Lawrence Edward Carter Sr. of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel; Esteemed members of the King Family; and of the Gandhi Family; Ladies and gentlemen, friends.

Together with SGI members in 163 countries and regions throughout the world, I wish to offer this message of felicitations and solidarity with all those who have gathered together to attend this Century Sunday, the final event of the Spiritual Awareness Week. I am confident that these events will, like a brilliant dawn, illuminate the future path of humanity in the 21st century. Please also accept our heartfelt congratulations on the first anniversary of the establishment of the Gandhi Institute for Reconciliation.

Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were great leaders of peace and humanism whose achievements stand resplendent in the annals of human history. As the heirs to their spiritual legacy, your presence at this gathering is a brilliant beacon of hope for the new century.

The 20th century was an era ravaged as no other by the horrors of war and violence. It was against this destruction that these two champions of nonviolence made their stand. They were spurred by the burning conviction that no one has the right to deprive people of freedom and dignity. They were moved by the intense determination to end the tragic folly of humans wreaking suffering on their fellow humans. Firmly resolved to transform human history from its very depths, they arose to blaze new paths through an uncharted, pathless wilderness.

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of their successors, the message of these two spiritual giants—which they offered their lives to engrave on the pages of history—has become a guiding principle for the international community. We see this in the fact that the United Nations has designated the first 10 years of the 21st century the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the World’s Children. This is indeed a crystallization and embodiment of the power of their vision as well as your dedication to nurture and extend that vision.

We must call forth the limitless power of the spirit.

Earlier this year, to further the noble goals of the international decade and with your generous support, SGI-USA staged here at Morehouse College the exhibition “Treasuring the Future: Children’s Rights and Realities.” It was our great honor in this way to be able to help commemorate the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birth.

In order to keep today’s children and all future generations from inheriting—from falling prey—to the negative legacy of the 20th century, we must call forth from within the limitless power of the spirit, the power of hope and courage. Nothing inspires these qualities more powerfully than the examples of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. King.

Gandhi once stated that “a poet is one who can call forth the good latent in the human breast.” In this sense, both Gandhi and Dr. King were poets of the highest imaginable standing. They believed ceaselessly in the capacities for good that reside in the human spirit. They uncovered and discovered the capacity for good in all people, equally and without exception. Committed first and foremost to the inner transformation of the individual, they worked with vibrant energy to inspire people to bring forth their very highest, their most noble potential.

Dr. King declared: “Today the question is not whether we shall be free but by what course we will win” that freedom. His concern was focused on the single question of how we can attain true and lasting victory through peaceful means.

Armed only with an unyielding faith in the power of dialogue, these two poets plunged headlong into the raging torrents, the violent storms of reality—

*Always alongside those
who suffer!
Everywhere challenging
social evils!
Forever amidst the common people!*

At times like the sun, shining radiantly on those who languish in the dark gloom of despair, at times like the moonlight, gently embracing those in the very abyss of misery, Gandhi and Dr. King awakened people to the sublime dignity of their own lives, as well as the lives of others. In this way they worked to construct a spreading solidarity of peace and nonviolence, one person at a time.

The struggle waged by these two poets of peace clearly demonstrates the path forward as we seek together to create a world free from war and violence in the 21st century.

Both men embraced, in the very depths of their being, an unshakeable confidence in final victory—no matter what billows of criticism surged, no matter what storms of oppression raged.

King and Gandhi saw each of the world's inhabitants as fellow citizens.

What was it that enabled them to maintain such undaunted strength, such profound faith, at all times and in all circumstances? I believe the answer can be found in the cosmic, universal scale of their religious convictions, the faith in which their lives were rooted and framed.

Unfettered by any narrow nationalist or sectarian concerns, both Dr. King and Mahatma Gandhi saw each of the world's inhabitants as fellow citizens equally lit by the inner brilliance of life. And they believed that our highest duty and responsibility is to be loyal to the voice of conscience that issues forth from the deepest reaches of each of us.

It is well known that when Gandhi translated John Ruskin's work *Unto This Last*, he titled it *Sarvodaya*—“the happiness of all.” I believe this expressed his knowledge that, so long as there is even one person suffering, one person shackled in misery, none of us can be fully, truly happy. Without action inspired from within, by a spontaneous spirit welling forth from within, we cannot create the kind of society and world where the full enjoyment of human rights is a reality for all.

I firmly believe that a renewal of the human spirit, energized by this kind of religious conviction, must be the driving force for efforts to bring forth a new era of human rights.

It is vital that we establish clear ethical guidelines for human rights. But if these remain mere unembodied principles or externally imposed rules, in the end we will fail to expose and counter the root causes of discrimination and oppression.

I am convinced that the most effective forms of action are those based on a profound inner awareness of how we want to live our lives—how we must live our lives if we are to be true to ourselves. In the end, only efforts to confront social ills that arise from a total personal commitment will move the hearts of others and give rise to a movement capable of transforming the course of history.

The struggle waged by Soka Gakkai founding president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and second president, Josei Toda, is the inspiration for the SGI's peace movement. Their struggle was based on a profound commitment, rooted in their Buddhist faith, to work for the rights, happiness and freedom of all people.

Makiguchi and Toda held high the banner of justice and humanity as they confronted head-on Japan's militaristic fascism, which was tightening its policies of domestic suppression—trampling underfoot citizens' inalienable rights—even as it carried out acts of aggression and unspeakable atrocity against Japan's neighbors. In the confines of his prison cell, Makiguchi remained utterly faithful to his beliefs to the moment of his death. Toda resisted and survived two years of confinement.

My own commitment to engage in dialogue with the world's people, to create a society that rejects war and violence in all forms, likewise grows from the inexhaustible inspiration I derive from the example of my predecessors.

It is our duty to pass on the spiritual awakening of Gandhi and King.

To make the 21st century into a century of life, to create a new current of history, requires a clear guiding philosophy. "All life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny"—this was the inner voice that arose within Dr. King as an unwavering conviction over the course of his travels to India to study Gandhi's nonviolence movement.

All forms of life are inseparably related and it is within this web of interconnection that each individual life shines with the utmost dignity. In Buddhism this is referred to as dependent origination—the understanding that all forms of life come into being through mutually supportive and sustaining relationships.

A profound reverence for the sanctity of all life bolstered Dr. King's efforts to rise above all differences that divide humans against each other, to challenge social ills and injustice wherever he found them. It was from this shining throne of insight that he declared "justice is indivisible."

The lineage of modern nonviolence can be traced from Henry David Thoreau and his study of Eastern thought to Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It has grown into a vast movement that has transformed our world, as symbolized by the nonviolent democratic revolutions that have swept the globe, starting in the Philippines and Eastern Europe a little more than a decade ago.

The spiritual awakening which we have the great fortune to have encountered—and which it is our duty to pass on—cannot be limited to a single country or historical era. The struggle of the inner forces of goodness against the dark forces of brutality, violence and barbarism knows no national or temporal boundaries; it will continue into the infinite future.

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dry.” We must never let the copious flow of the awakened spirit run dry. We must ceaselessly refresh its springs, sharing and conveying it to the generations who will shoulder the challenges and promise of the future.

Toward this end, together with our friends gathered here today, heirs to the noble spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I pledge to continue to work without end to make the 21st century shine as a century of life and human rights, to create a world in which there are only winners.

Next month, in May, the Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo campus will open in Orange County, Calif. As we continue to learn and draw inspiration from the esteemed example of Morehouse College, we are resolved to foster a succession of world citizens awakened to a truly global consciousness. Through the power of education, we are determined to pave the way toward a new culture of peace.

Finally, I close this message with my heartfelt prayers for the continued well-being and success of all our respected friends.

*April 8, 2001
Daisaku Ikeda*