

PERSPECTIVE
FINDING VALUE IN THE GANDHI, KING, IKEDA EXHIBITION
BY AL ALBERGATE
SANTA MONICA, CALIF.

‘Based on faith, practice and study,’ says Al Albergate, ‘SGI members all over the world are trying to exemplify the same values held by the three great men portrayed in this exhibition.’

I was recently invited to a monthly World Peace Gongyo Meeting where the youth members performed a skit to inform participants about the new “Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace” traveling exhibition.

The topic sparked some questions for me: “Although this wonderful exhibition is a great public relations tool for our organization, what importance does it have for the lives of our members as individuals? How can we, as common people, relate to the lives of these three outstanding figures in history?”

I found the answers in SGI President Ikeda’s message to the Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Prize Ceremony (April 27 *World Tribune*, pp. 8–9). I was inspired by the following points in his message: 1) human revolution; 2) interfaith relationships; 3) all life is related; 4) nonviolence; and 5) what we can do.

Human revolution: Speaking about Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., President Ikeda described them as individuals “committed to the inner transformation of the individual, [who] worked with vibrant energy to inspire people to bring forth their very highest, their most noble potential.” That’s exactly what SGI members around the world are doing every single day through their practice for individual happiness and for others. We call it “doing human revolution.”

Interfaith relationships: According to President Ikeda, “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.” Dr. Lawrence Carter, dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College, who inspired the prize and exhibition, fondly points out that Gandhi was a Hindu, King a Christian and President Ikeda a Buddhist. In spite of their different religious backgrounds, all three share similar ideals with regard to human rights and their achievement through non-violent methods.

As SGI members and citizens, we are continually encouraged to develop good relationships with all people, regardless of religion, and to contribute to our communities. Each of us has the opportunity to improve relationships and create new ones almost every day based on the values of equality and respect for life.

All life is related: “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 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,” said President Ikeda. He explained that Buddhism calls this concept dependent origination, the understanding that all forms of life come into being through mutually supportive and sustaining relationships. SGI members pursue their dream of world peace and try to conduct their lives with the understanding that whatever

one person does has the potential to affect others, perhaps many others.

Nonviolence: In his message, President Ikeda said: “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.” We SGI members are practicing ourselves and teaching others the most essential of nonviolent changes, the inner transformation of human revolution.

What we can do: As I read through these points, I realized that my individual mission may not be to lead a nation to independence as Gandhi did, nor spearhead a nationwide human rights movement in the tradition of King, nor build an educational system as has President Ikeda. There is something I can do, however.

I have my own mission to contribute to peace and people’s happiness. Through my practice in the SGI-USA, I can continue to undergo my human revolution and teach others to do the same. I have the opportunity to make new friends and relate to them on common, humanistic grounds, regardless of their religion. I try to treat each person that I encounter with respect, based on my understanding of their Buddha nature and the interconnectedness of our lives.

Based on faith, practice and study, SGI members all over the world are trying to exemplify the same values held by the three great men portrayed in this exhibition. Further, I believe the exhibition can help many individuals to awaken to their own individual missions, too. It sure served as a reminder to me.