

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
LOS ANGELES TAKES A STAND FOR NONVIOLENCE
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STAFF WRITER**

On Oct. 7, more than 9,000 people gathered at the Los Angeles Sports Arena for a Victory Over Violence Family Youth Festival. The daylong event included performances, speeches and informational exhibitions from the SGI-USA and dozens of community and faith-based organizations.

Throughout the festival, young people shared their personal experiences of intense suffering resulting from domestic violence, gang violence, bullying or war. One young man, Pedro Viraca, gave a tearful account of growing up with violence as a way of life and his journey to take back his life. "At times, the violence in our world seems unstoppable," he said. "But we can stop it, and it starts with each one of us here. Just like one violent act leads to another, one person committed to nonviolence will lead to another."

After months of intense preparation, youth of the SGI-USA gathered from all over Los Angeles county to perform an original show titled "A Mission of Peace," which explored the lives of Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and SGI President Ikeda. Through the examples of these "mentors of nonviolence," the show expressed the conviction that humanity will undoubtedly achieve peace.

Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas presented a certificate from the Los Angeles City Council to the SGI-USA youth proclaiming a "VOV Week" in the city. "Victory over violence — that's our cry," declared the councilman to the roar of the crowd. "And we won't stop until we have achieved it!"

Also performing at the festival were popular recording artists Duncan Sheik and Crazy Town, a homegrown, seven-member band, who all strongly endorse the VOV message. Dozens of organizations contributed to the festival's success, including the local Red Cross, the Los Angeles Police Department, the United Nations Association, and many Muslim, Christian, Jewish and other faith-based organizations.

"I hope that today is not a one-time event," said Los Angeles Police Chief Bernard Parks, on hand to lend his support for the event, "but that all of you here today are committed to achieving victory over violence. We can win this battle."

Summing up the spirit of the day, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima said, "Together with our many community partners, we want to send the message to the world that the people of Los Angeles are united across all religions and cultures to take a stand against violence."