

**Children's Rights Exhibit Begins National Tour**  
**The first stop for an exhibition on children's rights, by the SGI-USA's Youth**  
**Peace Conference, garners praise and sparks dialogue**

**By CHARLISE LYLES**  
**CORRESPONDENT**  
**Columbus, Ohio, Feb. 10**

An angel-faced boy marching military-style, ammunition and automatic rifle slung across his chest — the Liberian child-soldier in the photograph seemed to call to James Stowe.

"This picture is most devastating to me because this young man will never have a childhood. We robbed him of that. And that's a human disgrace," said Mr. Stowe, executive director of the city's Community Relations Commission, as he viewed the SGI-USA exhibition "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities." Mr. Stowe was among hundreds who saw the exhibition as it kicked off a 15-city national tour in the Ohio state capitol, Jan. 16-20.

Prepared by the SGI-USA Youth Peace Conference in cooperation with UNICEF, the exhibition is based on the international Convention on the Rights of Children, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1989. The exhibition's upper panels relay a serious message to adults. Below, interactive toys teach children important lessons in fun ways. From teachers, youth groups and the grass roots to South African exchange students, the powerful montage of photographs and texts evoked joy, pain, outrage and awe. And it made many new friends for the SGI-USA.

The local effort began months earlier. With little experience or contacts — only enthusiasm, seeking spirit and determination — members here took the exhibition on tour beginning at the Columbus U.N. Association International Festival, the State Capitol, the SGI Columbus Community Center and City Hall. At the end of the tour, the city presented a certificate of recognition, declaring Feb. 3, 1997, to be SGI-USA Day.

"My mission is to reduce violence in our community," said Councilwoman Les Wright, who issued the certificate. "It fits in with SGI's mission of peace- and harmony-building. The best thing we can do for children is be healthy, whole adults, because adults raise children. Your organization focuses on youth and creating healthy, strong, and, most important, peaceful adults."

Members worked hard to garner support for the exhibition. Schools wanted it. The art museum. The library. The airport. After the three-day UNA festival in November where thousands marveled at the exhibition, the next stop was the capitol. Mr. Stowe was so moved when he saw it there that he lobbied for a one-week display at City Hall.

During the tour, members strove to soar like a flock of geese in V formation. At times, youth division members led. At other times, members with some particular skill or experience led the way.

"This was the first time that we had an activity where we interacted with the community," said Dr. Albert Tsao, exhibition committee chairman. "We learned that we have tremendous talents among the members. And with unity, just as Nichiren Daishonin said, we were able to do something remarkable — a victory in society and actual proof within our individual lives."

At each stop, the exhibition became an engine for community dialogue on diversity and human rights. Beside the grand marble pillars of the capitol atrium, "Treasuring the Future" meshed with a "Day of Dialogue," which commemorated the birthday of slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Title: Children's Rights Exhibit Begins National Tour  
Subject: World Tribune 02/21/97 n.3127 p.1 WF970221p01 Columbus, Ohio 02/10/97  
Author: Charles Lyles  
Keywords: 02/10/97 Begins Children Columbus Events Exhibit Exhibitions National News Ohio Rights Tour

The Rev. Joel L. King Jr., cousin of the late Dr. King, saw a link between intolerance and the exhibit's story of Iqbal Masih, a 12-year-old boy who lost his life speaking out against abusive child labor in the Pakistani carpet industry.

"What do we discuss over dinner with our families?" Mr. King asked. "Is it peace issues, nonviolence and anti-racism, children's rights? It is all about cheap labor, whether it be children or other nationalities."

Dilip Doshi, a native of India, was struck by the exhibit's final quote by Mohandas Gandhi: "If we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children."

Mr. Doshi followed the exhibition to the SGI-USA Columbus Community Center for the Youth Peace Seminar on Jan. 26. The theme was "World Peace and Individual Responsibility: A Children's Rights Perspective."

Questions from youth division members sparked an exchange full of honesty and gusto: "How can we become friends with young people without being scared off by the rebellious clothing or behavior?" was one of them.

"Everyone needs to belong to something," said Mark Jay, Dayton vice chapter chief and a high school teacher. "Gangs and experimentation with drugs come from the breakdown of the family. We have to be parents to young people to whom we're not related."

Adults should think "every child is our child," said panelist Susan Wolford, chairwoman of the Columbus Committee of UNICEF.

From Feb. 3 to 7, the exhibition was displayed at the Columbus City Hall, where the SGI-USA hosted a reception for council members and citizens. Strawberry tarts, fruit, finger sandwiches, gracious smiles and warm conversation — the women's division at its finest. There the exhibit became the center of yet another community dialogue on human rights. More than 100 people attended, including Mayor Gregory S. Lashutka.

Koko Mokalomg, a member of the South African Parliament and foreign exchange student, came back to see the exhibition a second time.

"The exhibition is most powerful where it talks about educating children," she said. "If a child gets educated, they can help the nation. If not, it will duplicate unemployment and the circle of unhappiness and poverty revolves. This exhibition helps people to see that so clearly."

Said Mokalomg's fellow student, Krish Kumar of Durban, South Africa, "What is so amazing to me is that this is a volunteer group — everybody just got off from work — and you are here trying to meet and talk with people about the rights and suffering of children here and all over the world."

The exhibition's next stop is Los Angeles, where it will undergo renovation and strengthening for its three-year travel schedule. In September, Atlanta Joint Territory will host the exhibition, followed by Philadelphia Joint Territory in October and Washington, D.C., Joint Territory in November. It is intended to be shown in cities within those joint territories that have not previously hosted an SGI exhibition.

**WT**