

A Season for Nonviolent Choice
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To create an awareness of nonviolent practices to heal, transform, and empower lives and communities

To honor those who are using nonviolence to build communities that honor the dignity and worth of every human being

To demonstrate that every person can move the world in the direction of peace through their daily nonviolent choice and action

This is the purpose statement for the Season for Nonviolence, the 64-day period between the 50th anniversary of the death of Mahatma Gandhi on Jan. 30 and the 30th anniversary of the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4.

At first, Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, thought it would be appropriate to honor these anniversaries with a local campaign in his hometown of Memphis, Tenn. However, word got around and soon grass-roots organizations from around the world caught wind of it and began participating. An incredible number of organizations that have been working toward peace objectives are coming together in unity for this event.

Supported by UNESCO, more than 300 non-profit organizations in more than 100 cities around the world, as well as more than 25 U.S. governors and several other dignitaries and social leaders, the Season for Nonviolence encourages people to think about and practice conflict resolution through individual behavior, dialogue, workshops, educational events, online discussions and community action.

Youth are encouraged to participate online through I*EARN (The International Education and Resource Network), a global K-12 online network reaching 2,500 schools in 47 countries. The network is sponsoring an online conference to inspire and empower kids to learn about, practice and teach nonviolence in their schools and communities.

All this at a time when the United States faces a crisis with Iraq. Is this significant? Project coordinator Barbara Bernstein of the Association for Global New Thought thinks it is.

“I believe that a great force for good can be expected to encounter a great force for evil. It is not just a coincidence,” she says. “There are so many people working for peace, there is bound to be chaotic interplay.”

Says Arun Gandhi: “We live crisis to crisis. We take care of the conflict only when it reaches a crisis. Violence doesn’t resolve conflict, it only aggravates it. We need to learn to anticipate the conflict before it becomes a crisis and resolve it peacefully.”

In addition to a presentation at the United Nations on Jan. 30 that commemorated Mahatma Gandhi, a closing memorial is planned for Dr. King on April 2 at the United Nations and in Atlanta on April 4. What’s next?

“I hope the season never ends,” says Arun Gandhi. “I hope we can come together and work together and forget hate and become more human. Relationships are built not on tolerance but on respect, understanding, acceptance and appreciation. This is what Grandfather said.”

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