

## **'PEACE IS THE WORD'**

We must unite in a shared human struggle to confront and resolve the pressing problems facing our planet joining efforts with people of goodwill everywhere....” These visionary lines from SGI President Ikeda’s 1999 peace proposal flooded my mind as I headed out on the seven-hour road trip to Phoenix with several Youth Peace Committee representatives and volunteers from Los Angeles.

The YPC, the youth outreach arm of the SGI, participated in a five-day (May 28 – June 1) peace conference — “Weaving a New Beginning: Liberation - Healing - Community” sponsored by the National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution (NCPCR) at the Phoenix Civic Plaza and Hyatt Regency Hotel. The conference made new inroads this year by including the 1st World Summit for Youth Peacemakers and the African/African American Peace Summit. Several thousand attended.

Anticipation of this day had been mounting as SGI-USA volunteers from New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Phoenix, Tucson and Los Angeles began preparations last October; it was quite an undertaking for our first major community activity since the YPC reorganized last July.

Our objectives as YPC and SGI members were clear. As youth we’d promote humanistic values, global in scope; support the United Nations’ peace initiatives; and contribute to the realization of President Ikeda’s annual peace proposals and raise capable leaders for the 21st century— participation in this conference provided the perfect opportunity to advance each goal.

Among the more than 700 concurrent sessions offered, we presented four seminars: one on Makiguchi’s theory of value-creating education, led by Jay Heffron and Colleen Bachman; A Model United Nations, spearheaded by the youth of Phoenix and Tucson; and two seminars on non-violence, conducted by myself and Darin Nellis, with the support of youth from Arizona and Los Angeles.

People came from across the United States and around the world — with representatives from countries as far as South Africa, England, Australia, Turkey, Guam, Canada and Mexico. I made a point to meet other attendees whenever I could.

Performing for the African/African American Peace Summit Dondi Marble from Tucson, brought 12 students from his African-Brazilian martial arts school. They perform Capoeira, which was an art developed by slaves in Brazil and combines dance movements, drumming and acrobatics. Originally slaves disguised this “dance” to train for revolt, but today Dondi says “it provides a good outlet for anger.”

The youth summit was a highlight of the conference. Planned and organized primarily by elementary and high school students, the summit had workshops and theatrical, dance and musical performances that focused on issues such as conflict resolution, teen violence and identity. It was a forum where kids could speak their minds and show what they can do for peace. HB3, a 20-year-old poet and rapper, was a keynote speaker and very popular among the youth.

Coriana Close, 15, who’s been attending peace conferences with her mother since she was 3, says: “Youth could identify with HB because he was young and hip and he knows what’s going on. He was able to present so adults could understand, too. He bridged the gap between the kids and adults and he was good at it.”

In addition to sharing about the SGI's peace efforts, for me this was a significant opportunity to "join efforts with people of goodwill everywhere." It was a way to meet and learn how other people are making contributions in their unique way toward peace. I'm looking forward to August when the SGI-USA youth division launches the Victory Over Violence project. If you would like get involved with YPC, contact Yvette Edmond: yedmond@aol.com or Darin Nellis: darinnell@aol.com or write to YPC, 606 Wilshire Boulevard, P.O. Box 1427, Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427.

— *STEPHANIE CELANO*

Title: Peace Is The Word  
Subject: World Tribune 07/02/99 n.3249 p.8 WT990702p08  
Author: Stephanie Celano  
Keywords: Celano Peace Stephanie Word Youth