

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS**  
**PUERTO RICO SHOWS THE 'ESSENCE OF PEACE'**  
**BY ANDY SANCHEZ, PUERTO RICO CORRESPONDENT**

After two months of brainstorming, countless efforts and millions of daimoku, the “Family: Essence of Peace” festival was held at Luis Muñoz Rivera Park in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Sept. 2. The festival was sponsored by Puerto Rico’s SGI-USA youth and Vida Sin Violencia (Life Without Violence), a nonprofit organization inspired by the SGI-USA’s Victory Over Violence movement.

The central corridor of the beautiful Muñoz Rivera Park became temporarily set up with booths sponsored by artisans, government and educational organizations, as well as refreshment vendors. Facilities offering information about SGI and Vida Sin Violencia were also available.

A highlight of the program was the tribute paid by the Vida Sin Violencia organization to distinguished painter Carmelo Sobrino, director of the Amigos del Parque (Friends of the Park) organization, for the fervor with which he and his group safeguard the park from deterioration.

The activities continued with a merry, singing, hand-clapping group parading down the park’s central corridor, until arriving at the Peace Pavilion, an enormous, Victorian-like structure, where they were greeted by the thundering percussion of *Bomba* drums. *Bomba* is a Puerto Rican folkloric dance with roots in Africa.

The program began with the *Bomba* workshop. After an enlightening lecture about diverse aspects of this dance and its steps, the public was offered the opportunity to come on stage to dance. The second workshop consisted of *capo-eira ayé* and samba classes and demonstrations by students from the Afro-Brazilian Caribbean Cultural Center.

The artistic spectacular began with numerous SGI members and guests performing. The acts were strikingly diverse—dance, song, rock ‘n’ roll, salsa, jazz—these genres were performed in myriad ways. The talent displayed was such that spectators not only felt gratified, but pleasantly surprised as well.

Cesar Reyes is a student at the Afro-Brazilian Caribbean Cultural Center. He commented that this type of activity was of great value because it fosters a violence-free environment. Fifi Bernard, the center’s director, joined the conversation and said the activity was “marvelous,” adding that it should be held once a month.

Ingmar Soto, SGI-USA Southern Zone youth leader, said: “The success of this event was made evident by the numerous non-SGI members in the audience. This demonstrates we share common goals. Festivals such as this help link the SGI with the general community.”

“Life is transformed through efforts,” said Hector Rodríguez, the festival’s logistics group leader. Recently arrived from Uruguay, Hector said he felt happy participating in the festival and stressed the fact that seeds planted through the organization grow and spread throughout the nation.

SGI-USA member Angie Willoughby, who supported many committees, declared, “It was a total success.” She said she had a “blast,” and felt pleased with the contacts that were established with different organizations. “Putting the festival together took a lot of hard work,” said Angie, but she felt completely fulfilled by the results.

“I could see the members united and happy,” declared Jose Luis Vargas, Puerto Rico Area young men’s leader. “This joy permeated the members and was the key to success,” he added with much enthusiasm.