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the vision of President Ikeda. It provides a means to understand that we are all connected, not superficially, but on a deep level. By embracing that belief, it gives us one more opportunity to take a step toward peace. Because of this exhibition, many people will be able to see President Ikeda in a new context — as a living emissary of peace in the same category with Dr. King and Gandhi."

After viewing the exhibition, the crowd proceeded inside the chapel to begin the interfaith portion of the gathering and view a film entitled *Gandhi, King, Ikeda: Heroes of the Global Community*.

The film depicts the lives of the three men, observing the parallels of their struggles and how each dedicated themselves to building a peaceful society. In the film, Dr. Alfred Balitzer, formerly of Claremont McKenna College and now dean of faculty at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, mentions that "if Gandhi and King were still alive today, I believe they would pull Daisaku Ikeda up to the podium alongside them, because he is the next generation."

The Agape International Choir opened the ceremony as honorees made their way to the stage. The choir enriched the program's theme of "One River, Many Wells" through spiritual song. The renowned group, whose music has been heard all around the world, is a multi-ethnic choir with 150 active members. The combination of rhythmic sounds, superb vocalists, talented musicians and various styles of ethnic dress ignited the audience. Forty-nine choir members traveled from Culver City, Calif., paying their own way to participate in the event.

Also on hand were local state and city officials, as well as rep-

resentatives of various religions and denominations who, alongside the Morehouse College constituents and SGI-USA members, were presented three separate awards bearing the Gandhi, King, Ikeda name: the Spiritual Courage, Liberty and Courage of Conscience awards.

The Spiritual Courage award was presented to people of different faith traditions. Buddhist, Bahá'í, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, New Thought and Unity believers were given the award to thank them for their continuous work in their respective organizations and for getting their members to participate side-by-side in this event.

The Liberty award was presented to government officials instrumental in changing the design of the Georgia state flag. The new design is helping to bring about a new feeling amongst Georgia citizens, who were at odds over the Confederate symbol, which is now at the bottom of the flag. Shrinking the Confederate symbol and placing it at the bottom of the flag help depict a portion of Southern tradition and history, rather than representing the entire population.

The Courage of Conscience award was presented to the Mayor of Atlanta and the Governor of Georgia. The two were both instrumental in uniting the citizens in the Southeastern United States — Mayor Bill Campbell for initiating interfaith meetings that began in 1999 and Governor Roy Barnes for his work on the new flag.

Mayor Campbell commented that, through the exhibition, he hoped the public will "gain a better understanding and appreciation for the global nature of the struggle for freedom."

—Nicole D. Collier contributed to this article.

Photos by LUCY ESTEPHANOS, JERRI McWILLIAMS and GREGORY NAKASUJI



Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace



FROM PRIZE, 1

from the mind to the heart." He asked the audience if they, through their own efforts, can help society "move from a culture of existing to a culture of participating. The cornerstones of such a movement are surely the respect for life, a responsibility towards future generations, protection of the human habitat and, most of all, to move from acquisitiveness to altruism.... We must stop working against something and start working for something, working for a sharing of cultures and perceptions."

Also celebrated was the induction of a portrait of President and Mrs. Ikeda to the Martin Luther King Jr. International Hall of Honor. "We do this today," said Dean Carter, "in recognition of the fact that Dr. Ikeda is now widely believed to be the world's leading proponent of international peace."

Attending the ceremony on behalf of President and Mrs. Ikeda was SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda, the couple's eldest son. Vice President Ikeda commented that the Gandhi, King, Ikeda prize and traveling exhibition "represent a concrete and viable way to continue the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. King through public education toward nonviolence and reconciliation. We feel it is our mission to advance always the cause of equality and freedom, wherever there is injustice, oppression and racism."

Outside the chapel, high-energy Taiko drummers, SGI-USA members from New Orleans, greeted the crowd with beats from the Far East. Dressed

in traditional Japanese outfits called *happi* coats, the drummers were invited by Dean Carter and have been challenging themselves to win in their daily lives through this activity.

At the close of the gathering, Sharon Pesante, an SGI-USA member from Tallahassee, Fla., summed up the feelings of the majority of the attendees: "The Prince of Jordan was wonderful. He spoke about things President Ikeda has been talking about for a long time. For me, personally, it was a real wake-up call. No wonder President Ikeda can talk about the 23rd century! This is how large his vision is. I realized that I need to widen my own vision for the future."

The event was a significant milestone for the members of SGI-USA's Southern Zone. At an April 9 meeting at the Atlanta Community Center celebrating the members' remarkable achievements of the previous two weeks, SGI North America Bureau Director Norimasa Saito commented that "President Ikeda has often stated the center of *kosen-rufu* is found in America. So, if we are able to achieve *kosen-rufu* here in Atlanta, doesn't it follow that we will be able to achieve *kosen-rufu* anywhere in the world?"

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima congratulated the members on "opening a new era where people can see how powerful Buddhism is and learn something tremendous. You have opened up a beautiful community filled with friendship and trust."

—Nicole D. Collier, Eleanor Hunter and Quan Sullivan contributed to this article.