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# Soka University of America

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Aliso Viejo Campus

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## Dr. Michael Nobel's Lecture Notes April 9, 2002

Founders Hall, Soka University of America

President Habuki,  
Dr. Alfred Balitzer, Dean of Faculty  
Members of the Faculty,  
Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Students,

It is a great pleasure to be with you today here at Soka University. As you may know I just came from Atlanta where I had the pleasure to meet with Mr. Hiromasa Ikeda who very generously transmitted the greetings of his father Dr. Daisaku Ikeda and an invitation to come to Japan to meet him. It was a wonderful event and I was very proud to receive the award.

Nothing is quite like coming to Southern California, especially to a college campus, to make you feel young again. (add story about thesis)

I address you as Fellow Students because learning is a lifelong activity. We are all students, particularly when it comes to the study of peace.

It is impossible to address this student body of future leaders, without reflecting upon the terror of September 11 and its impact upon a culture of peace. Today we are said to be in a long war on terrorism. And there is virtually no one who would deny the critical importance of preventing terrorism here and around the world.

Still, we must ask ourselves, as the poet asks in the August Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, when told of life's endless struggle between oppositions: "But what of peace?"

Not being an American, but having lived and studied here, I would like to offer to you the words of one your Presidents, when he too spoke at a university almost 40 years ago:

"What kind of peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth

living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children--not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women--not merely peace in our time but peace for all time. I speak of peace because of the new face of war."

These words by John F Kennedy ring as true today as they did in 1963.

There is no defense for the horrific terror inflicted upon your people and country. But we cannot overlook the near epidemic levels of violence, in all its forms, plaguing societies around the world every day. We can all recite the problems that challenge us. But can we also develop the dialogues and actions of change? Of course, you have answered this. It is why you have chosen to study here at Soka University. But how do we build that genuine peace?

I believe the building blocks are here, in the shared values of education, which in turn create the culture by which we live and thrive. The mission of this university sets a new standard: "To foster a steady stream of global citizens committed to living a contributive life."

The founder of this university, Daisaku Ikeda, spoke of the key element of this new citizenship:

"--The wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living."

Here at Soka University, you have begun to develop this citizenship, "to foster leaders of culture in the community," vital because Culture is indeed the mixing bowl that builds community. I believe that the widespread use of cross-cultural dialogues will foster the global community we so earnestly seek.

Our communication revolution creates the real hope that knowledge transfers, in both directions, will help heal the deep divides of health and wealth which all too often serve to fuel violence.

New dialogues built upon the respect for humanity, its ideas and deeds, its dreams and aspirations, form the very learning that can "Foster leaders of humanism, such as yourselves, in society."

There are too many truly good men and women in the world to dispute the horrendous view of humanity we read about everyday, too many examples of kindness and selflessness to simply accept violence as a natural human characteristic.

One only has to think of the millions of people whose lives are devoted to teaching children life skills, to fighting pain, disease and poverty, to protecting lives and property and to promoting ideals of morality and truth.

One has to think of the remarkable changes in Europe. Two world wars and a cold war bitterly divided the continent, and yet before the century was over, a new democratic union was formed, with open borders and a common currency, and former mortal becoming brother nations.

These, rather than barbaric exceptions are, surely, the ones who reflect the true nature of Man. These are our hope and salvation even if the good that they do is so often over-shadowed in the media by the evil done by a comparatively few others.

How will you, as leaders of global peace activities teach the world that pacifism is part of our truest nature? When the UNESCO Task Force on Education for the Twenty-first Century considered the very notion of peace education, they proposed two key ingredients to the pillar of "Learning to Live Together."

The first was the early childhood exposure to the lives of others and other cultures. The second was the focus on learning through cooperative and collaborative projects and activities, which include music, the arts and sports. Together, these two simple and achievable aspects of any education could lead to profound impacts upon the daily lives of all people in a relatively short period of time.

An example of this leadership can be found through the dynamic synergy of two growing global movements. Here at Soka University you are at the forefront of this effort "to foster leaders for the creative coexistence of nature and humanity." This is truly an exciting field of new work. It exemplifies a trans-disciplinary approach, bringing scientists, peace and social activists, and scholars together.

In the 1950's Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs showed the need for basic safety and survival for oneself and family before any other activity can take place. Today, in the wake of the green revolution, we have begun to respect our interconnected world. The notion of hierarchies of human needs has been replaced.

Manfred Max-Neef's Human Scale Development identifies 9 categories of human needs, which are inter-related and interactively finite. These needs are constant in all cultures. What varies is how we satisfy the needs, and it is in the satisfaction of needs that cultural diversity can be found.

Doesn't this sound like peace work?

You do not have to look far to study or get involved in this work. Santa Monica is one of the world's leaders developing model sustainable practices and policies.

In Sweden, we have evolved a network of eco-communities. It might surprise you to know that one of these towns became so deeply involved in the transcendence of these issues, that it built a small Buddhist temple.

In Swedish we have two words for peace: fred and frid. Fred is the peace of non-violence and between nations and people. Frid is tranquility and calm, suggesting the inner sense of being at peace, in nature.

This inner and outer connection has a deep tradition too often ignored in our highly competitive and overly monetized lives. But these spiritual values are essential aspects of any education, and can help prepare you "to be philosophers of a renaissance of life."

The legacy of the Renaissance can be found in any university. I cannot help but think of Leonardo da Vinci and how his genius was cultivated by an irrepressible curiosity for learning, all kinds of learning, from any and all cultures.

His creativity was fueled by the constant mixing and blending of apparent contradictions. Eastern knowledge merged with Western perspectives. Science with art. We are left with Mona Lisa's enigmatic smile suggesting she knows something which you the spectator does not.

So remain curious. And be creative, Because creativity is also a critical component to the peaceful transformation of conflicts, as described in Dr Johan Galtung's Transcend Method used by the United Nations.

In his dialogue "Choose Peace," with Dr Galtung, President Ikeda reflects on the power of creativity and the importance of art:

"In a very real sense, art and literature are tools for peace because the knowledge and experience gained from appreciating and sharing them cultivate non-violence, compassion, trust, solidarity, beauty and breadth of mind, and intensified awareness of the natures and needs of all humanity."

These are the tools which can help you "to be world citizens in solidarity for peace"

It is a powerful phrase; World citizens in solidarity. We have come a long way since the famous Cartesian foundation of modern western civilization: the rather isolated figure who contemplates: I think, therefore I am.

But before we praise ourselves too much, this renaissance of world citizenship can also be seen as re-discovering teachings and wisdom, such as the golden rule, the Zulu concept of "ubuntu" or the words of Nichiren Daishonin: "If you light a lantern for another, it will brighten your way also."

Will we soon ponder: I think, of you, therefore I am?

It is through basic human relationships that we re-discover solidarity and the real seeds of peace, which as Dr Ikeda has said, "lie not in lofty ideas but in human

understanding and the empathy of ordinary people."

So where and how do we, as ordinary people, focus our attention and our resolve?  
Where can the grassroots thrive?

I agree with President Ikeda that we recall the Preamble to the United Nations Charter "We the Peoples of the United Nations, and our respective governments... "

Together, the peoples of the world, and the United Nations, have embarked on a great adventure. You, as students preparing to be world citizens, have a unique opportunity during this first Decade of the new Millennium to be the pioneers of a global civilization:

My great grand uncle was an inventor, a kind of pioneer, and believed in the global civilization. He wanted the prizes to be available to everyone on earth, not to Scandinavians only, as proposed by the King of Sweden. He felt the prizes would help to form a link between nations, people and individuals, and this would serve to promote and accelerate the peace movement.

For 100 years The Nobel Peace Prize has helped to amplify powerful messages of peace through the voices of the Laureates. And now, through the collective words and action of the Laureates themselves, a global peace movement has begun.

In 1997, for the first time, all living Peace Laureates signed an Appeal for the Children of the World and called for a decade dedicated to peace.

The United Nations heeded the Appeal and the General Assembly unanimously declared the years 2001-2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

Now it is time for us all to be pioneers.

The cornerstone of this global movement is a 6 point Manifesto composed by Nobel Peace Laureates for the United Nations. Their aim was to put peace into an everyday context for everyday use.

RESPECT ALL LIFE  
REJECT VIOLENCE  
SHARE WITH OTHERS  
LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND  
PRESERVE THE PLANET  
REDISCOVER SOLIDARITY

I urge you to sign it. (<http://www3.unesco.org/manifesto2000/>)

To date 75 million people have signed. But of this number, less one 1% come from Europe. Barely 40,000 from the United States.

Why is this? Is it that we westerners do not care? No. The problem is simply awareness. We in the west are overwhelmed with information and it is not an easy task for the United Nations or even Nobel Peace Laureates to grab the world's attention. In fact, did you know that the fateful September 11th was the UN Day of International Peace, which was to have marked the first year of this Decade?

So how do we generate awareness? What can we do?

Last year I was asked to become Chairman of the Appeal's newly established foundation in America. Since then we have developed a plan of action to generate widespread awareness and connection through diverse projects, programs and community based efforts from around the world, all working from the consensus of that 6 point Manifesto.

With the United Nations and partners from around the world, we will launch a global outreach to youth:

- We will distribute materials directly to teachers and schools.
- We will use broadcast and other media to reach the community.
- We will link networks of peace and learning centers around the world.
- We will employ a revolutionary radio channel to reach the developing world.

Our objective is not to develop "peace education" as a single curriculum, or a single program. But rather a symphony of diverse teachings across all cultures, available to all, encompassing all faiths, all voices who share these basic values.

Our task is simply to spread the awareness; to inspire and motivate a meaningful and creative engagement during this Decade.

And I urge all of you to get passionately involved.

As I look out across this audience, I can imagine the steady stream of global citizens who have committed to living a contributive life. It is only fitting that this stream should be inspired daily by the vast beauty of the Pacific Ocean.

Peace work is hard work. You do not set out to be a director of a peace movement. Patience and understanding will be taxed unlike any income you will ever receive. But with your commitment to these ideals at Soka University, you will be prepared to make a unique contribution to your fellow human beings.

As peace workers you must cultivate a persistent curiosity that kindles creativity. When stymied by conflict, ask, like the scientist, "what if..." Remember the words of Shakespeare: "Your If is the only peacemaker; much virtue in IF"

You don't set out to win a Nobel Peace Prize. But I encourage you to live and work diligently toward that ideal. You never know.

In the years to come, you should be able to look back and say to yourself, I really tried to do my best, then it does not matter if you fail. You are immortalized through the genes you pass on to your children. The most important thing in life is not to leave them a lot of possessions, but to leave a legacy of spiritual values that hopefully will make them good persons. That includes, above all, a peaceful attitude towards others, be it individuals, ethnic groups or nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you for your attention.