

International Association for Integration, Dignity and Economic Advancement

IDEA Center for the Voices of Humanity Seneca Falls, New York

Ultimately, Seneca Falls is about Human Rights. The presence of IDEA in Seneca Falls expands what we're about into a much more complete statement about human rights.

-- Dr. A.P. Sinicropi, Life-long resident of Seneca Falls



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1. Michiko Yamaoka, a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, with Olivia Breitha, who was forcibly isolated on the remote Kalaupapa peninsula because she had leprosy.
2. Carolyn Pogue from Canada, a member of Women in Black, an international peace network, displays the cape she has made with messages from a multitude of organizations who promote peace.
3. Bill Kikuchi, Editor, The STAR, who was relocated to three Japanese-American internment camps as a young boy, meets Yohei Sasakawa, President of The Nippon Foundation, whose father was held as a political prisoner for six years.
4. High school teacher Kathleen Campitiello (left) visits the Center with her friend, Dina Hamer, a survivor of the Holocaust.
5. Elvir Camdzic (center), director of the San Francisco Bay Area Darfur Coalition, is joined by Seneca Falls residents and Cornell Professor David Weiss (far right) as he embarks on a 600-mile bike trip to raise awareness about human rights violations in Darfur.
6. Actress Karolyn Grimes, who played "Zuzu" in "It's a Wonderful Life" presents the **IDEA** Center's first Annual George Bailey Award to Robert McKeveny, Principal, Seneca Falls Middle School, for his work in promoting the inherent value of each individual.

The Quest for Dignity Exhibit

Quest for Dignity implores us to remember our past and compels us to replace fear with knowledge and understanding.

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, in a message sent for the Opening of the *Quest for Dignity* Exhibit at the United Nations



Zilda Borges participates in the Opening of the *Quest for Dignity* Exhibit in Rome in 2000



The *Quest for Dignity* Exhibit is launched at the United Nations on October 30, 1997. UN/DPI Photo by Eskinder Debebe



Students visit the Exhibit at the Herbst International Exhibition Hall, The Presidio, San Francisco, in 1999.

Launched at the United Nations by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the *Quest for Dignity* Exhibit has been translated into several languages and displayed in different sizes and various formats in 10 countries, including: Luxembourg, Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, Brazil, India, P. R. China, Switzerland, the Philippines, Japan, and South Africa. The Exhibit continues to evolve and expand, with funding provided by The Nippon Foundation, Japan. The English version of the *Quest for Dignity* Exhibit forms the foundation for the **IDEA** Center for the Voices of Humanity in Seneca Falls, New York.



The IDEA Center for the Voices of Humanity was established with contributions from The Nippon Foundation, Zen Ryo Kyo (The National Association of Residents of Hansen's Disease Sanatoria, Japan), the Legacy of Nobutaka Murase and Mr. and Mrs. Ken Kato.



Winifred Harada, Kalaupapa, Hawaii, lights candles in memory of her mother, Rose Marks, who kept their family together in spirit, despite repeated separation and loss.

Leaping Over the Gulfs That Separate

Here we are, definitively and definitely, together leaping over the gulfs that separate, building hopes, zooming in from the global to the personal, creating goals and hopes, giving others and ourselves the positive experience of freedom from prejudice. -- Ymelda Beauchamp, IDEA, USA



Beatrice Ntowah and Grace Akandoh, **IDEA** Ghana, share cultural traditions with Seneca Falls students at the **IDEA** Center



Elvir Camdzic and 8-year-old Seneca Falls student Sara Sands join together in the "Ride Against Genocide"

The **IDEA** Center for the Voices of Humanity is an international resource center on stigma, identity, and human rights. Seneca Falls, New York, was chosen as the permanent location for the **IDEA** Center as well as for the International Offices of **IDEA** because of its power of place, which emanates from the area's 150-year tradition of advocating for universal human rights, including the women's rights and antislavery movements.

The Center's gallery displays photographs, quotations, poetry and art that reveal the wisdom and creativity that so often emerge from individuals who have experienced personal tragedy, social injustice and attempts to crush the human spirit.

The Center's library includes a large number of personal narratives of individuals who have confronted social injustice, survived attempts to rob them of their humanity, and created an awareness of the dangers of apathy and indifference. Publications, conferences and student opportunities complete the Center's activities, designed to utilize the wisdom of the voices of humanity to promote the peace that comes through the understanding, respect and appreciation of diversity.

As a pathway of hope, the **IDEA** Center for the Voices of Humanity vividly illustrates that, although you cannot always control what happens in life, you can choose how you will respond.

The Voices of Humanity Awards

“Never Believe We Are Powerless.” – Michiko Yamaoka



Olivia Breitha in front of the photo taken of her when she was diagnosed with leprosy and forcibly separated from her family at the age of 18.



Michiko Yamaoka receives the Voices of Humanity Award for her vision and efforts to promote peace.



Sonia Schreiber Weitz with Lian Law at the Holocaust Center Boston North. The exhibit includes a painting of Sonia and her father at the Plaszow Concentration Camp. It depicts the only time they danced together and the last time they ever saw each other.

On June 26, 2003, the **IDEA** Center for the Voices of Humanity presented its first Voices of Humanity Awards to Olivia Breitha, Sonia Schreiber Weitz and Michiko Yamaoka. The Voices of Humanity Awards were presented by students in appreciation of the efforts of these three great women and their vision of a world that understands the importance of diversity and promotes the value and inherent dignity of every human being.

Sonia Schreiber Weitz is the Education Director of the Holocaust Center Boston North and author of *I Promised I Would Tell*. Of the 84 members of her family, Sonia and her sister Blanca were the sole survivors of the Holocaust. She began writing at age 12, undaunted by a Nazi edict banning those who were Jewish from owning pencils or paper. The survivor of five Nazi concentration camps, Sonia simply continued writing in her head. In the last decade she has spoken to thousands of students about the dangers of remaining a bystander in times of crisis and the power of each individual to create positive change in the world.

People are given free will and most of the time you can change the march of history, if you speak up. -- Sonia Schreiber Weitz



Photographs by Natsuko Tominaga, The Nippon Foundation; Photograph of Sonia Schreiber Weitz by Henry Law

Michiko Yamaoka was 15 years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. She was buried under wreckage, rendered unrecognizable by her extensive burns, and continues to cope with the life-long effects of radiation. In 1955, Ms. Yamaoka was one of 25 young women who were invited to New York by an American organization, Friends, in order to undergo plastic surgery. In New York, she stayed with different volunteer host families while she underwent 27 operations. After remaining silent for two decades, Ms. Yamaoka now speaks passionately about the abolition of nuclear weapons to visitors, and especially students, at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.

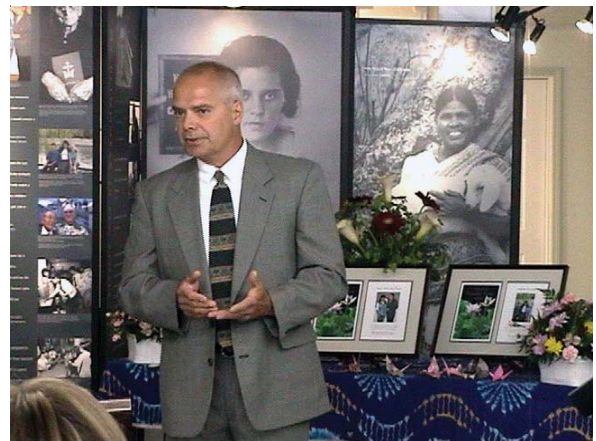
I will appeal for the abolition of nuclear weapons as long as I have breath . . . to help spread the spirit of Hiroshima, the pursuit of peace. Never believe that we are powerless. Peace will come through the accumulation of individual efforts. -- Michiko Yamaoka

Olivia Robello Breitha was 18 years old and engaged to be married when she was told she had leprosy in 1934. Forcibly isolated on the remote Kalaupapa peninsula in Hawaii, she and thousands of other individuals were deemed “expendable” and “a threat to the welfare of society”. Now in her late 80’s, Olivia has witnessed the discovery of a cure for leprosy, the abolition of the century-old isolation laws, and the designation of Kalaupapa as a National Historical Park. She has traveled extensively, but has chosen to live out her life in Kalaupapa. Olivia has written her autobiography, *Olivia. My Life of Exile in Kalaupapa* and has appeared in several documentaries, including *Olivia and Tim: Very Much Alive* with Tim Baker, a 32-year-old man with AIDS.

My philosophy of life is simple. It is to smile at people. I smile, they look puzzled, then smile back. It works, you know. I try to be happy and make other people happy in some small way. -- Olivia Breitha



Gary and Gail Lohr present Yohei Sasakawa with a token of appreciation from Seneca Falls for his support of the IDEA Center.



Dr. A. P. Sinicropi serves as Master of Ceremonies for the Voices of Humanity Awards.

Visitors to the IDEA Center for the Voices of Humanity

The message is so great, there are so many shades, that I feel happy as I see the sun dry off the leaves moistened by the tears of the guardian of the dawn. The beauty of everything I see withdraws a sigh and a wide smile of hope from within my soul. -- Antonio Borges, Jr., **IDEA**, Brazil



Voice of America journalists from Afghanistan, India, and Indonesia videotape interviews at the **IDEA** Center.



Sister Amber Rudd, Salt Lake City, with Sister Eria Yoshino, Japan.



Karel Zavodsky from the Czech Republic stands in front of a poem written by a young person interned at the Terezin Concentration Camp near Prague.

It is more important for me to understand other people, than for them to understand me. Because by understanding others, I can learn to better understand myself. -- Tokio Nishimura, **IDEA**, Japan

We used to say that if society changes, we will be able to change. We should discard this attitude and adopt the belief that society will change because We Ourselves Change. Let us believe this and make our lives rich and rewarding. -- Miyoji Morimoto, **IDEA**, Japan



Sister Roseanne La Manche and Sister Blanche Marie Messier, Syracuse, New York, outside the **IDEA** Center.



Jeremy Ruddor, Cape Town, South Africa, with a friend from Australia in front of a panel that discusses the isolation of people affected by leprosy on remote islands, including Robben Island, which can be seen from Cape Town.

May The Rainbow Always Touch Your Shoulder

(Quotes from the IDEA Center)

I do not want my house to be waled in on sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. -- Mahatma Gandhi, Humanitarian, India

Mankind must remember that peace is not God's gift to his creatures, it is our gift to each other.

-- Elie Wiesel, 1986 Nobel Peace Prize Recipient

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.

-- Lao Tze, Chinese philosopher

Respect is an irreplaceable gift wrapped in an invisible package of friendship. -- Lian Law, student, IDEA USA

Freeing myself of prejudice, Take a soar into the wind. -- Nanahuku Ikuta, Poet, Japan

My heart is open to all the winds: It is a pasture for gazelles . . . Mine is the religion of love. Wherever God's caravans turn, the religion of love Shall be my religion. And my faith.

-- H.R.H. Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, quoting a text from 14th century Spain to symbolize the spirit of Islam. Excerpt from an interview on Larry King Live, CNN, October 13, 2001



The Hosoda family from Japan in front of a photo of the lotus flower taken by Ken Kato, Japan



The **IDEA** quilt was created by members of the Amish community near Seneca Falls with fabric contributed by **IDEA** members from around the world. The pattern was chosen and adapted by Rebecca Hertzler

To love is not to give, but to share. The first sign of love is justice. The fruit of justice is peace.

-- Raoul Follereau, Humanitarian, France

The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence . . . The world will change because of your smile. -- Thich Nhat Hahn, Contemporary Vietnamese Buddhist monk, peace activist and writer

May the warm winds of Heaven blow softly on your home, And the Great Spirit bless all who enter there, May your moccasins make happy tracks in many snows, And may the rainbow always touch your shoulder.

-- Cherokee Blessing

The International Association for Integration, Dignity & Economic Advancement (IDEA)

Despite the fact that there has been a cure for leprosy for more than 60 years, individuals affected by this disease throughout the world continue to face discrimination, social exclusion and the denial of their basic human rights. **IDEA** was founded in 1994 as an international network of support for individuals who have had leprosy, also known as Hansen's Disease. It is the first international advocacy organization whose leadership is primarily made up of individuals who have personally experienced the challenges of this disease. **IDEA** has more than 20,000 members in 30 countries, spanning five continents. **IDEA** is registered in the United States as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with its international offices and financial headquarters located in Seneca Falls, New York.

IDEA values as its most important resource the inspiring words of individuals who have turned a diagnosis of leprosy into a personal challenge and ultimately a personal victory. Individuals and collective triumphs over prejudice and deep personal loss work together to defy stereotypes, restore the rights of humanity, and challenge the historical stigma that has no place in modern society.

In 2000, **IDEA** members traveled to Italy to receive the Raoul Follereau Award, which is presented by the Associazione Italiana Amici di Raoul Follereau to those persons or communities that have been promoters of change, transforming ideals and values into energy, action and experiences.

In 2003, **IDEA** launched a global campaign to eliminate the stigma associated with leprosy.

We dream about a new world, built by our hands, intuition and creativity.

--Zilda Borges, IDEA Latin America



IDEA members from around the world gather at Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls as part of the First International Conference on Issues Facing Women Affected by Leprosy, 2002.



Marilyn Bero, then President of the Board, National Women's Hall of Fame Seneca Falls, honors **IDEA** member Elaine Remigio as part of the Hall's Book of Lives and Legacies, 2002.

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