

MidWeek

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Good Neighbor



Photo courtesy Raj Kumar

Raj
KUMAR

Gandhi International Institute for Peace and founder/president Raj Kumar, Ph.D., are coming off a successful Mahatma Gandhi Day celebration earlier this month.

During this year's Peace & Aloha Festival, GIIP welcomed speakers including Andrea Malji of Hawai'i Pacific University, Maseeh Ganjanli and interfaith leaders from various religious backgrounds, as well as musicians and performers who used their talents to spread the word of peace and nonviolence.

In addition to marking the 14th anniversary of the event, the Oct. 5 Peace & Aloha Festival also commemorated the 150th birthday (Oct. 2, which is also the International Day of Non-Violence) of the organization's namesake, Mahatma Gandhi.

In fact, back in 2015, GIIP helped initiated SB 332, which established Mohandas K. Gandhi Day on Oct. 2 in Hawai'i.

The goal of it all, says Kumar, is to raise awareness about nonviolence. That notion is the foundation of GIIP, which got its start Sept. 11, 2001, when Kumar

shared on local news Gandhi's forward-thinking message to a nation torn apart by tragedy.

"I decided the same day that I needed to do something to bring Gandhi's teachings back to the modern world," he adds. "He faced oppression from all sides, and he used the philosophy of nonviolence."

Shortly after, the official nonprofit was formed, and its mission since has been to promote nonviolence and Gandhi's methods to locals and visitors alike through the annual peace conference.

In addition, GIIP spreads the word through education, like its 2017 book *Gandhi's Wisdom For You (108 Quotes by M. Gandhi)*.

"It has 108 of his best quotes," Kumar reiterates. "Whoever I gave this book to, libraries, lawmakers, mental health professionals, the general public, everyone loved it. I got letters about how the quotes helped shape and change their lives."

This year, GIIP is part of the group of community volunteers that's releasing *Children as Teachers of Peace and Aloha*, along with Center for Attitudinal Healing. Organizers collected artwork from local students — expect more than 70 unique pieces — that depict peace and what it means to the artist.

"It's amazing to see what they come up with," Kumar adds.

Some of the young authors were recognized at 2019's Peace & Aloha Festival for their contributions. In addition, during the event, young ones had the opportunity to participate in artwork activities to contribute to the second edition, which is slated to come out next year. (Visit catopahawaii.com for more information on the book.)

In 2020, the community can also expect Kumar's newest book, *Anger and Nonviolence*, which continues the perpetuation of Gandhi's legacy.

"We are always (trying to) raise awareness about peace and nonviolence in the community," Kumar adds. "We bridge relationships with nonprofits, churches, social leaders and peacemakers in the community."

Those interested in learning more or getting involved can visit facebook.com/gandhianpeace0210.

— Nicole Monton