

Event honors Gandhi, nonviolence

BY PAT GEE

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As a 12-year-old boy growing up in Georgia, William T. Randall despised the Japanese for attacking Pearl Harbor. But when Mahatma Gandhi won independence for India through nonviolent protest two years later, his view started to change.

Randall, a retired minister and professor, will be among the speakers next Saturday for Gandhi's birthday and the International Day of Nonviolence.

The program is being organized by Raj Kumar, founder and president of Gandhi International Institute for Peace, based in Honolulu, and the Indian-American Friendship Council.

Festivities include a devotional invocation, spiritual chanting, multicultural dances, meditation and music by the Royal Hawaiian

PUBLIC WELCOME

The community is invited to the International Day of Nonviolence celebration from 10 a.m. to noon next Saturday near the Mahatma Gandhi statue outside the Honolulu Zoo in Waikiki. E-mail Raj Kumar at rku-marhi@yahoo.com or visit www.gandhian-peace.com.

Band. State Sen. Brickwood Galuteria (D, Downtown-Waikiki) will be the keynote speaker. Kumar suggests that people wear white, comfortable attire.

Randall says he was profoundly influenced by Mohandas Gandhi, assassinated in 1948 after leading India to independence after two centuries of British rule. Gandhi, known as

mahatma or "saint," pioneered the concept of "satyagraha" — resistance to tyranny through peaceful noncooperation.

Randall will speak on how his views on the use of violence changed since he was taught as a youngster to hate wartime foes.

As a Christian missionary in Japan, he said, he developed respect for and an understanding of its people.

"I learned very acutely that to harbor revenge would only divide and separate," he said.

Randall spent 10 years there on assignment but stayed on for the next 30 as a professor and minister of Futenma Baptist Church in Okinawa. In 2000 he published "Social Justice Through Nonviolence in the 20th Century," a book about Gandhi and the Rev. Martin Luther King.

Gandhi believed "nonviolence needs more courage

than violence," says Kumar. "He advised people not to fight in the name of God and religion. He emphasized that God does not belong to one society, religion or nation. God dwells in the heart of all human beings. Gandhi said, If you wish to see change in the world, change yourself. When we change, the world changes."

Among other speakers will be Haaheo Guanson, president of the Pacific Peace and Justice Reconciliation Center.

Guanson, who teaches a class at the University of Hawaii at Manoa comparing Gandhi, King and Queen Liliuokalani, says Gandhi and Liliuokalani were "both powerful peacemakers" trying to create social change.

Liliuokalani believed in the virtues of love and forgiveness, expressed in her famous song "The Queen's Prayer," written while she



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Haaheo Guanson leads students through hula-inspired dance moves as part of the University of Hawaii-Manoa course "On Leaders Using Nonviolence." Guanson will be a speaker next Saturday at the International Day of Nonviolence.

was under house arrest, Guanson said.

Also speaking will be Peter Greenhill, an 'Iolani School teacher who formed the 'Iolani Peace Institute.

Greenhill insists the path to peace is viable despite the world's many incendiary conflicts.

"We can rally people to a cause more quickly because of the Internet, though it can be argued that evil can be

spread just as quickly," he says. "There is more understanding about what makes human beings behave.

There are improvements to the environment, on racial issues and social programs. Education has advanced around the world. The United Nations continues to exist.

"I'm very hopeful," he says. "We've got the tools to get it done."

