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Office of Public Information, "Arun Gandhi to Speak at Social Issues Conference at USD" (2000). *News Releases*. 4063.

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University of San Diego

Office of Public Relations

News Bureau

March 7, 2000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARUN GANDHI TO SPEAK AT SOCIAL ISSUES CONFERENCE AT USD

Arun Gandhi, grandson of India's late spiritual leader Mohandas K. "Mahatma" Gandhi, will be the keynote speaker at the 11th Annual Social Issues Conference on Thursday, April 6, 7:00 p.m., at USD's Hahn University Center, Forum A/B. The theme of this year's conference is **"Challenging Injustice with Peaceful Solutions."** The event is free and open to the public.

Born in Durban, South Africa in 1934, Arun Gandhi grew up as a target for bigoted white South Africans for not being *white* and from black South Africans for not being *black*. Growing increasingly angry and vowing to fight back, Arun's parents sent him to live with his grandfather, "The Mahatma" (great soul) in 1946. From his grandfather, Arun learned and witnessed the effects nonviolence and violence had on India's struggle to gain independence. This powerful experience changed Arun and set him on a very different course for the rest of his life. Returning to his parents eighteen months later, Arun's parents strengthened his belief by committing to raise their children in an environment of nonviolence. In 1956, Arun returned to India and became a reporter for The Times of India. During this time Arun and several colleagues started India's Center for Social Unity, whose mission was, and still is, to alleviate poverty and caste discrimination by providing members with self-help models of commerce. Since its creation, the Center has successfully provided more than 300 villages and 500,000 people with the resources to purchase their own businesses and create their own Co-operative Bank.

Gandhi is the author of several books, including *A Patch of White*, *Voices of Poverty* and *Morarji Papers*, which caused a major controversy in the Indian Parliament and press due to top secret documents provided by then Prime Minister Morarji Desai. His most recent works include *Testament to Truth*, a compilation of some of his grandfather's writings, and *Gandhi for Youth*, a historical look at Arun's grandfather designed for young readers.

In 1991, Arun and his wife Sunanda founded the *M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence*, which is located at Christian Brothers University in Memphis, Tennessee. (Arun is a scholar-in-residence there) The mission of the institute is to examine, promote and apply the principles of nonviolent thought and action through research, seminars, workshops and community service.

Gandhi lectures at colleges, civic groups and professional associations around the world, as well as participating in community outreach and corporate and community workshop programs. In addition, he has participated in the renowned Renaissance Weekend for the past six years.

The Social Issues Conference Workshops will take place on Friday, April 7, 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.. The workshops are free and open to the public. Workshop topics include:

Restorative Justice > 8:30 a.m. - 9:50 a.m., Hahn University Center (room tbd)

Both of the philosophical and legal aspects of Restorative Justice will be introduced. As a component of the criminal justice system, this innovative approach seeks to reconcile victims and offenders through guided mediation. Presenters: Dave McKane, Victim Offender Reconciliation Program Mediator, Susan Finlay, Adjunct Professor, USD School of Law, and Superior Court Judge, Ret. and Kate Martin, USD student.

Chicano Park at 30: Struggles and Solutions > 10:00 a.m.- 11:20 a.m., UC (room tbd)

Chicano Park, which was taken over and established by Chicano activists on April 22, 1970, has received worldwide recognition as a superior public art site for its commanding mural paintings of the past and present struggle of Mexican and Chicano history. The history of Chicano Park's past, present and future will be addressed. (A slide and video presentation will be included in this session.) Presenters: Salvador R. Torres, Artist, Educator and Director, The Metro Gallery, Michael Gonzalez, Professor of History, USD and Rudy Guevarra, USD student.

Reaching Across the Rainbow > 1:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m., UC (room tbd)

This interactive session is designed to promote awareness and education about sexual orientation. Rainbow Educators will provide a panel format to discuss ways in which to become an ally through education and promoting justice for the gay, lesbian and bisexual community. Presenters: Eren Branch, Professor of English, USD, Chris Nayve, Associate Director, Community Service Learning, USD, Scott Raub, Graduate Student, USD, Karen Brain, USD student and Joe Garza, USD student.

For further information or to register for the Friday workshops, please call (619) 260-4798.

The Social Issues Conference is sponsored by the Ecumenical Council of San Diego County, United Way of San Diego, Peace Resource Center of San Diego, Associated Students Social Issues Committee at USD, Associated Students Multicultural Programming & Issues at USD, USD Social Issues Committee, USD Public Relations and the United Front Multicultural Center.