

Area activists speak for peace

By Tony Moses
Staff writer

On Saturday, three speakers addressed the issue of achieving peace and harmony in an emerging global society.

The speakers, Leola Bullock, Canton Michael Wiesser and Amrita Mahapatra, spoke to a group of about 40 people in the Nebraska Union.

Bullock, a local civil rights activist, explored nonviolent means of achieving peace by drawing parallels between the lives of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.

"The works of these men have not only helped create peace within ourselves, but peace towards others," she said.

"Violence towards other people was never proposed."

Bullock advised that "seeking truth, learning how to love and trying to be unselfish" were vital to achieving peace.

Wiesser spoke about the importance of acknowledging that "each one of us is a member of the same family."

"It sounds very simple, but the salvation of the world will come when we recognize that we are all one."

Wiesser emphasized the importance individuals have in the process.

"Perhaps a sense of peace can come from governments, but it is unlikely," he said.

"Peace will come from ordinary people, and it will come when people reject the labels that have been given to us."

A local actor and civil rights activist, Mahapatra concluded the speeches by envisioning how to achieve peace.

"We are free today if we refuse to carry the chains they give us," she said.

"The world is not going to change by itself. We have to change it. And by we, I don't mean great leaders, I mean you and me."

Following Mahapatra's speech, the speakers answered questions about other issues relating to global peace.

One issue of concern was the role of ethnic pride and maintaining a sense of identity.

"We should become a family, but in a family, brothers and sisters are not the same," Mahapatra said.

"We should maintain ethnic pride while spreading tolerance."

Wiesser addressed the importance of religion.

"The biggest mistake that has happened in the world of religion is that religion has not taught tolerance," he said.

The final issue addressed was the role of affirmative action in attaining peace.

While all three speakers believed that affirmative action has no place in a peaceful world, they said it is needed on the road to peace.

Wiesser said it is necessary to guarantee representation for minorities.

"The majority can take care of itself very well," he said.

Bullock agreed that affirmative action is still urgently needed.

"I consider myself living under a

dictatorship: white rule," she said.

The peace forum was sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln International Affairs, the Lincoln chapter of the India Association of Nebraska and the UNL chapter of the India Student Association.

Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, was expected to address the crowd, but he was unable to because of an illness.

The groups may be able to reschedule Arun Gandhi for March 25 or 26.

Throughout the forum, the need for peace was emphasized several times.

"Peace - what a seductive word it is," Mahapatra said. "It has almost become a cliché without us ever achieving it."

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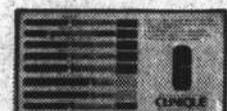
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