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April 26: Creating Enlightened Society: Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

April 27: Youth Congress on Peace

April 28: Peace Practices

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"By connecting with our own worthiness, we connect with the worthiness of all humanity. I believe that connecting with this worthiness -- both individually and collectively -- is critical for creating a good human future on this planet."
— Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

PRESS RELEASE
INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST LEADER, SAKYONG MIPHAM RINPOCHE, KICKS OFF WORLD TOUR ON YOUTH VIOLENCE WITH A PEACE PLATFORM
Honorary Co-Chairs Mayor Emanuel & Board President Preckwinkle with Youth & Community Leaders Combat Youth Violence Through a Vision of Peace at Youth Congress on Peace

CHICAGO – In the wake of the tragedy in Boston and intensified acts of violence across the nation, the **Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche**, a recognized global leader in peace initiatives and the highest leader of **Shambhala**, kicked off a four-city international speaking tour today with the ***Imagining Peace Conference***, featuring a ***Youth Congress on Peace.*** Hosted by **The Shambhala Meditation Center of Chicago**, C**ity of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel** and **Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle** are serving as Honorary Co-Chairs of the conference which runs through Sunday, April 28.

The Sakyong is opening the conference this evening at 7:30 pm at the University of Chicago's Rockefeller Chapel with a keynote talk: ***Creating Enlightened Society***. Saturday and Sunday the program continues at Malcolm X City College.

During Saturday's ***Youth Congress on Peace***, representatives from youth advocacy groups, violence prevention organizations, and at-risk youth are participating in a progressive journey through global issues affecting peace, systemic issues and community impact, and one's own personal relationship with peace, to address escalating youth violence and build a *Peace Platform*. The *Peace Platform* will be presented to **Mayor Emanuel** and **Board President Toni Preckwinkle** following the conference.

Sunday's program, ***Peace Practices,*** focuses on how dialogue can be continued in our communities to apply the Shambhala principle of inherent goodness and bring about personal and societal transformation.

"Globally, we are at a juncture where many of us are concerned about the direction our society is taking and what will come about," said **Adam Lobel, a senior teacher within Shambhala**. "Realizing the Shambhala principle of our inherent goodness and collective worthiness can be a dynamic and socially transformative opportunity. It is our hope that the ***Imagining Peace Conference*** and ***Youth Congress on Peace*** demonstrates how this Shambhala principle is not simply medicine for ourselves, but a principle that we all can apply to the social mosaic of the world we are living in to bring about positive and peaceful transformations."

In conjunction with the ***Imagining Peace Conference*** and ***Youth Congress on Peace***, **WBEZ** will host three community round-table discussions on May 7-9 at Chicago Public Media Community Bureaus to continue the dialogue within the community on preventing violence and creating peace in our communities.

SAKYONG OPENING PRESENTATION: CREATING ENLIGHTENED SOCIETY

During the Sakyong's opening talk, ***Creating Enlightened Society,*** on Friday evening at Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago, the Sakyong reflects on recognizing the Shambhala principle of the inherent goodness in all beings and how we can apply this principle amidst the challenges of daily life and societal issues.

The keynote program underscores the context of the Sakyong's new book, The Shambhala Principle: Discovering Humanity's Hidden Treasure, which invites us to reflect on the inherent goodness of all society, and to go forward as compassionate warriors to create an enlightened world and peaceful society.

"It is the right time in our society to embrace a new point of view that will allow us to see clearly the goodness and wisdom of others, and to feel compassion to help them in myriad ways. Through practice and study, we can cultivate personal qualities that are beneficial, not only in our individual daily lives, but also in serving others and bringing about cultural change," said **Lobel.**

YOUTH VOICES LEAD SATURDAY'S YOUTH CONGRESS ON PEACE

The ***Youth Congress on Peace*** program agenda was developed in collaboration with nearly 30 co-sponsoring organizations to ensure a prominent role for youth and for youth voices to be heard.

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The program provides a forum for a diverse group of youth, activists, professionals and organizations working in fields related to youth violence, and community members to:

- **Hear from youth about their perspectives on the context in which violence occurs.**
- **Share views on global influences and economic, societal, and cultural challenges contributing to youth violence.**
- **Learn about existing resources, best practices and techniques for addressing issues impacting youth violence**.

Keypad technology is being used to gain consensus on prioritization of issues and recommendations for the *Peace Platform* to present to **Mayor Rahm Emanuel** and **Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle** following the conference.

Youth are facilitating the program and participating in panel discussions and breakout sessions. Speakers include:

PANEL DISCUSSIONS:

The World: Global Influences/Local Impact

- **Moderators: Shantell Jamison, Host, Vocalo 90.7 & 89.5FM; Jaquan Reed, Student, Youth Connection Leadership Academy; Sarina Shane, Student, Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy**
- **Dr. Teresa Cordova, Executive Director, UIC Great Cities Institute**
- **Elena Quintana, Ph.D., Executive Director, Adler Institute on Public Safety & Social Justice**
- **Fleet Maull, Founder, Prison Mindfulness Institute**
- **Keenan Davis, Student, Youth Connection Leadership Academy; David Watson, Student, Rudy Lazano Leadership Academy; Langston Wren, Student, Mount Carmel High School**

Community Impact: Local Solutions For Global Issues

- **Moderators: Molly Adams, Host, Vocalo 90.7 & 89.5 FM; John Green, Student, Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy; Ashley Williams, Student, Sullivan House Alternative High School**
- **Lizbeth Marin, Youth Leader, The Life Campaign & Board Member, Albany Park Neighborhood Council**
- **Vianney Cervantes, Student, El Cuarto Ano High School; Christopher Hogan, Student, Winnie Mandela Intergenerational High School**
- **Rochelle Perry, Director of Client Services, THE SAFER Foundation**
- **Ameena Matthews, Violence Interrupter, CeaseFire Illinois**
- **Sol A. Flores, Executive Director, La Casa Norte**
- **Kady Leibovitz, AM, LCSW, UCAN**
- **Beverly Pacelli, Board Member, Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence**
- **Ryan Libel, Director of Operations, Thousand Waves Martial Arts & Self-Defense Center**

In preparation for the ***Youth Congress on Peace***, nearly 60 youth participated in a day-long youth leader facilitation training program conducted by **The Center for Civic Reflection** at the **Chicago Urban League.**

Throughout the day, youth leaders are presenting art exhibitions, music, prose and poetry readings, including youth poetry readings with representatives from **Kevin Coval's** "***Louder Than a Bomb: Chicago Youth Poetry Festival***," to demonstrate their visions for peace and to share their perspectives on how violence impacts their lives. **The Goodman Theatre** is leading 50 attendees in a day-long workshop to produce three vignettes about a shared vision for peace which is being presented at the conclusion of the ***Youth Congress on Peace*** program.

Featured performances include:

- **Poetry Readings: Youth Poets from "Louder than a Bomb: The Chicago Youth Poetry Festival;" Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence**
- **Musical Performances: Young Musicians from The Alternative Schools Network**
- **Closing Theatrical Performance: The Goodman Theatre**
- **Video Segments Filmed by the Community TV Network-Trained Youth**
- **Featured Student Art Exhibitions: Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence; Contemplative Photography from the Chicago Military Academy Students; The Alternative Schools Network**
- **Video Segments Filmed by Community TV Network-Trained Youth**

"By facilitating dialogue through a platform of peace at the ***Youth Congress on Peace***, we can attribute new perspectives and envision new and impactful ways to reduce violence, stabilize our communities and create an environment of peace where residents and young people in every neighborhood can feel safe," said **Tom Adducci, Executive Director, Shambhala Meditation Center of Chicago**.

CLOSING DISCUSSION: CONTINUING PEACE PRACTICES IN OUR COMMUNITIES

The conference concludes on **Sunday** at Malcolm X College with ***Peaces Practices***, a guided discussion by the Sakyong. The Sakyong reflects on the challenges and opportunities raised during the ***Youth Congress on Peace*** to address the societal issue of youth violence and how we can help each other realize our inherent goodness and employ peace practices in our daily lives and in our approaches to community and societal issues.

Co-sponsors include: **The Alternative Schools Network, CeaseFire, Center for Civic Reflection, Chicago LAMP, Chicago Urban League, City Colleges of Chicago & its Wellness Centers, Community Media Workshop, Community TV Network, Cure Violence, Enlace Chicago, Heartwood Center for Body Mind Spirit, Illinois African American Coalition for Prevention, Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence, La Casa Norte, Latinos Progresando, Leaders Investing for Equality (LIFE), Metropolitan Family Services, Safer Foundation, Serve 2 Unite, The Goodman Theatre, Thresholds, UCAN, University of Chicago, University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Institute, Youth Connection Charter School,** and **WBEZ Radio** as media sponsor.

Shambhala is a global network of more than 200 local communities and thousands of individual members founded upon the Shambhala principles of human goodness, genuineness and compassion. The Shambhala Meditation Center of Chicago hosted the Sakyong's world tour stop in Chicago: the Imagining Peace Conference. For more information, please go to www.imaginingpeace.com or www.chicago.shambhala.org.

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