



At James Madison University

Presentation Speech at the Gandhi Center

Dr. Sushil Mittal

Director

Mahatma Gandhi Center for Nonviolence

James Madison University

Harrisonburg, Virginia

Dr. Sushil Mittal delivered his Presentation Speech on 21 September 2007 at the JMU Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

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Good morning to you, ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues. We are pleased that you are here with us at Cardinal House, the home for the Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence at James Madison University. I am Sushil Mittal, the director of the Gandhi Center.

We are privileged to have with us a truly extraordinary guest of honor, His Grace, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who will be receiving the Center's inaugural Mahatma Gandhi Global Nonviolence Award later this evening, for his contributions to peace, encouragement of a nonviolent approach to human relations and world affairs, and efforts to promote reconciliation and forgiveness among people.

We meet at Cardinal House to acknowledge and to honor the call to this day as an International Day of Peace, as other people are doing in their own way in many other places around the world on this day.

Six years ago the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution that proposed this day, September 21st, as the International Day of Peace. In the resolution, the United Nations invited its member states, all government and non-government organizations, and individuals everywhere to interrupt, at least briefly, the flow of hostilities through a cease-fire effective everywhere, to remember this day with education, and to increase public awareness of the potential for peace.

We who gather here are privileged (indeed blessed) to be gathering in the peaceful hills and valleys of western Virginia. Yet all around us are reminders of the tasks that continue to weigh upon us as people and as peace-makers. We are in a calm and lovely place here, and yet we are not far from historic battlefields, from graveyards that honor war dead, and from sources of current news about conflicts that are happening on nearly every continent.

This day is an opportunity. Today is a day to search within ourselves. It is a day to join together with others in mutual support. It is a day to renew and strengthen our vision of a peaceful future. Most of all, it is a day to consider, search, study, and learn simple and effective ways to engage in nonviolent action that can make a difference to people and to a planet that suffers.

This morning we will do something for the Earth by planting a tree. We will do something to help us recall the example of a champion of nonviolence, Mahatma Gandhi, and we will encourage one another to keep our commitments for peace.

Thank you.

May I now invite Dr. Doug Brown, our provost, to give the welcoming remarks.