

The Toda Institute: Towards the Next Twelve Years

By Olivier Urbain, Ph.D., Director, 19 July 2008

1. Building on the Past Twelve Years:

Towards the Further Development of the Toda International Advisory Network

The first goal of the Toda Institute for the next twelve years is to keep the same level of professionalism and achievement shown during the first twelve. As we have just heard, the accomplishments of the institute so far, under the leadership of Majid Tehranian, have been outstanding. Of course Majid was not alone, and it is thanks to great teamwork and mutual support that the Toda Institute has been thriving. One of the great contributors to the institute was Mr. Hirano, who sadly, left us in January this year. Satoko Takahashi, as well as the Tokyo staff, have also been there since the beginning in 1996. We have also benefited from the enthusiasm and expertise of several secretaries and research assistants over the years.

Finally there are all of you. Indeed, under the leadership of Majid, the Toda Institute has established this International Advisory Council, and this is one of the unique features of the institute. Majid and I are doing our own research, and all staff members are learning and progressing constantly, but we do not have a permanent research team like most institutes do. What we offer is a platform for world experts to get together and generate new knowledge and new ideas through brainstorming at the highest level.

With its annual conferences, the Toda Institute wishes to create a temporary intellectual and humanistic oasis, lasting a few days, during which experts like you can feel free to do collective research in the best environment possible. Our motto is “Dialogue of Civilizations for Global Citizenship” and we will always try to provide a multicultural environment in our meetings, research projects and conferences.

I would like to thank all the members of the Toda International Advisory Council present today for their great support of many of our events over the years, and I ask for your continued support. We will not call on you all the time about everything, but we will surely call on you at the right time, and your expertise will be greatly appreciated. To our special guests today, many thanks for your support so far, and I look forward to continue collaborating with you in the future.

2. Celebrating the Spirit of Josei Toda: Focus on Three Themes and Three Issues

The name of the institute is the name of a real person, Josei Toda (1900-1958), a Japanese educator, philosopher and peace activist. He passed away 50 years ago, on 2 April 1958, and this Council meeting marks the new departure of the institute towards the next twelve years, and also towards the next 50 years. He believed in a concept he called Human Revolution, meaning that a world characterized by peace and justice, as well as the improvement of society towards more equality and harmony, needs to start with the inner changes taking place within one individual.

Toda knew that people are made of a mixture of good and evil, and he consciously decided to emphasize the good in an intense and systematic manner. He was put in jail for his beliefs, which were running contrary to the Japanese war machine during the Second World War, spend two years in prison, and devoted his life to the development of a grassroots movement after coming out of jail in 1945, and until his passing in 1958.

The call for a Human Revolution has been made in many different traditions and throughout the ages. It is the spirit that inspired Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) to say: “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” The 19th century Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) also said: “People want only special revolutions, in externals, in politics, and so on. But that’s just tinkering. What really is called for is a revolution of the human mind...”

One of Toda’s most original contributions to peace is the specific context mentioned above. He was advocating this idea at a time when the Japanese military was promoting nationalist fanaticism and bloodthirsty imperialism, just the opposite of Human Revolution. It is also noteworthy that Toda was able to develop a large grassroots movement for peace in Japan during the post-war reconstruction, promoting the message of Human Revolution while the country was busy becoming an economic, industrial and materialistic giant.

How can the Toda Institute translate these ideas into concrete policies and research results, which hopefully will lead to concrete action and positive change?

As I just mentioned, Toda believed in people’s potential for good, he believed in self-mastery, personal growth, and he placed the top priority on people’s development.

In peace studies vocabulary, this can be translated in the Toda Institute's emphasis on Human Security and Human Rights. Next he believed in spreading goodness through an ever-growing number of small discussions and dialogues. The Toda Institute will emphasize the importance of dialogue and peaceful conflict transformation. A third theme close to Toda's heart is what he called "One worldism" in 1952. The Toda Institute will pursue this idea in the form of the promotion of Global Citizenship and Global Governance. This concept is also central to our motto, "Dialogue of Civilizations for Global Citizenship."

The issue for which Toda showed the most concern was the abolition of nuclear weapons. He made a declaration in 1957, about seven months before his passing, in which he mentioned that "We, the citizens of the world, have an inviolable right to live." He believed that nobody has the right to jeopardize this right, and that nuclear weapons should be eliminated completely, as well as the spirit of fear, threat and mistrust that lies at the basis of their existence. Let us not forget that there are about 26,000 nuclear weapons left in the world today, and that each one is at least one thousand times more powerful than those that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Today, just like half a century ago, we must ask this question: How much genuine mutual trust and harmony can we promote in international relations as long as some countries keep each other at bay with the threat of complete nuclear destruction?

The founder of the Toda Institute, Daisaku Ikeda, whose message Majid has read at the beginning of this meeting, has established the Toda Institute in 1996 in order to encourage peace scholars to work together to tackle the numerous issues humanity is now facing, especially those closest to Josei Toda's heart. In his annual Peace Proposals, adapting Toda's spirit to modern times, Ikeda has consistently supported the strengthening, development and reform of the United Nations, and more recently, he has systematically emphasized the importance of environmental ethics for peace.

As a result, the Toda Institute will focus on these three themes and three issues for the next twelve years, as you can see in the brochure on page 3:

- | Human Security and Human Rights
- | Dialogue and Nonviolent Conflict Transformation
- | Global Governance and World Citizenship

These three themes will be explored in order to find concrete solutions to three main issues:

- | Abolition of Nuclear Weapons
- | UN Reform, to ensure a more collaborative world
- | Sustainable Peace through Environmental Integrity and Social Justice

By focusing on these three themes and issues for the next twelve years, we hope to generate some breakthroughs and build some momentum towards lasting solutions. I ask for your support during the future conferences, activities and publications of the Toda Institute: we need your expertise and enthusiasm to tackle those very challenging issues affecting the present and future of humankind.

3. Concrete Activities:

Regular Conferences and Other Activities in the Next Twelve Years

The Toda Institute will continue its annual rhythm of one international conference a year, centered on one of the themes and issues mentioned, with the production of a book as a result. We will also need the expertise of the Council members in order to publish our yearly journal *Peace & Policy*.

Concerning international conferences, last year we held a very successful event entitled “The Challenge of Abolishing Nuclear Weapons,” co-organized with the generous support of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF), headed by Dr. David Krieger.

This year the Toda Institute will hold a conference entitled “Facing Climate Change with a Renewed Environmental Ethic,” and this will be the first time we tackle this kind of topic, inaugurating our emphasis on the third issue on our list, “Sustainable Peace through Environmental Integrity and Social Justice.” We are currently very busy preparing this conference which will take place in November with about thirty experts in climate change, global warming and ecological ethics, and this event will add a new dimension to our activities. According to Lester Brown in his book *Plan B 3.0. Mobilizing to Save Civilization*, published this year, there are only 10 years left until the mechanisms supporting our entire biosphere plunge into chaos. For instance, as the polar cap of the North Pole is melting, less and less sunlight is reflected by the disappearing ice, and more and more heat is trapped by the dark ocean surface. As a result the entire area is becoming warmer, triggering more melting, making the area hotter... According to Lester brown we have a last window of ten years before we

can stop these destructive mechanisms from taking a life on their own.

We sincerely hope that our conference will contribute some new ideas and breakthroughs allowing us to make a radical change for the better.

Depending on many different factors, besides our annual conferences and the publication of conference results, we would like to offer other opportunities for joint research and publication of articles and books to our Council members whenever possible, and this will be decided year by year.

Continuing the list of regular activities, the Toda Institute would like to continue supporting IPRA in different ways. For instance we would like to combine a Toda Council meeting with the IPRA conferences every two years, just like today.

**4. Conclusion: let us keep up our youthful spirit
in order to reduce and eliminate human suffering wherever we can.**

On 1 January 1957, Josei Toda made one of his most pointed declarations towards peace and happiness of all humankind, when he said: "I want to rid the world of misery."

This spirit will always be the main motivating force behind the Toda Institute's activities, and our method for doing this is encapsulated in our motto: "Dialogue of Civilizations for Global Citizenship."

In 1951, Toda said: "The new century will be created by the power and passion of youth." The Toda Institute would like to support the next generation of scholars by providing special opportunities for the youth. If you are above thirty, we will try our best to inspire you to keep your youthful spirit, so that you may continue displaying your greatest power and passion for peace.

With best regards,

Olivier Urbain
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Toda Institute