

## NEWS RELEASE

**Area Educators George Cheney and Michael Minch will be honored at Gandhi Birthday Celebration**

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Two university professors who head up peace studies programs at area universities have been named recipients of the 2008 Gandhi Peace Award.

George Cheney, director of the University of Utah Barbara and Norman Tanner Center for Nonviolent Human Rights Advocacy as well as the Peace and Conflict Studies program, and Michael Minch, director of the Utah Valley University Peace and Justice Studies program, will be honored at the annual Gandhi Birthday Celebration September 28 at 5:00 p.m. in Salt Lake's Jordan Park. The public is invited.

The Gandhi Peace Award is presented annually by the Gandhi Alliance for Peace, a local activist group preserving the memory and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

In announcing its selections, the Gandhi Alliance board of directors noted that both men not only lead respected academic programs that teach and conduct research on the conditions and processes of peace, but both men and their programs also reach out in a practical way to engage their communities.

"The scientific study of peace couldn't be more urgent," said Alliance President Deb Sawyer. "It is heartening to know that scholars are doing research on this most important issue and sharing their work with their students and communities."

According to the International Peace Research Association, there are over 600 academic peace studies programs worldwide.

**George Cheney** earned a B.A. from Youngstown State University (Ohio) and master's and doctoral degrees from Purdue University. He has held faculty positions at the universities of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Colorado at Boulder and Montana-Missoula. In 2002, Cheney joined the faculty of the University of Utah where he is professor of communication. Sally Planalp, Cheney's wife and colleague, has shared the path from Illinois to Utah.

Cheney's award-winning book *Values at Work* (Cornell University Press, 1999) describes the struggles of Basque worker cooperatives to retain their democratic values while entering the global market. He has written or co-written five other books and is at work on three more, including one on professional ethics and another on the rhetoric of peace.

Since the early 1980s, when he was involved in the Indiana Nuclear Freeze Campaign and wrote an award-winning dissertation on the US Catholic bishops' peace pastoral, Cheney has worked on and off-campus for peace and justice. In the mid-1980s, he served as media director for the Colorado Nuclear Freeze Campaign. During the early 1990s, he worked on the Farmworker Power Project of Colorado while continuing work as a core member of the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center. In Colorado and Montana, Cheney co-organized wide ranging forums on war and peace. He is currently working, along with other concerned citizens, to establish the Utah Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (UCAN).

"Peace work is group work" says Cheney. "Individuals can and do make a difference. But it is in collaboration and the bridging of differences that we get our work done and also show others how viable peace really is."

Cheney enjoys the outdoors, particularly hiking in Utah's red rock country. He follows foreign and independent films, especially those on social issues, which often provide stimulating material for his classes.

**Michael Minch** earned a bachelor's degree from Grand Canyon College, a Master of Divinity degree from the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctoral degree from the University of Utah.

A member of the philosophy faculty at Utah Valley University, Minch specializes in political and moral theory and coordinates the annual Dialogue on Peace and Justice, a three-day conference which includes guest speakers, workshops and panel discussions. In addition to directing the Peace and Justice Studies program, Minch serves on the Religious Studies Committee.

Minch is co-editor of a book, out this year, titled *Living Ethics* (Wadsworth Publishing Co.), a comprehensive anthology of writings that focus the reader on the practical value of ethical reflection.

"My life in ministry and academia has always had a strong component of activism," says Minch, who has lead groups to Haiti and Mexico to build an orphanage and homes. He was a participant in meetings that launched Witness for Peace and, working for the American Baptist Churches, monitored a \$40 million investment portfolio with regard to corporations' environmental and social policies.

The father of two, Minch enjoys hiking and backpacking, movies and watching baseball. He plays drums and has performed with groups ranging from country to jazz, but he prefers rock-n-roll and is currently organizing a band.

Last year's Gandhi Peace Award was given to Jane Beckwith, who, along with Topaz Museum Board members, has worked to preserve the site and the memory of the Topaz Internment Camp, 16 miles northwest of Delta, Utah, where over 8,000 Japanese Americans were confined during WW II.