

International Aiki Peace Week – its origins and its vision

O-Sensei Morihei Ueshiba was convinced that aikido “came into being in order to foster and promote peaceful co-existence”. Although this peaceful mission is the heart of the founder’s vision, aikido isn’t yet perceived in the public as an important contribution to the creation of a worldwide culture of peace.

Thinking about this dilemma, the two aikido instructors Paul Linden (Columbus, USA), and Bertram Wohak (Munich, Germany) came up in 2010 with the idea for an annual International Aiki Peace Week (IAPW) in conjunction with the United Nations' 'International Day of Peace'. The first International Aiki Peace Week was celebrated in 2010, and 340 dojos from 43 countries and many different organizational affiliations participated.

Today Aiki Peace Week is an annual event, which provides for many aikidoka an opportunity to increase public awareness of aikido as a joyful practice of reconciliation, compassion, and non-violence. By transcending the divisions of different schools, styles, and organizations, IAPW truly follows the unique embodied peacemaking legacy of O-Sensei Morihei Ueshiba, who would be pleased by seeing aikido as a well respected part of a culture of peace.

My message for the first International Aiki Peace Week in September 2010:

Today’s inspiring message comes from Bertram Wohak Sensei, a 5th Dan who teaches Aikido and Bodywork in Munich, Germany. Originally a physicist, he operates a private body therapy office and is technical director of the Aikikan Biberkor dojo, which he founded in 1996. Bertram was one of the people who came up with the idea for Aiki Peace Week nine months ago (the other, Paul Linden Sensei of the US, was featured yesterday). He regularly teaches national and international workshops and retreats for Aikido, Ki-training and what he calls “Der Weg des Kriegers zur Kunst des Friedens”. Here is his message:

“Those who think deeply about Aikido feel that they must participate in the establishment of a universal system of truth and justice. It is our duty to serve as messengers and guides for world peace and universal brotherhood.”

Morihei Ueshiba

- Imagine the thousands of Aikido practitioners in hundreds of dojos around the world, who are at this moment celebrating their own kinds of Aiki Peace Week event.
- Imagine the enormous burst of creativity set free by our coordinated action.
- Imagine the fact that in Aiki Peace Week we can all share O’Sensei’s legacy regardless of the political divisions and stylistic differentiation we have in the world of Aikido.
- Imagine a broader public that knows more about Aikido as a joyful practice of reconciliation, compassion, and nonviolence.
- Imagine what that could mean for you and your dojo.
- Imagine that from now on, every year, an even greater part of the worldwide Aikido community will celebrate Aiki Peace Week.
- Imagine the spirit of Aiki spreading out beyond our dojos to become fruitful at many levels, from personal to political.
- Imagine Aikido becoming an important and well known part of a “culture of peace”.
- Imagine that you are making a significant contribution for this to become reality.

My message for the second International Aiki Peace Week in September 2011:

Today's words come from Aiki Peace Week co-founder Bertram Wohak Sensei from Munich:

Aikido is meant to bring out the best in people, to lead us along the proper path. Its basis is Love. The purpose of Aikido is to help us fulfill our mission to bring peace and harmony to this world.

Morihei Ueshiba: The Heart of Aikido, The Philosophy of Takemusu Aiki, p.99

“This peaceful mission is the heart of Aikido and that's what motivates and moves us and why we came up with Aiki Peace Week. While respecting all the different schools and styles, the lineages, federations, and organizations that have developed like branches, twigs and leaves on the constantly growing tree of Aikido, in Aiki Peace Week we all can come together at the trunk and its roots. There we all can join without fearing that we would lose something. And with the inspiration we have gained at the roots we can go out and see what our Aiki spirit is able to accomplish. That seems to be difficult but it's worthwhile and that's what Aiki Peace Week is all about.



In promoting Aiki Peace Week in Germany now for the second year I experienced this difficulty on different levels. From the many dojos I contacted and supplied with all our information on Aiki Peace Week only a small minority showed interest and signed on. But with some of the dojo chos who signed on, there developed a warm and promising contact. And I know of different cities, where Aiki Peace Week inspired multi-dojo-events. This is also Training across Borders. In my own dojo I organized a joint Aiki Peace Week training and invited a couple of dojos from the

regional neighborhood. Some accepted, some not. Every dojo cho was asked to give a short training sequence stressing his own ideas concerning Aiki peacemaking. This wouldn't have happened without Aiki Peace Week. O'Sensei would be happy. “This fellow Ueshiba, through practice of the warrior spirit, has firmly resolved to make the world a better place.” Let us follow this fellow“.

Bertram Wohak

My message for the fourth International Aiki Peace Week in September 2013:

Message to the Aikido world

Today is United Nation's International Day of Peace and the final day of this year's International Aiki Peace Week. Every year, hundreds of organizations and citizen groups worldwide honor that day with thousands of Peace Day events. Since 2010, Aikido practitioners and other martial arts practitioners from hundreds of dojos in more than 40 countries around the world have chosen to be part of this annual celebration by participating in the newly created International Aiki Peace Week (IAPW).

As chair of the International Aiki Peace Week committee, I thank all of you who have been involved this year with peacemaking ideas and events, and practicing your art by emphasizing your vision of a more peaceful world. Through your activities, you have made your contribution to fulfilling O Sensei's vision of Aikido as a way to reconcile the world.

Next year will be even more important. August 2014 will be the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, the gigantic eruption of violence between the most developed nations of that time. I believe that in the summer 2014 there will be a lot of attention in the media on issues of discord, violence and ways out of that dead end. As Aikidoka we should be ready to show the world what our art is capable of contributing to the development of a "culture of peace".

So I would like to invite all Aikido practitioners to become a part of this growing movement. By participating in the International Aiki Peace Week we can make our voices heard in our communities and around the world and make a difference!

Sincerely,

Bertram Wohak Sensei

IAPW Committee Chair

My message for the sixth International Aiki Peace Week in September 2015:

Message to the Aikido World 2015

Since O-Sensei's death in 1969, Aikido has spread all over the world. Today millions of people in almost every country in the world practice this peaceful martial art. And yet Aikido is hardly present in public consciousness. But as an embodied art of peace Aikido could give our world much more than its elegant and effective techniques and its profound paths to self-development.

For our revered founder O-Sensei Morihei Ueshiba it was the determination of his art, to make the world a more peaceful place. He said "those who think deeply about Aikido feel that they must participate in the establishment of a universal system of truth and justice. It is our duty to serve as messengers and guides for world peace and universal brotherhood."

If we look at our world today, it is obvious how much we need other ways of dealing with conflicts and contrary interests. Just because Aikido is a profound martial art, it can provide an essential contribution to the creation of a culture of peace, from personal to political. Bringing this into greater public awareness and at the same time making our local dojos better known is the determination of **International Aiki Peace Week (IAPW)**.

I invite you to participate this year and to show through your IAPW event the exceptional value of Aikido for the emergence of a culture of peace.

Yours sincerely

Bertram Wohak Sensei

IAPW Committee Chair