

Conversations with Rigoberta Menchú, Peace Nobel Prize Laureate 1992

United Nations International Day of Peace

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On the occasion of the UN International Day of Peace, UPF-Austria organized a conference with Nobel Price Laureate Mrs. Rigoberta Menchu at the UN Vienna Headquarters.

The meeting was organized in cooperation with the *Academic Council of the United Nations System* (ACUNS), *Art of Reconciliation*, (an initiative for reconciliation) and with Media Partner [The Best of the World Network](#)



Further, the

event was Supported by UNIS Vienna and the Embassy of Guatemala.

The conference took place on Friday, September 20th 2013, in the **UNIS Multimedia room**, VIC, G-Building, 5th Floor

The Chairperson of the program was **Dr. Leo Gabriel**, Ambassador of Peace, Social anthropologist, journalist and film maker, who has lived and worked in South America for several years and initiated many social projects.

Welcome messages were given by **Mr. Janos Tisovsky**, Director of UNIS, as well as **Mr. Desmond Doyle**, founder of *Art of Reconciliation*.

The third welcome message was given by **H.E. Antonio Roberto Castellanos Lopez**, Ambassador of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mrs. Rigoberta Menchú gave the keynote address with translation from Spanish to English.

Rigoberta Menchú Tum (born 1959) is an indigenous [Guatemalan](#) woman, of the [K'iche'](#) ethnic group. Menchú has dedicated her life to publicizing the plight of Guatemala's indigenous peoples during and after the [Guatemalan Civil War](#) (1960–1996), and to promoting [indigenous rights](#) in the country. She received the 1992 [Nobel Peace Prize](#) and [Prince of Asturias Award](#) in 1998. She is the subject of the testimonial biography *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1983) and the author of the autobiographical work, [Crossing Borders](#).

Menchú is a [UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador](#). She has also become a figure in indigenous political parties and ran for President of Guatemala in 2007 and 2011.

In her speech at the conference she emphasized the importance of education for everybody. "We need to know who we are and where we go." She continued:

"In order to attain peace we need dialogue and negotiations. This needs people behind who work hard and don't give up. We want all the organizations in the world to become active in helping those who suffer the most, like mothers helping their children. I spent 14 years of my life walking down the corridors of the UN in Geneva and New York. I think my work opened the doors for millions of people to enter the UN."

To the *Refugee Protest Camp* spokesman of Vienna she gave the advice: "I understand the life of refugees. You must always keep your goal in mind to back to your country eventually and change things there. I fought hard to be able to return to my country. Finally I became a candidate for the elections. We need to be

an example when it comes to be leaders. We cannot remain victims forever. We must have self-esteem. Have we achieved changes in Guatemala? Yes, we have made changes possible. How can we live in peace? If I am spiritually and socially well I can help other people.”

After the meeting in the UNIS Multimedia Room there was a **Ceremony at the Peace Bell at Vienna United Nations Plaza**. It started with two dance performances presented by the Ensemble **Jeroky Paraguay**.

Then the Peace Day message of the UN Secretary General was delivered by

Mr. Dennis Thatchachawalit, Director, Division for Management, UNOV, followed by

Mrs. Rigoberta Menchú Peace Day address, in which she summarized the principles of peace as she learned them from her ancestors (which turned out to have universal character):

1. Respect: If all people respect each other we can build a better world together

2. Be grateful! We need to be thankful over and over again if we want to live in peace
3. Reciprocity: others give to me, but I have to give as well (give & take), under equal conditions
4. Unconditional love: if we do our work with unconditional love, we can create a different world!

After her speech a Special recognition from the UNWG - United Nations Women's Guild Vienna given by Dalila León-Kostal to Mrs. Rigoberta Menchú. Finally, the **Peace Bell** was rung, which set an end to the official program.

After the meeting Mrs. Rigoberta Menchú had to leave for other meetings with Austrian politicians.

One of the co-organizers made this 3min video of the event:

<http://youtu.be/EpjcfOFUeU>

