



Walking in Peace

by Dara Fukuhara

A Honolulu doctor, inspired by a child who helped peace break out on the Pakistan-Indian border, organizes a peace march.

Reading the story of how two warring countries came together as a result of an ailing girl's plight of survival to recovery, brought tears to Dr. Inam Rahman's eyes.

Inspired, the Honolulu physician organized the first "Hearts for Peace" march, a peaceful, one-mile march that took place on February 22 as several hundred of participants walked Sunday morning from Fort DeRussy to Kapiolani Park.

In June 2004, Pakistanis and Indians are planning to walk from India to Pakistan to show their support of the peace and friendship between their two countries. "This event was so powerful that I thought it was a good idea to start a peace march in Honolulu and expand it to the entire United States and around the world," he says. This march was not only for the support of peace between Pakistan and India, but to show other warring countries and nations, such as Palestine and Israel, or North Korea and South Korea, that there can be peace among people.

Hearts for Peace marches are currently being planned in other

states, including California, Texas, Michigan, Illinois, and New York. A second Hearts for Peace march in Honolulu is slated to be held in late May.

Rahman says that the march welcomes all nationalities, ethnicities and religions. And there's no cost to join the march. "We want to show our support from America that we are supporting the friendship between India and Pakistan," he says.

The little girl who renewed the ties between Pakistan and India was 2-year-old Fatima Noor Sajjad. She was born with a congenital heart defect, but there was no medical treatment in her homeland of Pakistan. The only chance of surviving lay in the hands of a surgeon hundreds of miles away in India. But the border was closed and there was no rail or air travel between the two countries and bus service had been suspended in 2001. After hearing the seriousness of Fatima's life-and-death situation, authorities allowed the bus service to temporarily resume, taking Fatima and her parents to a hospital in India, where she underwent open-heart surgery and recovered.

With an overwhelming support for peace from Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Christians, the border between India and Pakistan has remained partially reopened. Currently the leaders of the two countries,



Dr. Inam Rahman, center, shown with Mr. Harish Dhami and Dr. Mina Ganapathy, participate in the Hearts for Peace March

Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, have agreed to reopen peace talks since the July 2001 summit in Agra when the two nations failed to make any progress. "We (Pakistanis and Indians) have been friends here for a long time and there's no reason why we should not be friends there," Rahman says. "We should be helping each other without any boundaries of religion or ethnicity because inside we are the same, no matter where we come from."

Born in Lahore, Pakistan, Rahman moved to the United States in 1974 to continue his education. He got his degree in pharmacy from a university in Pakistan and worked as a licensed pharmacist in Washington, D.C., and New York City. As an American citizen living in New York, Rahman decided to go to medical school in South America, where he had to learn Spanish. He studied medicine in the Dominican Republic. "I wanted to treat people," he says. "As a pharmacist, I was just dispensing medication and it was only one side of helping people out. People used to tell me that I was so caring and loving that I should become a doctor."

Rahman returned to the United States in 1985 and studied towards his master degree in microbiology at Harvard University. Taking on a voluntary position at Mount Sinai Medical Center as a researcher in nuclear medicine in New York, Rahman had to take a plane to Harvard (Boston) to attend his evening classes after work and then a train back home. After finishing the nuclear medicine training program, he was offered a position in the internal medicine training program at Mount Sinai. Rahman knew he wanted to be an internist and primary care physician after finishing the program. "I didn't find nuclear medicine fulfilling," he says. "I just didn't want to look at (x-ray) pictures all day. I want to treat patients." The cold weather in New York was not suited for Rahman, he says. As he was flipping through a magazine, an ad for a senior resident needed in Hawaii caught his eye. "I thought this position would be very good because I have seen Fantasy Island and to me, this was heaven," he says.

He fell in love with Hawaii when he came for his interview 11 years ago and stayed to complete his last year of his training at the University of Hawaii's John A. Burns School of Medicine's residency program. Rahman started his own practice in Honolulu after finishing his residency, specializing in internal medicine, diabetes and osteoporosis.

One reason he specializes in diabetes is because his mother, Najima Begum, died from the disease. "It was a shattering experience for me when she passed away because I knew diabetes was a serious disease, but I've never realized that it is a sitting time bomb," he says. In the name of his mother, he provides a monthly diabetic clinic to the community, in which he educates about the disease and evaluates the patients for proper diagnosis and care. Rahman met his wife, Reyna, two years after he moved to Hawaii and has been married to her for nine years. They have a daughter and a son, Aisha, 7, and Mateen, 5.

This physician, whose mission in life is to help people, is reaching out even more to the community with the Hearts of Peace march that advocates a friendship and peace between Pakistan and India, and other warring countries and nations. "In Pakistan, there were too many wars," Rahman says. "I never liked the wars because I thought those countries would be better off being friends."

Editor's Note:

Most of our readers know Inam Rahman, MD, as a very busy internist in private practice in Honolulu. Inam is also president and founder of The Diabetic Clinic, and has served as host on the TV series "The Medical Bulletin" and the TV & Radio series "Healers of the New Millennium."

Our readers probably do not know he is also a registered pharmacist (in New York State) and has pursued Master's degrees in Business and Science studies. His non-medical interests include Pakistani-American Arts Council, where he is president of the Hawaii Chapter, and is also a member of the Hawaii Screen Writers Association. He served as president of the Honolulu County Medical Society 2002-2003, and as President-elect of the Hawaii Medical Association 2003-2004. Inam had to resign the latter position in order to run for political office.

This article appeared in MidWeek February 25, 2004, and is reprinted here with permission of Don Chapman, Editor of Mid-Week.



Aloha Laboratories, Inc.
... When results count

**A CAP accredited laboratory
specializing in Anatomic
Pathology
Quality and Service**

David M. Amberger, M.D.
Laboratory Director

Phone: (808) 842-6600
Fax: (808) 848-0663
E-Mail: results@alohalabs.com
<http://www.alohalabs.com>