



September 2017

PEACE ADVOCATE

Gandhi Alliance for Peace Newsletter

2017 Gandhi Peace Award: Aden Batar

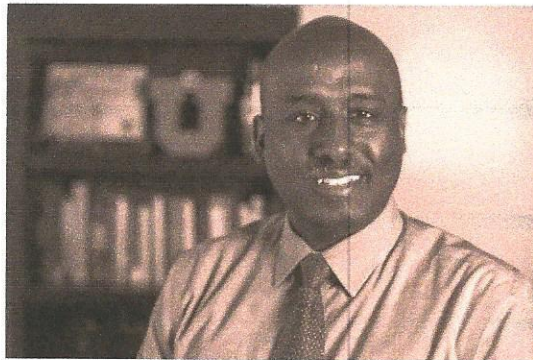
Aden Batar came to Utah as a refugee fleeing violence. Now his life is dedicated to helping other refugees succeed in their new country. Batar, as he is known by all, will receive the 2017 Gandhi Peace Award on October 1, 2017, at 3:00 p.m. at Tracy Aviary in Salt Lake City.

Batar grew up in Somalia. He graduated from law school in 1990—just as the Somali Civil War broke out. Fighting throughout the capital city Mogadishu included his own neighborhood, regularly killing civilians. Batar, with his wife and two children, escaped to a house owned by friends outside the city. “We waited there for the fighting to stop, but it didn’t.”

Some 100 people lived there. One day as all the women were cooking, boiling water fell on his two-year-old son, severely burning him.

“There were no hospitals, no doctors, no open airports. I couldn’t do anything for him,” Batar says. When his child died five days later, Batar thought, “Why should I stay here?”

To leave, he first had to make a dangerous journey alone to Kenya, arriving after 3 1/2 weeks. Only then could he contact his wife. He found a way to reunite his family through a



Aden Batar of Catholic Community Services is the 2017 recipient of the Gandhi Peace Prize.

miraculous meeting with a pilot who agreed to bring them. The family waited in Kenya for two years until, in 1994, they became the first Somalis to settle in Utah through Catholic Community Services (CCS).

Batar worked menial jobs while he learned English at Utah State University. In 1996, CCS hired him to help other refugees, first as a case manager, then program manager, immigration law counselor, and now as director of the Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Program.

He has helped thousands of refugees and immigrants transition to their new life. “Our goal is teaching self-reliance and how to become productive members of the community. ‘This is your country now,’ I tell them. We encourage refugees to pay

back by volunteering. Many do so.”

60,000 refugees now live in Utah. “Life is difficult for the first generation,” Batar says. “They sacrifice so their kids can have education and better lives. It’s up to us as a community to help the first generation succeed. We don’t want them trapped in poverty.”

But integration works both ways, Batar says. Everyone benefits from the richness of cultures, experiences, and skills that immigrants bring.

Batar himself has given extensive service to the community. He has been or is currently a board member for the U of U Alumni Association, Utah Center for Legal Inclusion, Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable, Utah Nonprofit Association, and United Africans of Utah. He has served on advisory boards and committees for the Center for Research on Migration and Refugee Integration, Utah State Refugee Services, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Diocese, and Department of Workforce Services. As president of the Islamic Society of Greater Salt Lake, he helped establish the Islamic cemetery and mosque in West Valley City, and he founded Somali Community Services of Utah.



Join us for the Gandhi Birthday Celebration!

Sunday, October 1, 3:00 p.m.

Tracy Aviary in Liberty Park, Salt Lake City. Free admission for attendees.

Kids for Peace at Lincoln Elementary

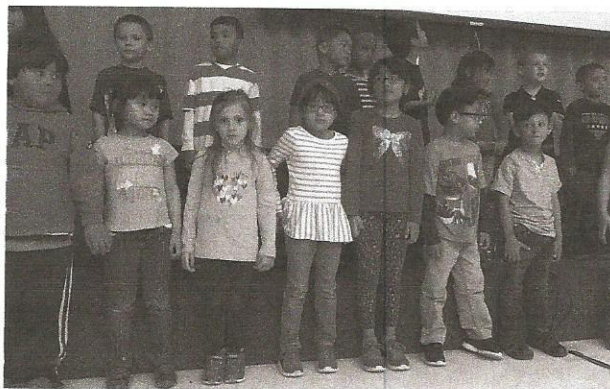
by Kathy Kreuter

On Monday, May 22, 2017, three members of the Gandhi Alliance for Peace (GAP) attended a morning assembly at Lincoln Elementary School in Salt Lake City. This was the school chosen for the 2017 GAP gift of books about peacemakers and living non-violently. GAP maintains an ever-expanding list and collection of such books. Each year the faculty of an elementary school is invited to order from the list for a \$1,000 gift of books for their school.

We had been invited to Lincoln School's peace assembly, where thanks were warmly expressed. The 2nd grade children opened the program by lining up on the stage and each child proclaiming, in a different foreign language, "PEACE!" The nearly 500 children present responded with hearty applause.

The kindergartners were up next and sang a song to more applause:

The world is a rainbow



Children teach about peace at Lincoln Elementary.

*Of many colors, many people.
You'll be you. I'll be me.
That's the way it's meant to be.
The world is beautiful
When we live in harmony-eee.*

The 6th grade "junior coaches" showed a slideshow about peace, which they had put together for an interschool contest, and they were happy to tell us it had won a prize. Nine junior coaches each shared a Gandhi fact.

The program moved on to a Gandhi Rap: "Be the change you want to see!" Five hundred voices chanted it over and over to a catchy beat!

The school serves a very diverse population. One group on stage assured everyone that their souls were the same color. One class recited *A Pledge of Happiness at Recess*, which included the words, "We don't need equipment to be happy."

Another class sang, "This land is my land; this land is your land," emphasizing inclusion of all the refugee children at Lincoln. The children asked every-

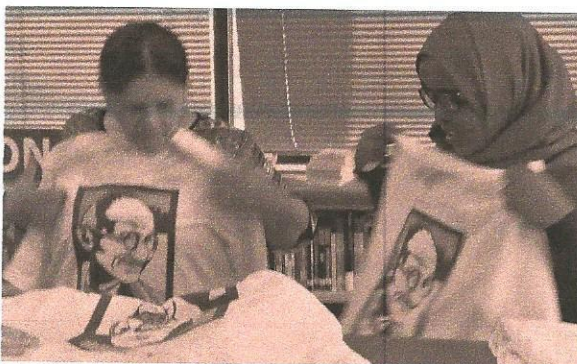
one to take the song seriously by loving our country. The assembly closed with two more songs: "Peace Be With You" and a vigorous rendition of "If I Had A Hammer."

As the children filed past us on the way to lunch, we had a chance to wink, smile, or wave to each one. We offered our special thanks to our contact person at Lincoln School, kindergarten teacher Nancy Busath, and our enthusiastic thanks to all for a rousing good program about peace.



Gandhi Peace Essay contest at Horizonte

For several years, the Gandhi Alliance for Peace has sponsored a Gandhi Essay Contest at Horizonte Instruction and Learning Center in Salt Lake City. Diverse students attend this school: immigrants and refugees, adults completing high school requirements, and teenagers benefiting from alternative education. This year, adult learners took part in the contest. Winners were announced last May at a gathering at the school: 1st place: Luciana Ferreira; 2nd place: Zahra Warsame; and 3rd place: Magna Hansana.



Horizonte students try out Gandhi t-shirts.

Luciana Ferreira, from Brazil, wrote about racism. She hopes for a society with no more victims of racism but with dignity and respect for

all. Ferreira feels she could help this happen by how she treats others and by valuing those who may be disrespected, excluded, or forgotten. As Gandhi taught, "In a gentle way, you can shake the world."

Every year, GAP gives away Gandhi t-shirts with a quote from him: "Even if you are a minority of one, truth = truth." Students and teachers at Horizonte were happy to get a shirt honoring one of humanity's foremost creators of peace.



SLCPD's Crisis Intervention strategy resolves tense situations peacefully

by Cindy Powell, graduate student in social work

For years, the Salt Lake City Police Department (SLCPD) has been using innovative techniques to connect with members of the community and keep them safe. In the early 2000s, the police department established a specialized training program to teach officers how to de-escalate situations that involve some of the community's more vulnerable populations, including those with serious mental illness. All new officers receive this specialized training, and some officers elect to become part of an elite program that specializes in working with members of the community who live with a mental health disorder and are in crisis. This group of officers are part of the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT).

To illustrate the benefits of initiatives such as this, recall that Brian Cardall died in 2009 after being tased by a Hurricane police officer, while Mr. Cardall was experiencing a psychotic episode. Cardall's wife and young child watched the events unfold. At the time, CIT training was not available in many parts of Utah. Since then, however, officers in all Utah counties have received Crisis

Intervention training to help prevent tragedies like those involving Cardall.

CIT training teaches officers about some of the more serious mental health disorders, like bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and autism spectrum disorder. As part of their training, officers visit with patients in the Utah State Hospital and hear what daily life is like for individuals who are affected by mental illness. In addition, officers participate in everyday tasks while wearing special headphones with audio recordings that simulate the kinds of voices individuals may hear when they experience auditory hallucinations. These kinds of exercises teach empathy to officers and also help them learn strategies to help individuals in crisis. De-escalation strategies they learn can help protect officers and other community members. Supplemental trainings address autism, post-traumatic stress disorder, and CIT for youth.

This is not to suggest that individuals with serious mental illness are inherently violent. In fact, people with serious mental illnesses are more likely to be victimized themselves than to victimize others. Some years back, I spoke with de-

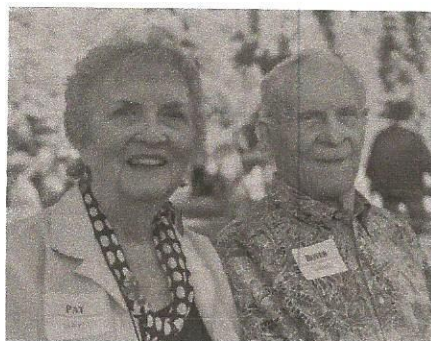
tective Ron Bruno, who spent more than a decade as CIT Utah director and who is now vice president of the CIT International board of directors. He told me that having a mental illness does not make individuals more dangerous, but it can make them more unpredictable. Learning crisis intervention skills helps officers manage any situation that is unpredictable, whether it involves an individual with mental illness or not. Officers operate in unpredictability. It is part of their job.

The SLCPD has implemented other programs to help individuals most in need. They have hired a team of social workers—the Community Connection Team—and opened a Community Connection Center, where people can access assistance, including short-term therapy, assistance with housing, help in reunifying families, and other crisis intervention services. The Homeless Outreach Service Team and program collaborates with community providers to help individuals who are homeless access medical services and other social services, including housing. All of these programs help keep our community safe through respectful, nonviolent interventions.



Buzz from the Board

We are thrilled to let you know that GAP co-founder and board member Boyer Jarvis and our dear friend Pat Jarvis have received the Human Rights Campaign *Ally for Equality Award*. Boyer and Pat have devoted their lives to social justice,



education, community betterment, and equality for all. In June, the Human Rights Campaign honored them for being “passionate advocates for all members of the LGBTQ community and amazing allies.”

These two are indeed amazing, and all Utahns' lives are better because of them. Thank you, Pat and Boyer!

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Refugees: The situation today

Aden Batar, this year's recipient of the Gandhi Peace Award, has these comments on refugees:

The U.S. has been settling refugees since the 1970s, beginning with the fall of Saigon. Since then, the U.S. has given humanitarian assistance to those affected by the breakup of the USSR, conflicts in the Balkans and African nations, the Gulf Wars, and recent conflicts in the Middle East.

"Every refugee has a story: they have lost their families, seen people they love killed, endured rape and torture, had their properties taken, and been driven from their homes."

More than three million refugees have resettled in the United States. However, the Trump administration

has drastically damaged the compassionate reputation of the U.S. as Executive Orders have suspended the resettlement program, banned Syrian refugees, increased deportations, and limited visas from certain countries.

"I have seen the country shifting to a politicized, un-American climate. We were known as a humanitarian nation, but the rhetoric of the administration is undoing this," says Batar.

Today, 60 million people around the world have been displaced. Batar believes the U.S. and other nations have a responsibility both to help refugees and to heal places where they have colonized, sold arms, and created war lords.

"When I was in Somalia," he says, "the international community tried

to support peace and order and provided food. People were not dying at that time. Then, after a U.S. soldier was killed and dragged through the streets, President Clinton decided to pull out of Somalia, and other countries followed. They left Somalia for the militias and terrorists to rule."

Here in this country, he believes we need more effective refugee policies and resources to help provide housing, economic opportunities, and support for school children. "We need to invest in this younger generation, or we will pay a heavy cost."

Private individuals can help immigrants successfully transition to life here. You can mentor, help people get jobs, teach English, or befriend a family who needs friendship. Go to ccsutah.org to see volunteer opportunities.



GANDHI ALLIANCE FOR PEACE - MISSION STATEMENT

To increase public awareness and understanding of Mahatma Gandhi—his unique role in world history and his commitment to truth, nonviolence, service and justice; and

To encourage nonviolent resolutions of conflict among individuals, communities and nations.

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