



Salt Lake City, Utah
PEACE

Gandhi Alliance for Peace Newsletter
ADVOCATE

October 2021

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

2021 Gandhi Peace Award

- Maggie Laun

This year's Gandhi Peace Award will be given to the Sanctuary Steering Committee, First Unitarian Church. While there were many iterations of the Sanctuary Committee as needs changed over time, the picture included is the Steering Committee that was there at the end. I have chosen to have the words of those intimately involved tell the story. The words are taken from the Annual Report to the First Unitarian Church and personal statements. I do believe their words speak to the magnitude of the task taken on by this brave and committed community as well as the love they found in this amazing family.

Joan Gregory, Director, First Unitarian Sanctuary:

"They say inclusion changes everything. Life at First Unitarian Church of Salt Lake City certainly changed when on the evening of Tuesday, January 30th, 2018 Vicky Chavez and her two daughters took sanctuary at First Unitarian Church of Salt Lake City. Vicky was on her way to the airport to self-deport to Honduras after her stay of removal was denied. But she could not do it, could not expose her daughters to the violence rampant in the country that she fled from in 2014 to seek asylum in the United States. It was just too dangerous. So, she took the brave step to defy deportation and take sanctuary. We opened our doors, our arms, and our hearts to this amazing and courageous family.

It had been 8 years since the congregation voted to join the "New Sanctuary" Movement and pledged to provide short-term "symbolic" sanctuary. But in 2017, it became abundantly clear that "symbolic sanctuary" could no longer meet the desperate needs of immigrant families facing deportation. Long-term sanctuary was what was required.

At a congregational meeting on February 4, 2018, the First Unitarian Church congregation voted to solidify and confirm its commitment to provide long-term sanctuary

and to making this a ministry of First Unitarian Church of Salt Lake City.



Members from left to right:

Dr. Maritza Sotomayor, Interpreter and Volunteer; Reverend Monica Dobbins, Media Wrangler/Coordinator; Lisa Hyte, Guest Resources Coordinator; Joan Gregory, Sanctuary Director, First Unitarian Sanctuary; Rev. Tom Goldsmith, Senior Minister and Advisor; Vicky Chavez, Sanctuary Guest and Super Mom holding Bella Chavez; Yaretsi Chavez; Katie Swade, Volunteer and Scheduling; Samantha Overton, Treasurer; Kelly Garrett, Training Coordinator; Sarang Joshi, Safety & Security & IT Coordinator.

We had been preparing for months to host a sanctuary guest facing deportation but, in hindsight, the preparations were nowhere near what was needed and at the same time far more than what was required. Anything more than safe haven could come in time. Our understanding has come gradually over time as we prepared and as we continue to learn. We have stepped up to this critical call to action and Vicky has made it easy. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to serve in this way."

The Reverend Monica Dobbins:

"The first time I met Vicky Chavez, it almost didn't happen. Our team at First Unitarian Church had been preparing to welcome a guest - of unknown provenance; all we knew was that the guest would be an asylum seeker. It was an act of faith on our part, to open our doors to a guest without knowing who they were, where

they came from, or why. It was an act of faith on Vicky's part, too: to turn the car around, to divert from the path she had chosen – to return with her children to a country that promised only uncertainty and violence – and instead walk through these open doors, to spend the next few years of her life with a group of strangers.

When I first saw her, I saw a woman filled with fear and desperation, yet also with a defiance that comes from putting one's life in the hands of God. My own part in the story was so small. My official responsibility was to wrangle press: sending out press releases to members of the media, organizing press events, setting up interviews, and occasionally speaking to the media about Vicky and her case. I was only called into this service once in a while, when there was big news to share with the world. And the truth is, that didn't happen very often.

The truth about Sanctuary, and a larger truth about being undocumented in the United States, is that the wheels of justice, such as they are, grind very slowly. There can be months where nothing happens on a person's case, and there's just nothing to do but wait. Millions of cases remain stacked on judges' desks, just waiting as the system slowly lurches along, and many will not be resolved until Congress finally acts.

So, for most of the three years Vicky lived with us, my task was simply to witness. I witnessed the pain of a person whose life is in limbo. I witnessed the confusion of children whose parent is doing the best they can against enormous forces well beyond their control. I witnessed the faith of ordinary people, becoming aware of their extraordinary privileges and leveraging them to help a stranger – a stranger who would become closer than a friend. I witnessed the power of a group of people growing their love to create something really new and amazing.

My prayer is that the witness, the faith, the struggle, and the love that was cultivated over these past three years may spiral out into the universe for many years to come, sending waves of creative energy that contribute to the transformation of our immigration system to one that makes justice and freedom truly possible. My prayer is that every person who migrates to the United States, for whatever reason, finds this faith and fulfillment in their journey."

Lisa Hyte, Guest Services and Resources Representative, Steering Committee member:

"Meeting Vicky and having the opportunity to serve her and her girls brought me so much joy. In fact, it was life changing! Vicky taught me so much about perseverance,

strength, and hope. She remained so positive during her stay at the church and always offered smiles and laughs to volunteers and visitors. Someone said to me, "It's so nice of all the volunteers to make Vicky part of their family" but then I realized it was actually the other way around, Vicky had taken each one of us volunteers and made us part of HER family! She welcomed us, she loved us unconditionally, she fed us, she crocheted gifts for us and best of all, she shared her precious girls with us.

My role as "Guest Services & Resources Volunteer" was to ensure her stay with us was comfortable and her needs were being met. This included grocery shopping and delivery, personal shopping and errands, arranging haircuts, arranging occasional meals to be delivered from volunteers, and planning personal and sanctuary social events. My ultimate goal was to turn a 'sanctuary of shelter' into a 'sanctuary of comfort and hospitality'.

I will cherish the memories made from this experience. Some of my favorites being the milestones made with the girls, like first steps, first words and birthdays. However, the memory that surpasses them all is the day that Vicky walked out of the church. Vicky always stated that she wanted to ring the church bell the day she could leave the church. After the press conference, Reverend Tom Goldsmith and Vicky ceremoniously rang the church bell together. It was almost a spiritual experience seeing the much taller Reverend Tom helping a petite Vicky pull the rope down again and again to ring the enormous bell. I didn't want to miss seeing the moment Vicky walked out of the doors of the church for the first time so I ran downstairs and outside the front doors and waited. It was a cloudy and wet day, but I could have sworn that for just a moment the clouds parted, and the sun peeked through as if to say 'It's a new day' as the church bells were ringing. It was a surreal moment knowing that the church bells were being rung by the hands of Vicky and Rev. Tom. The tears welled up in my eyes as I waited for her to walk out the doors. She then walked out and I had a burst of emotion of happiness and gratitude. Tears of pure joy! If I had to pick a piece of music for a soundtrack for the moment, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Ode to Joy comes to mind!

I am grateful for the friendships made, the opportunity for personal growth and the circle of love that was continually shown to and from everyone involved. Every single individual made a tremendous impact on Vicky's comfort, happiness and her eventual freedom. When I drive past the First Unitarian church now, I see more than a church building, I see a sanctuary, a home and I see a structure that housed an immense amount of love.

Joan Gregory, Director First Unitarian Sanctuary:

"The Sanctuary Steering Committee wishes to express our deepest appreciation for the service of all the Sanctuary volunteers who have worked tirelessly, passionately, and generously in support of Vicky and her daughters. Vicky, Yaretzi, and Bella send their love and appreciation. Rev. Tom and Rev. Monica thank you for your steadfast commitment. We extend deep gratitude, knowing that we could not do this work without YOU, without ALL OF US. How we support Vicky in meeting her goal of permanent protected residency status will be changing now ... we are on this journey together ... all the way! Our commitment remains steadfast. Love resists."

Vicky Chavez: The church adopted me without knowing me, and they supported me, without getting tired. Thank You.

The work of members of the Sanctuary Steering Committee is not over. They are waiting on a resolution of the legal fees that were levied during the previous administration. The government did decide to drop the fees but they are still waiting for that to appear on the official records. The lawsuit won't end until those fines are officially lifted. They are also filing a Special Immigrant Status for Yaretzi, Vicky's 9-year-old to put her on a path to US citizenship. They are also working with The Colectivo and several Congresspeople to present a private bill to help Vicky on her path to citizenship. Vicky filed for a work permit in April and is still waiting for it to be granted. The goal has always been permanent resident status for Vicky and there are many hurdles still to cross.

Questions? Contact: Joan Gregory, 801-949-2906 (text), joanmzg@gmail.com

=====

Unarmed Civilian Protection:

Gandhi's Ideals in the 21st Century

- Nancy Haanstad

The title "Peacekeepers" has long been associated with blue-helmeted UN troops. After WW II, the UN instituted Collective Security agreements, but these agreements were ill-suited to managed global "hot spots." The Security Council thus created Peacekeeping units, using soldiers from UN member states. Initially, these lightly-armed troops were limited to defense and facilitating peace processes. Over time, despite increasingly militarized missions, the "Peacekeepers" proved unable to prevent massive humanitarian tragedies. In response to these tragedies, in 2005, the UN explicitly committed itself to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, mandating the protection of vulnerable civilian populations caught in zones of violence.

The 21st century has witnessed the emergence of an alternative method of peacekeeping—Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP). Rooted in Gandhian values and experiences, UCP rejects the common assumption that only violence can overcome violence. UCP practitioners believe that conflict may be inevitable, but violence is not. In contrast to traditional UN militarized personnel and tactics, groups who practice Unarmed Civilian Protection rely on global civilians working within local communities to more effectively safeguard the lives of endangered people.

UCP staff must be knowledgeable about local conditions and populations, and they must possess considerable self-discipline and courage. Because they are unarmed, UCP staff can enter a conflict area without being seen as a potential threat to anyone, whether potential victims or aggressors. They live within the community while wearing identifiable civilian clothes and complying with the customary patterns of social conduct. Establishing communications and relationships with all parties and key players is crucial to UCP success. These unarmed civilians work in tandem with local leaders while respecting the community's decision-making process. Acceptance by community leadership is vital for immediate success as well as the sustaining of UCP principles in the future.

Typical UCP activities involve monitoring unsettled situations, patrolling dangerous areas, and accompanying individuals (such as environmental activists) who are under threat. UCP staff assist victims of kidnappings and domestic violence while also finding safe, temporary housing for displaced persons. Successful shuttle diplomacy may lead to the establishment of safe negotiation locations and even peace zones. At times, UCP staff face significant personal danger by placing themselves physically between hostile groups to prevent armed assaults.

Among the more prominent global UCP practitioners is **Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP)**, which sponsors ongoing UCP engagements in South Sudan, Myanmar, Iraq, and the Philippines. **Peace Brigades International (PBI)** is perhaps best known for 'walking with' endangered human rights workers in Latin America and elsewhere. **Cure Violence (CV)** addresses gang violence in multiple U.S. cities as a major public health issue.

Stable social and political conditions are a prerequisite for progress on the UN's top priorities of Sustainable Development Goals and the slowing of Climate Change. To that end, the United Nations has itself now incorporated UCP as a viable approach to managing conflict. The 2015 UN High-Level Panel on Peace Operations Report proclaimed "unarmed strategies must be at the forefront of UN efforts to protect civilians." In addition, General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions have further embedded UCP within UN policies, while UNICEF and

UNHCR have carried out operations in partnerships with UCP organizations.

Today's Unarmed Civilian Protection model stems directly from Gandhi's commitment to building humanitarian communities based on the power of nonviolence. Gandhi founded his own *Shanti Sena* (Army of Peace) for the purpose of preventing communal violence and creating the foundation for true peace. After the many humanitarian tragedies of the 20th century, Gandhi's non-violent principles remain our last, best hope for creating a world based on humanitarian ideals.

Learn more:

Search for Unarmed Civilian Protection or see the following websites:

- Nonviolent Peaceforce: nonviolentpeaceforce.org
- Peace Brigades International: peacebrigades.org
- Cure Violence: cvg.org

Peace Studies Journal and other academic journals have studied UCP operations in Sri Lanka, Colombia and South Sudan.

Other resources include the course manual --*UCP: Strengthening Civilian Capacities to Protect Civilians against Violence*. It can be found at the NP website. Click "Explore Our Work" then "Publications."

nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/UCP_Course_Manual.pdf

=====

Athletics United, Logan

- Kristi and Mike Spence

Athletics United was launched in 2017 as a way to build community through sport and was officially incorporated as a non-profit organization in Utah in 2018. The club is based in Logan, Utah where there is a growing refugee and immigrant population. Running is one of the most accessible of all sports and a familiar pastime around the world, and as avid runners, club founders, Mike and Kristi Spence and Glynn Hadley saw running as a way to bring families together and build community with minimal barriers (club participation is free to all!). Currently, the majority of club members range in age from 5-16 years with participants primarily from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and the United States; however, the club has had runners from Burma, Kenya, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Sierra Leone.

On any given week, 15-45 kids show up for a weekly running session. During these sessions, participants engage in skill building (running drills, technique instruction, core strength), demonstrate sportsmanship, and enjoy healthy snacks. Distance and participation is incentivized with goal setting and rewards. The focus of all running is on personal improvement, encouragement, health and confidence instead of inter-participant competition.

In addition to weekly running practices, the club offers weekly tutoring sessions, engages in local races and holds a track meet series over the summer. Athletics United continues to grow both its volunteer and participant base and was recognized by Utah State University with a Presidential Award for Community Engagement in 2020.



These frequent interactions with families allow volunteers to identify challenges that they may be experiencing in a new country. Athletics United often serves as a hub, connecting families with resources and working as a partner with state and local services to help with issues related to education, medical, psychological, social, and legal needs.

~~~~~

### **Mahatma Gandhi's Writings From 100 Years Ago**

[from *Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi*-VOL. 24 351-354] Article - *Message to women of India to become part of the Nonviolent Swadeshi Movement as part of Civil Disobedience Satyagraha Movement*; - this involved spinning cotton and weaving their own Khaddar [Khadi] clothes and burning away foreign clothing dumped into India. Written on October 2, 1921

#### **To Women**

Dear Sisters,

I have been thinking all this time about the kind of message I should send to you on my birthday, which falls today. What interest can our sisters have in my birthday? What is the reason that they know me? Pondering on this question, I feel that they do so because they recognize my love for them. They know that I value their honour and that I have shown the best means of safeguarding it. This means is swadeshi. In following swadeshi, women can do much more than men. When, in the past, the daughters of India spun and clothed themselves and others, India may have been poor but she was not as abject as she is today. It is plain to me that today the women in the country are unable to preserve their virtue as they could do in the old days. I, therefore, once again put before them the same idea.

All women should devote at least one hour daily to spinning. Realizing that simplicity is dharma, women should regard themselves adorned through it, regard as sacred whatever quality of cloth is produced from yarn spun by girls and wear such cloth for the purpose of covering their bodies. I see, too, and I want women as well to see, that this is the only way to win swaraj. The best way to show our regard and affection for a person is to follow his example.

My aim in everything which I ask my countrymen to do is to revive the satyayuga. Our first task in the country is to educate women. Education will help them to safeguard their virtue. For doing this what we require is not much erudition but strength of character. The love you have shown me today encourages me to ask you to show love of another kind by resolving to bring back the satyayuga. India is certainly capable of defending herself. If we decide to use exclusively cloth made in India, we shall in a very short time have ensured strong protection for the country. That is why I am trying to popularize the spinning-wheel. It enables women to safeguard their virtue. There is no other occupation which will help millions of our women to spend their time usefully sitting at home. To ply a spinning-wheel does not require much of intelligence either. The country should learn to be self-reliant. It will be so when it has brave men and brave women. The courage we should display is of the kind required in satyagraha, which is superior to the courage of arms. If we can do this, we are bound to be free. Save the millions of rupees which are drained out of the country and protect your sisters.

If you are convinced that the work I am asking you to do needs to be done, come forward, for the sake of the country, to take it up. 1. Go among the poor and, wherever you find people suffering for want of food and clothing, introduce the spinning-wheel, banish hunger and help people to become self-supporting. 2. Wherever you find the surroundings very dirty, women and children disease ridden and the general state one of moral laxity, the people should be provided with the means for a sober, clean, healthy and pure life and, in this way, be made aware of their present condition and ways of living. 3. Wherever you see the need for efforts to spread knowledge and a desire to undertake such efforts, you should provide the necessary means and should, yourselves, work actively. For this work, it is first necessary to cultivate self-purification, that is, spiritual growth, sisterly regard for others and intellectual humility.

Let your life be governed by high ideals. In Rome, the ideals themselves changed, but in India we have still not forgotten ours. Whether Hindus or Muslims, we are all heirs to our forefathers. We can hope to preserve that heritage only by constantly fixing our attention on high ideals of life. With our forefathers, aspiration for goodness was the central motive of their life, but it seems to have vanished from us.

Wherever we turn, we find hypocrisy. We have got into the habit of resorting to lies in every small matter. We must root that out and fill our lives with truth.

Your humble brother,

*Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*

---

### ***Buzz From The Board***

- Kristen Rogers Iversen

### **Thank you, Deb Sawyer!**

With sadness and an inexpressible feeling of gratitude, we want to announce that GAP president Deb Sawyer will be stepping off the board in October.

Deb, of course, has been the guiding light for this organization for 23 years, pouring her time and resources into the cause of peace. In 1998, she was asked to organize an event for Gandhi's birthday on October 2, and she pulled together a number of groups who worked together to organize a "Salt March" and program at the Great Salt Lake. Shortly after, Deb gathered a few people, including U of U professor and dean/civic activist Boyer Jarvis and political science professor/Amnesty International chapter head Nancy Haanstad to continue observing Gandhi's birthday.

Since then, the Gandhi Alliance for Peace has done that and so much more, under Deb's committed and inspired leadership. GAP efforts led to the clearing of minefields in Afghanistan—and she actually traveled to Afghanistan as part of this effort. GAP also erected a statue of Gandhi at the YWCA, teacher workshops on teaching peace, programs in elementary schools, the donation of peace-oriented books to schools, music peace programs, writing contests, a film series, and the production of a play. And of course, the wonderful yearly commemoration of the birth of Mohandas K. Gandhi.

But Deb had already been working for peace. When she was a graduate student in physics, she started attending Quaker meetings and speaking out for peace causes. This was during the time the government proposed to build racetracks carrying MX missiles in the West Desert. As a teaching assistant, Deb became very aware that half of her students would likely go on to work for the military. "It all came together," she says. "I wanted to be a voice for an alternative to militarism.

As a start, she started a group called "Writing to Stop Nuclear Testing." People from different peace groups committed to sending postcards to officials twice monthly calling for an end to testing. The U.S. did stop nuclear testing, "and I think we contributed to that," she says. Deb also went to Nicaragua and Guatemala with the program Witness for Peace, which opposes U.S. and corporate

***Return Service Requested***