



Salt Lake City, Utah
PEACE

Gandhi Alliance for Peace Newsletter
ADVOCATE

February 2022

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.

Children as Peacemakers

Kristen Rogers-Iversen

We Must Begin with the Children.

In recent months, we have heard the heartbreaking news of a 10-year-old and a 12-year-old who each took their own life—because they were bullied. We have cried tears of sorrow for these children and their families, and tears of despair for the cruelty of children and the fact that adults did not stop or prevent the cruelty.

Not long ago, my 9th-grade granddaughter had told me of endemic bullying at her school. Later, at a choir concert at this same junior high, I watched beautiful young people on the stage sing of happy holidays and peace on earth. And I thought, “Could it be possible that any of these smiling girls and boys bully others?”

Some do, I learned. Some of these choir kids had been calling a friend of our granddaughter’s “fat” and other names. Devastated, this girl goes to the counseling center almost every day.

Our children are the future. As Gandhi said, **“If we are to create peace in the world, we must begin with the children.”** Children who learn kindness and empathy—and these are learned skills—can be peacemakers right now. They will be the peacemakers of the future.

Children learn primarily in families, but also from peers. Schools can and should reinforce positive teachings. In any cases where children experience violence or contempt, schools can and should model and teach peace toward self and others.

Teachers already have a lot to do! But helping children gain emotional peace and become more inclusive, kind, and compassionate toward others may save time instead of taking time.



According to The Peace Alliance, in schools that implement even small positive changes, “a surprising thing is occurring--the climate of the school begins to shift: conflict and violence drop substantially, bullying is reduced, truancy goes down and grade point averages rise.”

The Children's Peace Monument in SLC's Peace Gardens, says, "Peace on earth," "Dawn of a new era," and "Our hope is in the children"

The Gandhi Alliance for Peace is committed to helping our children find and learn peace and compassion. We seek to support peace practices and learning in schools, families, and organizations. Do you have ideas, suggestions, or willingness to help? Please contact us.

What Would Gandhi Do?

Sabine Weil

At this time of climate change and global environmental crisis, it is important, more than ever, to contemplate the words and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. The ecological crisis we are witnessing is not only damaging our beloved Earth; it is also threatening world peace.

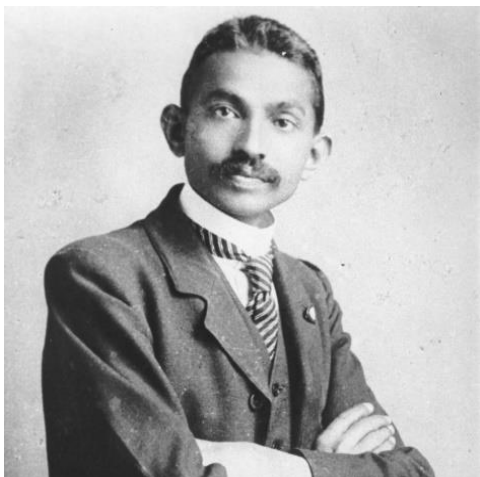
UN Secretary General António Guterres said on September 23, 2021:

“The effects of climate change are particularly profound when they overlap with fragility and past or current conflicts. It is clear that climate change and environmental mismanagement are risk multipliers. Where

coping capacities are limited and there is high dependence on shrinking natural resources and ecosystem services, such as water and fertile land, grievances and tensions can explode, complicating efforts to prevent conflict and to sustain peace....”

Last year, more than 30 million people were displaced by climate-related disasters. Ninety per cent of refugees come from countries that are among the most vulnerable and least able to adapt to the effects of climate change. Many of these refugees are in turn hosted by countries that are also suffering the impacts of climate change, compounding the

challenge for host communities and national budgets.



Gandhi was a young lawyer in South Africa when he read John Ruskin’s *Unto This Last*. The ideals in the book inspired him. In 1908, he coined the term “Sarvodaya” from two Sanskrit roots: “Sarva,” meaning “lifting all.”

Since that time, the Sarvodaya movement of “lifting all” has grown towards advocating non-violent means to solve progress in all aspects of society (social, economic, environmental, political and religious).

The welfare of the earth’s ecosystems is clearly crucial to “uplifting all”—Sarvodaya—and to peace. As Gandhi has said, the Earth has enough resources for everyone’s need, but not enough for everyone’s greed. So what would Gandhi do today and how would he teach us to act? These are important thoughts for us to contemplate and apply to our own lives at this critical time. To paraphrase Gandhi once again, we become the change we want to see.

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# Peace and Healing in Trees

Indra Neelameggham

For many years, the Gandhi Alliance for Peace has annually planted a “Peace Tree.” Now they hope to establish a grove of trees to symbolize peace and provide a place for contemplation and earth healing.

Trees and plants have been revered as sacred and special by humankind since times immemorial. One of the ancient wonders of the world was the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Many Biblical histories speak of sacred groves that inspired a certain spiritual awakening. Prophets from the old and modern era found inspiration amidst trees. Gautama the Buddha is said to have found the path to salvation under a Bodhi tree. Hindu temples are usually surrounded by a sacred grove of trees and flowering plants. For example, in the Kauai Hindu temple complex there is large grove of *Rudraksha* sacred bead trees, perhaps the only one of its kind in the world.

Trees live for a long time; they are multigenerational and hence hold a space of awe for men and women, whose life span is limited. Trees bridge time over several generations. African tribal leaders held conclaves under the Baobab, believing that the tree would inspire them to take wise decisions. Merchant guilds of ancient India met under the spreading Banyan tree that gave shelter and shade with enough nooks for small groups to strike a deal.

Old pagan and druidical reverence for trees morphed into the Christmas tree that has become the cheerful symbol of modern holidays, somewhat



spanning beyond the narrow confines of Christian belief alone. Lakota tribes of America held a firm belief that the spirits of the braves resided

in sacred trees that should not be cut down; this is similar to beliefs of some far east peoples.

It is but natural that we evolve with the times to recognize that beyond the spiritual and mental solace from trees, flowers and groves, plants play a vital role in keeping our blue earth healthy. Plants and trees help to keep air breathable. Modern city planners all over the world include green space and public gardens in metro city plans. One of the most famous and most used such spaces is Central Park of New York. It is a multi-use space available to all to connect with nature amidst the concrete jungle.

Certain trees always were recognized in literature and art as being particularly sacred. The various genus of Ficus that have long lifespans are one of the most sacred. Lotus plants are revered in many societies of the East. Fir, Oak, Cedar, willow and Yew are special in many European traditions.



The one common facet is such sacred trees live long, stay green for longer times often keeping their foliage even in harsh winters and thus symbolize that life revives. Other

plants and trees acquired a mystical cloak because of their healing and medicinal value such as the holy basil Tulasi.

Sacred space where one can find quiet, where one could be safe and contemplate, where the mind can be calmed is very essential. It is important that we establish sacred spaces of nature with trees and waterscapes to provide that much needed quiet in the chaos of modern times.

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Social-Emotional Learning Through Bucket Filling

Life with a nearly 6-year-old has been interesting lately. There have been a lot of questions about right and wrong, what's fair, emotions, and when and how to speak up.

As parents navigating such complex topics, we're lucky to have an amazing partner in T's kindergarten teacher. She uses research-based strategies to help students with concepts such as managing emotions, empathy, making responsible decisions, and much more. Evidence shows that when students know how to find peaceful solutions, communicate better, and get along with others, they are less likely to be bullied and will ultimately have skills to succeed in every part of life.

Our district currently has a committee of parents and teachers evaluating a social-emotional learning program for possible implementation in our district's elementary schools.

One of the tools available to T is bringing his problems to the class for help. He recently did this when he was disappointed that he was too young to audition for a local ballet production of "Cinderella." Sitting in a rocking chair with his friends surrounding him on the carpet, he explained his problem and then called on 3 children for advice: 1. Do belly breathing 2. Tell your mom 3. Create your own "Cinderella" show at home. What a great process to work through big emotions with the help of others—which empowers students to be creative in their problem-solving!

Another of our favorite takeaways from his kindergarten experience is bucket filling and dipping—that is, when I'm not being accused of being a dipper. T will tell us how he "fills the buckets of others" when he checks on a classmate after a fall on the playground or helps his teacher pick up the classroom without being asked to do so. And then there are the "bucket dippers," like his parents.

Recently, when we did not give T candy shortly before dinner, he disappeared into his bedroom and emerged a few minutes later to post signs in every room of the house. With buckets crossed out, he "activated" the signs by pointing to them and then stared us down, making it very

clear we dipped his bucket. But there was no tantrum. Even at a young age he has learned to express his frustrations in a healthy way, which can only contribute to a better-balanced emotional life as he grows up.



I mentioned to T's teacher that I was looking for ways to support this work in our local community. She brought up the idea of doing an evening event on peace, much like the STEM event that's happening at our elementary school later this month. I asked T what he thought, and he immediately started brainstorming ideas. I'm working with the principal to see if we can hold an event on or around World Peace Day on September 21 with age-appropriate activities, not only in the evening (making peace flags and fingerprint doves, filling a peace tree with leaves containing what peace means to the students), but hopefully also in the days around it in individual classrooms.

I feel lucky that my child has a teacher dedicated to social-emotional learning, but she also worries that teaching about emotions is becoming a hot-button issue. According to the Radio West episode that aired on February 10, 2022, groups like Utah Parents United are not only seeking to ban books in libraries but also to curtail social-emotional learning in schools.

As a parent, teaching my child about fairness, justice, peace, and respect for all people is my top job— and joining with teachers seems like the most natural pairing. As Gandhi said: "If we are to teach real peace in this world...we shall have to begin with the children."

Resources:

Second Step <https://www.secondstep.org/>

Responsive Classroom <https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/>

Love and Logic <https://www.loveandlogic.com/>

100 Years Ago—

Gandhi on Faith and Non-violence

(Excerpt from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 26: 24 Jan 1922-12 Nov 1923)

An English Lady Blesses (Vide “Notes”, 12-1-1922)

“An English lady, ... writing from Calcutta, says:

It elevates one to see the admirable way in which Mr. Gandhi shows us the truth and opens our eyes to the atrocious things that our so-called noble Government are doing daily. His patience and work are like the spring that lies hidden far below. No matter what the world may preach, God will give him a harvest greater than he expects. Millions are watching and judging him. But there is One above all, watching and judging each struggle in his daily life, and when his toil and struggle are over, his work and name will live forever. God bless and spare him and his dear wife.

But my reason for publishing this letter is to encourage every true non-co-operator in the non-violent path he is pursuing. This is a terribly true struggle. It is a struggle which is based on love, pure and undefiled. A man who has the least faith in God and His mercy, which is His justice, cannot hate men, though at the same time he must hate their evil ways. But having abundant evil in himself and ever standing in need of charity, he must not hate those in whom he sees evil.

This struggle, therefore, is intended to make friends with Englishmen and the whole world. It cannot be by false flattery, but by plainly telling Englishmen of India that their ways are evil and that we will not co-operate with them so long as they retain them.

If we are wrong in so thinking, God will forgive us, for we mean no ill to them and we are prepared to suffer at their hands. If we are right, as sure as I am writing this, our suffering will open their eyes.”

From Beware Of Ourselves (Young India, 26-1-1922)

“The law of Islam, in so far as a non-Muslim can speak of it, requires ... toleration. Nothing could have so deeply hurt the Prophet as the

intolerance of the people of Mecca during the early period of his ministry towards the new faith he was preaching. He could not possibly, therefore, at any time have been party to intolerance. "There shall be no compulsion in religion" must have descended to him when some of his new converts were more zealous than wise in the preaching of the new faith. Whether we are Hindus or Mussulmans or what, does not matter."

From Non-Payment Of Taxes (Young India, 26-1-1922)

"Non-violence is certainly nine-tenths of the battle, but it is not all. The peasantry may remain non-violent, but may not treat the untouchables as their brethren; they may not regard Hindus, Mussulmans, Christians, Jews, Parsis, as the case may be, their brethren; they may not have learnt the economic and the moral value of the charkha [spinning wheel] and the khaddar [homespun cloth]. If they have not, they cannot gain swaraj [self-government]."



A Visionary Voice of Peace

Rabbi Ronald Gittelsohn, an ardent pacifist, volunteered as a Navy chaplain during World War II.

He ended up at Iwo Jima. During the bloody battle there, he tirelessly went from foxhole to foxhole offering encouragement and comfort. Thousands died.

Gittelsohn was asked to offer a eulogy at a nondenominational memorial service. However, some Christian chaplains objected to a Jew speaking for Christian soldiers. So instead, the young chaplain gave his sermon at a Jewish ceremony—and it was riveting. He called for peace, inclusion, and justice.

Three Protestant chaplains, incensed at the bigotry of their colleagues, attended. One of them asked for a copy of Gittelsohn's powerful speech and distributed it widely. In the end, people all around the U.S. and the world read this rejected, visionary sermon. Some consider it the Gettysburg Address of World War II.

Some excerpts:

We dedicate ourselves, first, to live together in peace the way [these dead soldiers] fought and are buried in war.... Here lie officers and [privates], [Blacks] and whites, rich and poor...together. Here are Protestants, Catholics, and Jews...together. Here no man prefers another because of his faith or despises him because of his color. Among these men there is no discrimination. No prejudice. No hatred. Theirs is the highest and purest democracy.

Anyone among us the living who fails to understand that, will thereby betray those who lie here. Whoever of us lifts his hand in hate against another, or thinks himself superior to those who happen to be in the minority, makes of this ceremony and of the bloody sacrifice it commemorates, an empty, hollow mockery. When the last shot has been fired, there will still be those eyes that are turned backward not forward, who will be satisfied with those wide extremes of poverty and wealth in which the seeds of another war can breed. We promise you, our departed comrades: this, too, we will not permit....

Thus, do we consecrate ourselves, the living, to carry on the struggle they began.... Out of this, and from the suffering and sorrow of those who mourn this, will come—we promise—the birth of a new freedom for all humanity everywhere. And let us say...AMEN.

Gittelsohn went on to act as he spoke, working against McCarthyism and the Vietnam War and working for Civil Rights, prison reform, the abolition of the death penalty, and the rights of migrant workers.

May we, too, work for his vision of “the highest and purest democracy.”

**Zoom Event – Interfaith Season 2022 -Salt Lake Interfaith
Roundtable**

**“Mahatma Gandhi – Interfaith Leader
& Peace Grove Initiative”**

**by Gandhi Alliance for Peace
February 28 2022, 7:00 pm- 8:00 pm**

Zoom Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81097220437?pwd=VGthMEZGaW9wOE5XMVhGekdNTUxHQT09> Passcode: Interfaith

Recorded Videos in interfaithroundtable.org & gandhialliance.org

An invitation from the Board

Please consider joining together with us in our Alliance. For many years, we have been only a loose association of interested people. But we'd like to grow a real membership!

Why?

--So that we can hear your ideas and learn from you!

--So that we can work together to make a difference in important causes!

--So that, in this time of violence in thought, speech, and action, we can stand together as a Beloved Community--for peace, equity, and healing.

The world truly needs "small groups of thoughtful, committed citizens" to create change (as Margaret Mead said).

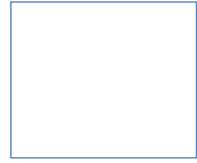
Will you join with us, our thoughtful, committed friends? Please go to gandhialliance.org and simply provide us with your name and email. Or if you'd rather, contact us by email or phone.

Another invitation

We are seeking new voices, hearts, and hands for our board! If you might like to work closely together for peace causes dear to your heart, please give Kristen a call at 385-414-5500, and we can talk. Thank you!

Gandhi Alliance for Peace
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