Ahimsa Center K-12 Lesson Plan

Title
The Life of Gandhi and Chavez

Name, School, Affiliation, Location
Stephanie Lee, Equitas Academy, Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles, CA

Grade Level/Subject Area(s)
Kindergarten, General Subjects

Duration of Lesson
Each activity should take about 30-40 minutes over a period of four to five days.

Relevant State/National Standards
Ahimsa Institute Content Standards
1. The life of Mohandas Gandhi
2. The life of Cesar Chavez
3. Gandhi’s and Chavez’s conceptions on nonviolence and they used them to bring social change

California State Content Standards
Reading: Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text
2.3 Connect to life experiences the information and events in texts.

Learning and Working Now and Long Ago (Social Sciences)
K.1 Students understand that being a good citizen involves acting in certain ways.
   • 2. Learn examples of honesty, courage, determination, individual responsibility, and patriotism in American and world history from stories and folklore.
   • 3. Know beliefs and related behaviors of characters in stories from times past and understand the consequences of the characters’ actions.

K.6 Students understand that history relates to events, people, and places of other times.
   • 1. Identify the purposes of, and the people and events honored in, commemorative holidays, including the human struggles that were the basis for the events (e.g., Thanksgiving, Independence Day, Washington’s and Lincoln’s Birthdays, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day).
   • 2. Know the triumphs in American legends and historical accounts through the stories of such people as Pocahontas, George Washington, Booker T. Washington, Daniel Boone, and Benjamin Franklin.
Lesson Abstract
In this lesson, students will learn about the life and times of Mohandas Gandhi and Cesar Chavez. Students will learn general information about the two activists including, but not limited to, their birthdays, their families, and where they came from. Students will also learn why these activists decided to fight for equal rights and lead social movements. Additionally, students will learn why they choose nonviolent actions.

Guiding Questions
1. What are the similarities and differences between Gandhi and Chavez?
2. How did Gandhi’s nonviolent beliefs impact Chavez’s beliefs?
3. What were the turning points on Gandhi’s and Chavez’ life?

Content Essay
The goal of this discourse is to tell the stories of two people that brought social change without violence. They are the stories of Mohandas Gandhi and Cesar Chavez. These men lived during different time periods, in different countries and had different professions, but they had one goal: to ensure equal rights through love and nonviolence.

Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 in Porbandar, India. He had many brothers and sisters, and grew up in a very accepting environment. While his parents were both Hindus, his father had many acquaintances that practiced a variety of religions. Due to his father’s acquaintances, Gandhi became aware and appreciative of other religions. As Gandhi grew older he excelled in school and eventually traveled to England to study law. While he lived in England he continued to learn about other religions.

After he completed his law studies, Gandhi traveled to South Africa to assist a friend with a legal matter. While traveling to his destination in South Africa, he was forcibly dismissed from a train without warrant. Gandhi was traveling in a first class compartment when another white South African passenger entered. The South African passenger was so disgusted by the idea of sharing the compartment with an Indian that he elicited the assistance of a conductor. The conductor asked Gandhi to leave the compartment and informed him that all Indian passengers rode in third class. When confronted, Gandhi showed the conductor his first class ticket and stated that he had a right to stay in the first class compartment. Gandhi was thrown off the train and stayed the night in the train station. This was a turning point for Gandhi. It was the first time that he personally experienced racism. He was furious with the white South African passenger’s and conductor’s actions, but he knew how to use the legal system. Gandhi decided to use the legal system to fight for equal rights of Indians in South Africa, such as writing letters to high political officials and writing petitions.

While Gandhi used the legal system’s channels, he found that there were many obstacles and that his legal actions did not prevent the South African government from creating new and unjust laws. Thus, Gandhi decided to utilize non-cooperation and civil disobedience tactics to protest against the unjust laws. For example, he vowed to not register in response to the Asiatic Bill.
The Asiatic Bill required that all Indians (eight years old and older) register with the government, including finger and thumbprints, along with notes of any identifying marks (Sethia, p. 61). Gandhi recognized that if the Asiatic Bill passed that it would surrender many Indians’ rights. For instance, Indians could be jailed if they did not present their passes and the police would be able to enter their homes at any time to review the passes. In response, Gandhi gathered many community Indians and asked that they take a vow, that if the bill were passed into law they would not register themselves. As a result, many Indians did not register and in an act of civil disobedience burned their current passes.

Gandhi lived and worked in South Africa for over 21 years. While he engaged in many acts of non-cooperation and civil disobedience, he also developed his philosophies and concepts of nonviolence.

He developed his philosophy of satyagraha, which meant that Indians needed to pursue an ultimate truth in themselves and society. In pursuit of satyagraha, Gandhi believed that Indians needed to develop self-reliance and have a deep understanding of one’s specific and valuable role in society. Gandhi believed that once a person realized their specific and valuable role in a smaller society, they could understand their importance to the larger society and would be motivated to sacrifice themselves for a greater community cause.

Therefore, Gandhi promoted self-reliance and self-power through simple acts, such as making cloth and clothes for themselves, not paying unfair taxes, writing editorials to newspapers, writing the Indian Opinion, and engaging in acts of civil disobedience.

Gandhi’s greatest act of civil disobedience in South Africa was against the immigration laws established by the Black Ordinance, which prohibited Indian immigration into the Transvaal region. Gandhi sent leaders from the ashrams (small living communities) to different areas near the Transvaal to gather Indians to purposely break the law and enter the Transvaal. Once Indians had obtained equal rights and had created their own voice in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India.

Gandhi took his well-developed philosophies and practices of nonviolence to India, where he continued to lead Indians to freedom. In India, Gandhi encouraged the Indians to engage in satyagraha and nonviolent actions. As a result, Indians began making their own cloth and participating in several non-cooperative actions. Gandhi’s most significant action in India was the Salt March. The Salt March was an act of civil disobedience in response to the Salt Tax, which prohibited Indians from making and selling salt (a natural resource). In late March, 1930, Gandhi along with approximately 70 supporters began to walk to Dandi. It would a 241 mile journey and take approximately 25 days. Once Gandhi had reached Dandi, with thousands of supporters, he picked up a handful of salt and asked that all Indians participate in the production of salt. In response, the British used violent actions to stop Indians that were producing salt, such as arresting them or striking them. The British received so much worldwide negative attention that the British government in India was pressured to conduct negotiations with Gandhi. These negotiations ended with India’s freedom.

Gandhi’s legacy lived on in Cesar Chavez. Chavez was born on March 31, 1927, in Yuma Arizona to migrant farmworkers. Because Chavez’s parents were migrant
farmworkers they moved many times, and often he and his siblings had to work on the farms too. Chavez did attend school, but found it difficult to learn due to language barriers and racial stereotypes. In 1942, when Chavez was in eighth grade, he was forced to leave school to work in the fields because his father was injured and his family needed money.

After years of working on farms Cesar was approached by a man named Fred Ross. Ross was a member of the Community Service Organization (CSO) that taught poverty stricken communities to fight for political power. Ross recruited Chavez as an organizer for the Mexican population. After years of service to the CSO, Chavez wanted to create a workers’ union for farmworkers, and he called it the United Farmworkers Union, and left CSO.

Prior to joining the CSO Chavez was introduced to the nonviolent philosophies of Gandhi by a man named Father Donald McDonnell. Chavez embraced Gandhi’s teachings of nonviolence and clearly understood that productive and meaningful social change would come through nonviolent actions. Chavez connected with Gandhi’s ideas and sense of service so readily because of the influence of his mother and grandmother. Both women taught Chavez early on in his life that it was his duty as a human being to help others. His mother always modeled an altruistic behavior for him by feeding others that had no food, or requiring Chavez to drive others around that did not have a car. Therefore, Chavez knew that he had to help the farmworkers because it was the human thing to do. The farmworkers movement would eventually become known as La Causa.

There were many injustices plaguing the farmworkers. In the hot California fields, there was little water and farmworkers had to share drinking ladles; there were no bathrooms and women often circled around each other for privacy, farmworkers were not allowed to take breaks, and were paid little for each pound of food they harvested.

While these issues were of great concern for Chavez, the turning point in the farmworkers struggle was the Delano Grape Strike, in which the union joined which Filipino grape pickers in fighting for better wages. This was the turning point for Chavez and all farmworkers because they needed to engage in Gandhi’s satyagraha practices and made personal sacrifices in order to win the strike.

Not only did farmworkers refuse to work and protested on the outskirts of the fields, but they also conducted a national grape boycott and marched from Delano to Sacramento. The boycott required trained union workers and volunteers to go to different cities and discourage consumers from buying table grapes. Thus, if consumers were not buying table grapes than the farm owners could not make a profit. The boycott lasted approximately five years, and during that time many farmworkers lost cars, homes, and relied on each other for support. In addition, Chavez led a march from Delano to Sacramento to further promote the concerns of farmworkers. During this march Delano grape farm owners called Chavez into negotiations and a fair agreement was signed.

While Gandhi and Chavez were different people, living in different times and places, they made social change through nonviolence. They engaged in marches and protests, strikes and boycotts, and occasionally fasts (which was not discussed
above), which helped their oppressors to acknowledge and understand the importance of their causes and the necessity of dialogue for change.

**Bibliography**


**Teaching Activities**

**Activity #1: The Life of Gandhi**
- Discuss the life of Gandhi through PowerPoint presentation (or storybook)
- Create a circle map with facts about Gandhi’s life (birthday, profession, where he lived, what Gandhi wanted, and the nonviolent tactics he used)

**Activity #2: The Life of Cesar Chavez**
- Read *Harvesting Hope*
- While reading the story, have students ask the motions and actions of the farmworkers
- Create a circle of facts about Chavez's life (birthday, profession, where he lived, what he wanted, and the nonviolent tactics he used)

**Activity #3: Compare and Contrast of Gandhi and Chavez**
- Review both circles highlighting their major differences (professions and where they lived) and similarities (activists and nonviolent tactics)
- Be sure to distinguish Chavez from Gandhi (i.e. planes de tortuga and boycotts)
- Discuss how both activists used compassion
Activity #4: Pocket Books

- Create pocket book
  1. Fold 8” x 11” paper (or bigger if you want to use larger index cards) vertically in half (or like a “hot dog”)
  2. Press the fold with a popsicle stick
  3. Lick the fold
  4. Lay the paper flat and tear (have the students make bunny ears when they are finished)
  5. Put one half aside
  6. Lay the other half of paper horizontally
  7. Fold in half
  8. Press fold with popsicle stick
  9. Fold in half again
  10. Press fold with popsicle stick
  11. Lay flat on table (there should be four squares)
  12. Fold a small portion of the paper at the bottom (creating a pocket)
  13. Pass out four index cards (or half of index cards depending on the size of the paper you originally used)
  14. Place one index card into each of the pockets
  15. On the pockets write the following (one word per pocket): Who, Where, What, Fun Fact (F.F.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Fun Fact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- On the “Who” card have the students draw Gandhi on one side and Chavez on the other
- On the “Where” card lead students on drawing India on one side and California on the other
- On the “What” card ask students to draw the activists in action. For example, they can draw Gandhi marching and Chavez boycotting.
- On the “Fun Fact” card allow students to draw one extra piece of information for Gandhi and another for Chavez on the other side
Materials

Activity #1
- PowerPoint presentation (or storybook) about Gandhi
- Chart paper
- Markers

Activity #2
- *Harvesting Hope* book
- Chart paper
- Markers

Activity #3
- Circle maps of Gandhi and Chavez
- Chart paper
- Markers

Activity #4
- Standard 8” x 11” paper or larger (for larger index cards)
- Index cards or cardstock paper cut into rectangles
- Popsicle sticks
- Pencils
- Crayons

Digital Story
The digital story should be shown prior to the first activity. The digital story will introduce basic information and differences between Gandhi and Chavez.