Title of Lesson: Truth and love by Gandhi and King: Experimenting with Satyagraha

Lesson By: Ofelia Oronoz

Grade Level/ Subject Areas: Spanish, FLES 5-8 connection History

Class Size: Any size

Time/Duration of Lesson: 2 lesson of 50 minutes each

Guiding Questions:
- What is Satyagraha (truth-force or love-force) in Gandhi’s philosophy?
- How MLK applied this concept to self and to the Black Freedom Movement?
- How teenagers can identify and use Satyagraha in self and others today?

Lesson Abstract:
The purpose of this lesson is for students to be able to identify Satyagraha; a concept of Gandhi’s philosophy meaning truth-force or love-force in every individual. They will be able to list references from MLK’s life and how he incorporated it to the Black Freedom Movement. In addition, student will be able to identify and describe personal situations using Satyagraha as a tool to promote individual and social development.

Lesson Content:
This essay describes Satyagraha, a concept of Gandhi’s philosophy meaning truth-force or love-force in every individual, how he used it in his personal and social journey. This paper also describes the incorporation of Satyagraha in the philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr. as a follower of the Gandhian believes and as an element for the social changes undertaken during the Black Freedom Movement. Finally, it describes how Satyagraha or love is important today in the contest of middle schoolers for their individual and social conflicts.

Gandhi and Satyagraha
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in October 2, 1869 in Porbandar, India. He dedicated his life to the pursuit of nonviolence using different elements and concepts, specially the existence or truth and love in self and in mankind. In the Gandhian philosophy, everyone had Satyagraha. Then, it could be a useful tool to relate to others, even to enemies. In addition, Satyagraha could promote inner calmness to pursuit individual strength and consequential social change. Therefore, Gandhi applied it to his life and to his social journey.

Using Satyagraha, Gandhi searched for social changes loving the enemies separating the violent action from the perpetrator. First, he connected to the person from the soul or spirituality itself. Second, regarding religion he related to all beyond differences. “I am a Muslim and a Hindu and a Christian and a Jew and so are all of you.” (Fisher, 1954, p 84). Third, Gandhi did not differentiate among the Hindu social casts, because everyone possessed love, truth or Satyagraha. Thus, he accepted the untouchables, outcastes from the four Hindu social ladder due to their work cleaning lavatories. “The safest course is to believe in the moral
government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law, the law of truth and love”. (Fisher, 1954, p 108).

Equally important, Gandhi considered that love was the creator and renovator of the individual, the society and the world. “The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth…The universe would disappear without the existence of that force” (Parel, 1997, p 89).

Finally, Gandhi depicted truth and love stronger than the force of weapons and indeed indestructible. He considered Satyagraha, a way to convert or transform individuals, to change the social settings returning good for evil, until evil fades out progressively. “The robber … comes to learn about your broad and loving heart, he repents, he begs your pardon, returns you your things and leaves off the stealing habit… The force of love … is greater than the force of arms.” (Parel, 1997, p 85).

Living by love, Gandhi died to hate. He was shot to death passed 4:30 January 30, 1948 in a public gathering. Godse, his killer, was even greeted and blessed by Gandhi before the shots. Then, Gandhi invoked his creator, or the force he considered moved and renovated the universe by saying Hey, Ram… Oh, God, Oh God.

**Martin Luther King Junior and Satyagraha**

Martin Luther King Junior came to identify himself with Gandhi and his concept of love in a speech by Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University. After that speech, King was so taken by the message that bought all the books he could find about Gandhi and his philosophy. The more King studied Gandhi, the more he believed into the power of love as a tool for social change. “Satyagraha… was profoundly significant to me … my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potential in the area of social reform.” (Carson, 2001, p 23)

Supported not only by his Gandhian readings, but also by this own religious background from the Baptist Church, and his PhD in Theology from Boston University, King considered all human people coming directly from divine. “I was absolutely convinced of the natural goodness of man and the natural power of human reason” (Carson, 2001, p 24).

King experienced love and spirituality himself in and his pursuit of social change. It gave him inner peace and serenity even in the most difficult moments. “If I demonstrated unusual calm during the recent attempt on my life, it was certainly not due to my extraordinary powers that I posses. Rather it was due to the power of God working through me. Thought this struggle of racial justice I have asked God to remove all bitterness from my heart and to give me strength and courage to face any disaster that came my way. The constant prayer life and feeling of dependence on God have given me the feeling that I have divine companionship in the struggle. I know no way to explain it. It is the fact that in the mist of external tensions, God can give an inner peace (Carson, 2001, p 119). Even after the bombing of his own house in which his wife and children could have been killed, King looked for inner peace. Then, he invited his followers to look into themselves and experience that love was stronger than hate to support the individual and social changes they were pursuing.
King delivered his famous speech of “I have a dream” as a closing to the March on Washington August 28, 1963, appealing to the soul force as a permanent way to achieve their goals. “We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. …Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force”. (Carson, 2001, p 225).

Despite of his life encouraging love, King died due to hate being shot in Memphis Tennessee, April 4, 1968. But indeed before his death, King and the Black Freedom Moment experienced the transformation of love. “While the nature of this account causes me to make frequent use of the pronoun “I”, in every part of the story it should be ‘we’. This is not a drama with only one actor. More precisely it is the chronicle of fifty thousand Negroes who took to heart the principles of nonviolence, who learned to fight for their rights with the weapon of love, and who in the process, acquire a new estimate of their own human worth”. (Carson, 2001, p 50).

**How teenagers can identify and use Satyagraha today?**

The word *Satyagraha*, may sounds strange to a teenager in a public or private school in the United States. However, the concept that there is some love and truth in everyone, as explained by Gandhi and King, is an approach students can work with. Then, *Satyagraha* can become a tool for the students to explore their individuality and their relationships in school and at home. First, accepting themselves, students can identify their positive values and characteristics. Thus, raising the awareness of “it is inside what counts” can lead to self-appreciation, so that students develop positive attitudes toward self as a unique and worthy person to demonstrate personal and social growth.

Second, this individual acceptance can lead to appreciating others’ personal values finding similarities in each other to solve conflicts, and attempt common goals, especially at school. In that regard, *Satyagraha* relates to the concept of community, in which all individuals support common interests and shared goals. Truth and love relates as well to diversity. Because today in the vast majority of schools, there are students with different ethnic and religious backgrounds, who using *Satyagraha* can value and advocate for their various perspectives and backgrounds fostering mutual respect and understanding.

These important historic and philosophic element of *Satyagraha*, truth or love force from Gandhi and King, can assist current middle scholars to pursuit an individual and social development for self and others recognizing, accepting, and respecting individual, ethnic and religious differences within family, school, or community.

**National Standards for Learning Foreign Language from the American Council of Teaching Foreign Language**

**Communication Standard 1.1:** Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

**Connections Standard 3.1:** Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.
Materials Needed:
- Word search from www.puzzlemaker.com as vocabulary bank
- White boards
- Markers

Suggested Teaching Activities:
- Complete the puzzle maker with vocabulary bank such as calmness, spirituality, power of decision, I, control, nature, joy, beauty, soul, conflict, resolution, solve, approach, respect, acceptance, value, common, goal, etc.
- What makes you unique? Use positive attitudes or values.
- Write minimum 3 adjectives in Spanish, or draw it or act it out.
- Pair activity. Present this description to your partner
- How can you reach a common goal using such values or attitudes
- Play meditation or nature music to foster calmness
- Do breathing exercises to foster calmness
- Play “it is inside what counts” identifying acceptance attitudes that promote community or diversity
- Role play common goals for personal, group or school growth

Bibliography: