Title of Lesson: Soul Force and Its Contributions to Nonviolent Movements and Self Empowerment

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<th>Grade Level/ Subject Areas:</th>
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<td>5th Grade Social Studies/Language Arts</td>
<td>Can be modified to fit any class size</td>
<td>Approximately 30 minutes for a period of 1 1/2 - 2 weeks</td>
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Guiding Questions:
- What is the concept of Satyagraha (love/soul force)?
- What was its role in progressive nonviolent movements such as the Salt March and Civil Rights Movement?
- How did it contribute to a sense of self empowerment?

Lesson Abstract:
This lesson delves into subjugated groups who found nonviolent ways to not only counter a discriminatory system, but abolish and create reforms that benefit all of society. The use of Satyagraha will be exemplified through two extraordinary protests led by Gandhi and King on two different occasions, and how individuals came together to create a positive social change.

Lesson Content:
History can attest to the violence that occurred in the many societies around the world throughout the passage of time. It is the witness that we turn to when we search for the birth of nations. As Mohandas Gandhi once said, “History, as we know it, is a record of the wars of the world” (Gandhi, pg. 89). Many might argue the uselessness of a protest without violent force, especially in the face of violence. However, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. are prime examples of a force that is greater than any violent means one may uncover. That is, Satyagraha proves to be so powerful, that it has the ability to change laws and overthrow governments. Satyagraha is derived from Gujarati, Gandhi’s native tongue, in which “sat = truth, [and] Agraha = firmness” (Gandhi, p.284). This is also known as love/soul force. This was the premise that Gandhi used in his resistance movements, and that King followed, years later. The concept is simple, yet involves great commitment and self-discipline. Gandhi’s dedication to Satyagraha or love force was evident when he told the Indian people that the purpose behind his protests were to specifically strike at the opponents’ hearts. By being nonviolent to the point of not striking back even when one is deliberately harmed, and being persistent with it, one can eventually conquer his/her opponent with love, empathy, etc. This is a force that changes people not by bullying or threat, and makes for more lasting and authentic changes in society.

One of the greatest examples of Gandhi’s use of Satyagraha is during the year of 1930. India was bursting with tremendous pressure due to the citizen’s unrest. Most recently, the British imposed a tax on salt. Gandhi wrote a friendly letter to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, hoping to provide an opportunity that could avoid civil disobedience. In his letter, he explained that laws must consider how it affects the poor. “But the British System seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live, is so taxed as to make the burden fall...
heaviest on him... The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich man” (Gandhi, p.96). Gandhi explains further, that with the tax, some peasants were paying 3 days worth of income a year just for salt. Moreover, Indians earned an average of two annas or 4 cents a day (Gandhi, p. 97). This was a continual devastating affliction upon the peasants’ daily lives.

Unfortunately, Lord Irwin did not respond, nor did he want to meet with Gandhi. As a result, Gandhi placed more pressure on the British government by informing them of a nonviolent protest to the unjust law. On March 11th, Gandhi, who was 61 years old, proceeded with seventy-eight male members of his ashram and began a more than 200 mile nonviolent march toward the sea. In the many nonviolent marches, Gandhi always stressed that all members or the Satyagrahi, were to march in peace. They were not to act in violence in any instance, nor were they allowed to even lift a hand to defend themselves from the blow of a baton or fist. The notion that Gandhi and his people were going to evoke the power of love from their enemy to create social change was viewed as futile by some, and admirable by others. On the morning of April 6th, after long treks of winding dirt roads and village after village, Gandhi walked toward the sea with his congregation. He dipped his hand into the sea, and lifted it out from the waters. As the water trickled down his hand, Gandhi broke the British law. For there upon his hand, was salt that he had not purchased from the government. This was an act of defiance, but was also symbolic of the injustice that prevailed over the Indian government. It also reflected upon Gandhi’s belief that the Indian people could only be free from England by becoming self-reliant. Gandhi was able to resist and rebel without using any physical force that would inflict pain upon others. Many of the peasants followed in his footsteps and attained salt illegally by immersing themselves in water, using pans to sift for salt. He was hailed for his artistry and dignified performance by critics, and revered by his people for showing them a peaceful demonstration to attain justice. As opposed to physical force and aggression, Gandhi demonstrated to his people and the world, that one could battle injustices using truth and love. Moreover, the ability to depend on the self to provide for one’s livelihood was possible. These were some of the great truths that Gandhi provided for his people (i.e. nonviolence resistance for unjust laws and inequalities, and self-empowerment).

Afterward, Gandhi warned the viceroy that there would be a raid upon a mine at Dharsana, if the laws and prohibitions were not lifted. Almost one month later, Gandhi was arrested. His poet friend and supporter, Mrs. Naidu and his second son, Manilal, continued the movement. On the day of the raid, Mrs. Naidu reminded the people that pain, suffering, and death might result, but that they needed to remain steadfast to their commitment to nonviolence. That day, the Indians courageously marched in rows toward the British soldiers. Upon face to face contact, the Indians were beaten down with brute force by batons. Each time one row fell, the next would come behind. According to a news reporter, Webb Miller, the sound of baton bashing and cracking heads went on for hours and days. People lay on the ground writhing in pain, but none were deterred. Those following behind calmly and quietly proceeded on aware of what awaited. Soon enough, Mrs. Naidu and Manilal were also arrested.

Although there were many casualties, eventually India was liberated. Legally, India was still under British rule. On May 17, 1930, the newspaper, Manchester Guardian, described the fall of the Great Empire. The guards’ behaviors were dishonorable and reprehensible. The world
was horrified by such cruel treatment by a Western power that boasted of democracy and morality. Here was one of the greatest examples of succeeding in a battle using nonviolence. Not only did the thousands of “Gandhi Men” not harm others, but they succeeded in persuading England and the world to fight for their cause as well. The symbolic acts of nonviolent resistance served as a profound proclamation to the world, including India, that eradicating injustices was possible through a nonviolent manner. Moreover, it reminded thousands of Indians how important each person was to contributing to the independence of the country.

Nearly 30 years later, on the other side of the world, was a man named Martin Luther King, jr., who was also embroiled in the same battle Gandhi fought. The inequalities faced by African-Americans in the United States of America were similarly filled with tension and violence. King was receiving successful breakdown of the injustices in Montgomery, Alabama. However, he realized that segregation and discrimination were something that he needed to take on, on a much larger scale. For this reason, he moved along with his family to Atlanta. At that time, young college students across the south were holding demonstrations and sit-ins that he considered, “…a glowing example of disciplined, dignified non-violent action against the system of segregation” (King, p.137). Initially, the goal was to sit at a lunch counter until one was served. After which, the process would continue elsewhere at yet another lunch counter. Soon enough, this courageous act caught the attention of Civil Rights Activists, such as Gordon Carrey and Ella Baker. What began as a protest against segregation became an extremely successful and systematic way of delivering a powerful message for respect to the American public. The students were trained to behave in a certain manner:

The basic plan of the sit-ins was that a group of students would go to a lunch counter and ask to be served. If they were, they’d move on to the next lunch counter. If they were not, they would not move until they had been. If they were arrested, a new group would take their place. The students always remained nonviolent and respectful. Students in Nashville had some "Do's" and "Don'ts" during sit-ins: Do show yourself friendly on the counter at all times. Do sit straight and always face the counter. Don't strike back, or curse back if attacked. Don't laugh out. Don't hold conversations. Don't block entrances (Cozzens, 1997).

The students remained persistent by sitting at lunch counters in a way that was demanding of respect without being disrespectful to others. Furthermore, what was viewed previously as a minor nuisance, was now a challenge to the law and the consciousness of every American individual. Group after group would be ready to fill the empty lunch counters after any arrests. This was a great parallel to the Gandhi Men who filed forward endlessly only to meet the violent end of a baton. The use of nonviolence and Satyagraha was demonstrated with great magnitude through these sit ins. The most important element about Satyagraha was that the Satyagrahi acknowledged that the law itself was unjust, so to change such mistreatments, one had to challenge opponents to the game of empathy and kindness. That is, allowing the opponents the awareness of wrongdoings, and the freedom to choose the right thing on his/her own. Thus, despite the imprisonment and threats, like the Gandhi Men, the civil rights activists were committed in their fight towards justice and truth. King stated, “Our ultimate aim was not to defeat or humiliate the white man but to win his friendship and understanding. We had a
moral obligation to remind him that segregation is wrong” (King, p. 139). That is, King and the African-American community used Satyagraha to attain justice and liberation. More importantly, their cause, just as Gandhi’s, was to acknowledge a universal truth that all of humanity deserved to live freely and with dignity. King further stated, “We protested with the ultimate aim of being reconciled with our white brothers” (King, p. 139). When one engages in nonviolence and uses satyagraha, the intention will always be living amongst each other respectfully and harmoniously.

These two great nonviolent movements are among the many that have been conducted around the world where people gather for a humanitarian cause. They demonstrate time and time again that individuals do matter when it comes to making a difference. Moreover, the idea of Satyagraha permeates through race, color, religion, etc. A Columbia student who led a protest in Woolworth stated a very Gandhian belief when he said, "People have asked me why northerners, especially white people, who have been in the majority in our picketing demonstrations in New York, take an active part in an issue which doesn't concern them. My answer is that injustice anywhere is everybody's concern”( Cozzens, 1997). Gandhi always held fast to the idea of helping and living along with others who might be different in a peaceful way. No matter if it is a private relationship or political matter, Gandhi believed that “Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment”(Gandhi, Vol. 30, 66-67).

California State Content Standards:
Social Studies:
Standard 5.7.5: Discuss the meaning of the American creed that call on citizens to safeguard the liberty of individual Americans within a unified nation, to respect the rule of law, and to preserve the Constitution.

Language Arts:
Comprehension & Literary Analysis 2.3: Discern main ideas and supporting evidence.
2.4: Draw inferences, conclusions about text
2.5: Distinguish facts, supported inferences, and opinions in text.

Materials Needed:
James Forten: Now is Your Time! The African-American Struggle for Freedom
Short passages from Martin Luther King, Jr. and/or Mohandas Gandhi
Selected excerpts from Freedom Rider’s Diary
Graphic Aids depicting nonviolence
Digital story

Suggested Teaching Activities:
1. Use Thinking Maps. For example, a circle map can be used to define violence and nonviolence are. Another example, is the double bubble which can compare and contrasts violence/nonviolence.
2. Provide scenarios and have students journal possible solutions. Categorize as violent/nonviolent.
3. Invite students to imagine what they can do in their daily lives to live and promote a life of nonviolence. Have students keep a journal of the challenges of using satyagraha, and
document successes as well as hardships. Provide a special time to discuss.
4. Read through stories and excerpts to share and discuss with students.

Bibliography:


