Ahimsa Center K-12 Teacher Institute Lesson Plan

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<th>Title of Lesson: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. meets the philosophy of Gandhi’s Ahimsa</th>
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<td>Lesson By: Dawna Tully</td>
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<td>Grade Level/ Subject Areas: Grades K-8</td>
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<td>Class Size: 20-38 students</td>
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<td>Time/ Duration of Lesson: 30-45 minutes/3-7 days</td>
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Objectives of Lesson:
- Students will brainstorm definitions of violence and nonviolence.
- Students will classify the examples of violence, nonviolence into soft and hard categories. Students will learn other vocabulary words such as: Ahimsa, Swaraj and Satyagraha.
- Students will read and analyze Mohandas K. Gandhi’s philosophy of Ahimsa and learn how he used it to obtain independence for India.
- Students will read and analyze Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s philosophy of nonviolence and how he used it to lead the civil rights movement for African Americans.
- Students will compare and contrast the application of the methods used by both Gandhi and Rev. King.
- Students will research and create a list of at least three principles Gandhi used that helped him achieve success in gaining India’s independence from Britain.
- Students will research and create a list of three principles Rev. King learned about Gandhi’s nonviolent movement during his visit to India that he applied in gaining Equal Protection under the Constitution for African-Americans during the civil rights movement.
- Students will research, evaluate and write an essay on, The Legacy of Nonviolence: from Gandhi to King and Me.
- Students will explore how ‘looking into their own mirror’ supports Gandhi’s goal of creating a nonviolent world.

Lesson Abstract:
Students will learn examples of soft and hard forms of violence and nonviolence as well as the nonviolent philosophy and movements of Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King with an emphasis on what Rev. King learned from Gandhi about Ahimsa and how nonviolent social change begins with personal transformation.

Lesson Content:

My Esteemed Colleagues:

I am writing you today to implore upon your moral conscience to review the nonviolent philosophy. There have been and unfortunately continues to be abject violence that impacts our lives, family, community and the world we live in. We know there is both the overt and covert violence; violence of the body and violence of the mind, the spirit and the heart. Both are as destructive. One is aggressive while the other slowly cooks the soul. Sticks and stones do break our bones and words do hurt us. We would do well to learn both the soft and hard definitions of the words violence and nonviolence. Make the vocabulary instruction understandable to the students so they can go on with the more important work of acquiring knowledge, comprehension, synthesis and evaluation of the objectives. The use of a student friendly dictionary or website such
www.dictionary.com would be helpful.

My intent today is not to dwell on the selfish, self-centered ego. Instead, it is to promote the values of peace, harmony and stability. It is to share with you Gandhi’s concept of Ahimsa, or nonviolence as a moral force to question, reform and transform the unjust establishments of authority by mobilizing the largest nonviolent mass movement known in world history. Soul Force as more powerful than Brute Force.

How do we apply this Soul Force to the nonviolent movement for social change? The laws of segregation were unconstitutional, undermining the dignity of the human spirit. Therefore, we as a people are within our right to protest. However, the protest must be nonviolent. As I learned from my mentor, the honorable Mohandas K. Gandhi, nonviolence must begin with my personal transformation. This extends to how we treat the following personal attributes: tardiness, mistreatment of animals, disrespect of property, harmful thoughts to others, yelling, insulting others, rudeness towards others, hatred, anger and hostility. It is violent to be hostile. But it is also violent to be tardy. It is violent to put others down, as it is violent to mar the property of others! Anger to demolish injustice is dignified; but anger to destroy the spirit and soul of others is not acceptable!

The Hindi word Swaraj addresses this so eloquently. Swaraj states emphatically that the transformation of the self is a prelude to the transformation of the society. Violent movements have sought to forcibly change others without changing oneself. We must look inside before we look outside for the justice we seek.

Like Gandhi, I have read numerous texts, works and teachings. My conclusion from examining his movement is that nonviolence expressed more profoundly by the Hindi word Ahimsa is the best way we now have to achieve the long sought redress for our grievances. What is Ahimsa? It is more than turning the other cheek. It connects nonviolence with truth and love. The power of Ahimsa is in its power to transform the adversary with true love. This power does not come cheaply. Ahimsa requires patience, suffering and sacrifice. Gandhi, as expressed in his autobiography, My Experiment with the Truth explained the grueling soul searching process he went through to gain this realization. He fasted to both inspire his followers and get the sympathy of his adversaries. A devout Hindu, he continuously prayed for those that persecuted him. He also educated himself with the moral tenets of many religions including my own to ignite a ripple effect of looking within to change the without. The result my dear colleagues was the freedom of 400 million people from British rule. The great legacy of my brother Gandhi is that he left for me the opportunity to replicate the principles of Ahimsa for nonviolent social change. He is a master teacher with a lesson plan for all who seek nonviolence through truth and love.

Most students know about the civil rights movement of the 1960s that I led. They can recite, re-enact and be moved time and again by the ‘I Have a Dream’ speech given at the Washington Mall in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963. What many students have difficulty understanding is what motivated me to practice nonviolence when rocks were thrown at me, my home was bombed, I was jailed on numerous occasions, beaten and threatened with death along with my family.

Like Gandhi, I read, ‘Civil Disobedience’ by Thoreau. When I read about Gandhi I was deeply impressed by his philosophy of nonviolence and the Soul Force he lovingly perpetuated upon the British who were humbled by his sacrifice, suffering and passion to right the social injustice of the Indian people. I, too, was captured by the sheer simplicity of his practice of Ahimsa. Light can overcome the dark; love can overcome hate and even teach the hater to love! This is Ahimsa. From the infancy of the civil rights movement, I thought this philosophy could work.

Soon after the successful Montgomery boycotts, I, Rev. King, visited India on February 9, 1959.
to learn more about Gandhi’s philosophy and how it was implemented. (The esteemed Mahatma Gandhi had died in 1948). Not only was I received warmly by both the government and Satyagrahas (practitioners of passive resistance), but I was astounded and deeply moved that the civil rights movement was followed closely in India. I left re-energized with additional information on how Gandhi’s Ahimsa could be practiced. It is with the Soul Force which is that inner quality of strength through adversity that I too learned, practiced and emphasized in every march and at every act of civil disobedience.

There are many, many books on the life, teachings and philosophy of Mr. Mohandas K. Gandhi, known as the Mahatma or Great Soul. For me, “He has been my guiding light for nonviolent social change.” His message that change begins within oneself first, then outwardly toward others is timeless. This message is all around us, even in songs such as, Man in the Mirror. The lyrics adequately state the principle of the change of oneself from selfishness to unselfishness is a prerequisite to transform the miserable conditions of others in our society and world. This musical masterpiece includes as well, the added incentive that it will feel good to make this selfless, yet courageous personal change for the betterment of others.

Now, go explore and discover the principles of Ahimsa for yourself, your school and bring peace to the world. You will find that nonviolence is a way of life that requires real strength, real bravery and real courage. At the same time, the depth of the experience of joy that one receives when helping those less fortunate can be overwhelming. Caution: Then, too, you may be surprised at the tremendous feelings of joy of helping uplift the station of those less fortunate is greater than any container can hold. Alternately, I caution you to contain the tremendous joy you may experience from taking these steps.

Sincerely,
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Disclaimer: This was written as if Rev. Dr. King had written it to encourage the study of Ahimsa.

California State Content Standards:
- Grade One- A Child’s Place in Time and Space: 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.3, 1.5.1, 1.5.2, and 1.5.3.
- Grade Two- People Who Make a Difference: 2.2.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, and 2.5.
- Grade Three- Continuity and Change: 3.4.1 and 3.4.2.
- Grade Four-California, A Changing State
- Grade Five- United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation
- Grade Six- World History and Geography: Making a New Nation
- Grade Seven- World History and Geography: Medieval and Early Modern Times
- Grade Eight- United States History and Geography: Growth and Conflict

Guiding Questions:
- What is the meaning of soft and hard violence; soft and hard nonviolence?
- Which is harder to live by? Why? Which has the best chance of creating a peaceful world? Why?
- Who was Mahatma Gandhi? What was his philosophy? How did he learn it? How did he
• Who was Martin Luther King, Jr.? What was his philosophy? How did he learn it? How did he use it?
• What principles did Rev. King learn from Mr. Gandhi during his visit to India? Why did he think it would help the budding civil rights movement?
• What is the legacy of Gandhi and King? If they were alive today what would they teach us about Ahimsa?
• What attributes about Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. King have I learned about? Which might I use in my life? What challenges might I face by practicing a non-violence philosophy? Why?

### Materials Needed:
- Butcher paper: List for hard and soft violent and non-violent terms
- Writing Paper: Research/Essays
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, tempura paint: Self Portrait Poster of Peace
- Paper, pencil, pen
- Guiding Questions given to table groups for discussion, research and writing
- Appointment clock for each student for discussions (Can use scrap paper)
- Books, web info about Mr. Gandhi and Rev. King that relates to the objective
- Longman, Webster, Children’s Dictionaries
- Internet access to research info on Rev. King’s trip to India.
- Internet access to research info on Mahatma Gandhi’s Ahimsa Movement
- LCD Projector + Computer + Screen to show the Movie Maker
- Drawing/Poster Paper
- Venn Diagrams
- Writing graphic organizers
- CD Player or use the computer audio player to play the song, *Man in the Mirror*
- Student generated poem about, *How Non-Violence Shaped the Life of Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*
- Student generated rap song from poetry lyrics.
- Hand mirror for self portrait.

### Lesson Context:
1. Resolving Prepared and Created Conflict Resolution Scenarios with the direction of: What would Gandhi Do?
2. Use the Lesson Questions for Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay and Art Contest,
3. Black History Month, Asian History Month, Poetry Month
4. Historical Re-enactment: ‘Rev. King goes to India’ and ‘Gandhi’s Salt March’
5. Student groups create a mural of: Most Inspiring Moment of my Life the time period use a span of 10-30 years of Gandhi’s and King’s life.
6. Act of Kindness Month
7. Sixty-Four Days of Nonviolence
8. Character Education
9. Connect with Unit Reading Themes
**Teaching Activities:**

- Brainstorm #1: Examples of the word: Violence
- Brainstorm #2: Examples of the word: Nonviolence
- Activity #1: Watch Movie Maker Digital Movie
- Activity #2: Create a Quick Sketch of Who and What from the movie.
- Activity #3: Pair/Share Discussion with table partner of: What was learned about violence and nonviolence? Continue to add to chart any new examples. Preview vocabulary words.
- Activity #4: Read about Gandhi using Active Reading Strategies: Structured Silent Reading, Cloze Reading, Choral Reading and Pair Share Reading using the Guiding Questions.
- Activity #5: Students get 4 sets of colored paper, 4” by 5” to first write a soft violent and then a soft nonviolent examples, etc. to post on butcher paper.
- Brainstorm with students’ soft violent examples such as tardiness, hateful thoughts and nonviolence examples such as: punctuality, attentiveness, self-control. Students write down on butcher paper.
- Activity #6: Read about King using the above active reading strategies.
- Activity #7: Students will create an appointment clock and set up appointments with four other students. Use appointment for structured discussion of King.
- Activity #8: 3 o’clock appointment: Read, get info on Gandhi and King and complete a Compare and Contrast organizer.
- Activity #9: 9 o’clock appointment: Research selected question about Gandhi and King
- Activity #10: Use answers to Guiding Questions, articles, Internet search to write an essay on topic. Peer review draft, revise, edit and type on computer.
- Activity #11: 12 o’clock appointment: Create collage of soft and hard violent examples and soft and hard nonviolent examples using magazines, web images, photos.
- Activity #12: 6 o’clock appointment: Discuss how to apply Gandhi’s principles to personal life, school and world. (Then get out own hand mirror and play, *Man in the Mirror*).
- Activity #13: 12 o’clock Appointment: Review the lyrics of *Man in the Mirror* and compare with Gandhi’s philosophy of Ahimsa.
- Activity #14: 9 o’clock Appointment: Create a poem related to Gandhi and King and the philosophy of non-violence. Use a rap or other beat to perform for the class.
- Activity #15: 3 o’clock Appointment: Design a self portrait that focus’ on the topic, *Non-Violence begins with me*.

**Assessment/ Evaluation:**

1. Discussion
2. Collage art project
3. Self Portrait on focus question
4. Poem on topic
5. Research project
6. Butcher/Chart Paper Project with cut colored paper
7. Venn Diagram
8. Quick Sketch
9. Composition/Essay with rubric
10. Appointment Clock meetings/discussion/pair work/project completion
11. Answers to Guided Questions Sheet

**Extension Activities/ Enrichment:**

1. Create a 1 minute movie using Movie Maker on examples of soft/hard of violence and soft/hard nonviolence.
2. Create a PowerPoint presentation to compare/contrast the life of each type of person.
3. Painting or mural of a re-enactment of a time in Gandhi or King’s life.
4. Biography Presentation which includes dress and painted historical background, student re-enacts important event in Gandhi/Kings life which includes reciting the acts from their life, what legacy they left for the world and what they would do to change that legacy.
5. Family/School Interviews: Where were you when…? (King died, gave speech, Gandhi died, first heard of him, etc.)
6. Create timeline of events using the computer or hard copy.
7. Plant a small, medium and large plant.
8. Do a literary analysis of two authors about Gandhi or King.
9. Start a Gandhi fan club
10. Start a King fan club
11. Review the lyrics of *Man in the Mirror* and compare with Gandhi’s philosophy of Ahimsa. Research other songs that express nonviolence through truth and love.
12. Have students create a booklet/brochure/newsletter on Gandhi’s (and King’s) principles of nonviolence on topics such as: ‘How to have a successful protest,’ ‘Nonviolence for Dummies,’ or Elements of a Great Speech, etc.

**Bibliography:**

**Biography of Mahatma Gandhi.** [http://www.indianchild.com/mahatma_gandhi.htm](http://www.indianchild.com/mahatma_gandhi.htm)


**King’s Trip to India.** [www.stanford.edu/group/King/about_king/encyclopedia/India_trip.html](http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/about_king/encyclopedia/India_trip.html)

**Legacy of Bapu: Reminiscences of a Grandson.**
[www.manushi-india.org/pdfs_issues/102/2.%20The%20Legacy%20of%20Bapu.pdf](http://www.manushi-india.org/pdfs_issues/102/2.%20The%20Legacy%20of%20Bapu.pdf)

**Manas: History and Politics, Mahatma Gandhi.**
[www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/History/Gandhi/gandhi.html](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/History/Gandhi/gandhi.html)
