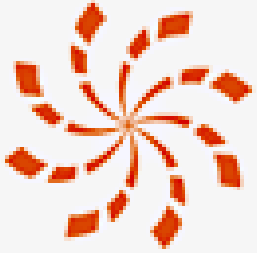


AHIMSA CENTER

NONVIOLENCE IN THOUGHT AND ACTION

www.csupomona.edu/ahimsacenter

2013
NEWSLETTER



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings to seekers and supporters of ahimsa!

In this issue of the *Newsletter*, I want to draw your attention to the serious business of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Ahimsa or nonviolence is first and foremost about LIFE, that is, reverence for all life, which enjoins us to celebrate life in its fullest, to nurture it, to enrich it. True ahimsa finds expression in compassion, caring and love; in gratitude, generosity and forgiveness. Ahimsa, thus understood is the foundation of GOOD LIFE.

LIBERTY or freedom ensues from the practice of ahimsa. At individual level, ahimsa is a vital form of freedom, that is, freedom from animosity, anger, hate, and divisiveness. In social and political arenas, ahimsa is the only viable strategy for pursuing freedom as demonstrated by the pioneers and exemplars of nonviolent social change.

HAPPINESS is not simply about the absence of pain or discomfort. Nor is it about fleeting pleasures or ephemeral positive sensations. Rather, happiness that endures represents a solidly grounded sense of wellbeing, of flourishing, and of having found meaning and purpose in life.

There is deep reciprocity and symbiosis between ahimsa and happiness, and freedom and happiness. If we embrace ahimsa, we cultivate happiness—in ourselves and in others. And if we begin seeking enduring happiness, we will be walking on the path paved with the values of ahimsa. Similarly, a good part of happiness is based on freedom from greed and envy. Being happy is, for example, to be free of worry about “keeping up with the Joneses.”

This newsletter brings you glimpses of Center’s accomplishments over the past two years and previews some of its upcoming programs. Contributions and stories in this newsletter testify to the difference such programs are making in the lives of students, teachers and citizens alike. On behalf of the Center, I wish to thank our sponsors for their kind and continued support which makes such programs possible; speakers for sharing their ideas and insights; and, the guest editor for helping to put the newsletter together. I invite our readers for their continued engagement with the Center’s programs.

Tara Sethia is Professor in the History Department at Cal Poly Pomona, and Director of the Ahimsa Center.

Ahimsa Center Hosts Prem and Sandhya Jain Conference on Nonviolence

November 2-4, 2012

Ahimsa and Sustainable Happiness was the theme of this conference, which featured scholars from a wide variety of disciplines and fields of expertise. The conference was aimed at advancing scholarship, enriching education, and facilitating practical applications based on new insights pertaining to the relationship between nonviolence and sustainable happiness.

The Center is grateful to Prem and Sandhya Jain for their continued support.



University honors Prem and Sandhya Jain (center), Ahimsa Sponsors, with their son, daughter-in-law and grandson. Dean Sharon Hilles, Vice President Douglas Freer (R) and Center Director Tara Sethia (L)

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Executive Editor: Tara Sethia
Guest Editor: Christian Bracho



FEATURED PUBLIC LECTURES AND DIALOGUES 2010-2012



Joseph Orosco was featured in an Ahimsa Center dialogue, "Cesar Chavez: Immigration and a Culture of Peace," in July 2011. An Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of Peace Studies Program at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Orosco is the author of *Cesar Chavez: The Commonsense of Nonviolence*. His course offerings include political philosophy with an emphasis on democratic theory and Latin American thought, the history of Chicano/a Civil Rights Movement, and a seminar on the philosophical foundations for conflict resolution, social justice, and peace.



Ocean Robbins gave the Ratan and Madhu Baid Public Lecture in May 2011, entitled "The Power of Partnership: Building Healing Bridges Across Historic Divides," addressing how people can work collaboratively in an increasingly interconnected world. Robbins organized a peace rally in his elementary school at age 7, and at age 16 he co-founded, and directed for 20 years **YES!**, a nonprofit that connects, inspires and collaborates with young change-makers in building thriving, just and sustainable ways of life for all. The author of *Choices for Our Future* and *The Power of Partnership*, Ocean has served as a board member for Friends of the Earth, Earth-Save International, and other organizations. He is a founding member of The Turning Tide Coalition, co-founder of the Leveraging Privilege for Social Change program, and founding co-convenor of Leverage Alliance. *Utne Reader* recognized him as one of 30 "Young Visionaries" under 30, and he received the Freedom's Flame Award in 2008 and the National Jefferson Award for Outstanding Public Service.

Vandana Shiva presented a lecture, "Hunger in the Age of Plenty: Sustainable Solutions Through Nonviolence," at the Ahimsa Center in October 2011. She addressed the question, "Why do millions starve, and even die of hunger, in an age of food surplus?" An internationally acclaimed author, scientist, eco-feminist, and activist, Shiva is hailed as an environmental hero by *Time Magazine* and as one of the five most powerful communicators by the *Asia Week*. Dr. Shiva is the author of many books, including *Biopiracy*, *Stolen Harvest*, *Water Wars*, *Earth Democracy*, and *Soil Not Oil*. For her numerous contributions in the areas of sustainability, social justice, and peace, she has received several honors and awards including the Right Livelihood Award, the Order of the Golden Ark, Global 500 Award of the UN, Earth Day International Award, and the Sydney Peace Prize. She serves on the boards of many international organizations, including the World Future Council, the International Forum on Globalization and Slow Food International. She is the founder of *Navdanya*, an organization aimed at the conservation and integrity of seeds and preservation of biological and cultural diversity.



Vinay Lal presented a lecture in April 2012, entitled "Gandhi and the Politics of Visual Representation," an examination of Gandhi's representation in various media, such as cartoons, public statues, paintings, and nationalist prints. Lal earned his Ph.D. with Distinction from the University of Chicago in 1992 after undergraduate and masters degrees in literature and philosophy from Johns Hopkins University. He has taught history at UCLA since 1993 and most recently was Professor of History at University of Delhi (2010-11). His books include *Deewaar: The Footpath, the City, and the Angry Young Man* (HarperCollins, 2011); *Political Hinduism: The Religious Imagination in Public Spheres* (ed., Oxford, 2009), and *Of Cricket, Guinness and Gandhi: Essays on Indian History and Culture* (Penguin, 2005). His work has been translated into many languages. He was also profiled at some length in David Horowitz's book, *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America* (2007).



AHIMSA FELLOWS: 2011 Summer Institute

Jami Arnst, Sylvan Rodrigues Elementary School, TX
Kiera Asay, Open Meadow Middle School, OR
Louise Bauso, Long Island University, NY
Nan Campbell, Crystal River Elementary School, CO
Shara Carder, Collins Elementary School, CA
Mary Cartier, James C. Wright Middle School, WI
Rachel Chodorow-Reich, Berkeley High School, CA
Phyllis Cron, Aspen High School, CO
Ted Cuevas, High Tech High Chula Vista, CA
Andrew Duden, Lake Oswego High School, OR
Brooke Gonzales, High Tech High Chula Vista, CA
Catie Griesdorn, Sunnyside Environmental School, OR
Anya Gurholt, Skyline High School, CA
Ryan Harvey, Cascade Heights Public Charter, OR
Meghan Hausdorf, Cypress Hills Collegiate Prep, NY
Caroline Hay, Tualatin High School, OR
Heather Heyes, John F. Kennedy Middle School, MA
Laura Hirshfield, Acton-Boxborough Regional HS, MA

Nancy Johnson, Hoover High School, CA
Serenity Krieger, Natomas High School, CA
Stephanie Lee, Equitas Academy, CA
Sandra Luettgen, Cascade Middle School, WA
Rachel Moo, Neighborhood House Charter School, MA
Gina Pagel, Waunakee Community School District, WI
Diana Parente, East Side Community High School, NY
Avis Pickens, Clark County School District, NV
Tazeen Rashid, Suncoast Community High School, FL
Rosa Salazar, United South High School, TX
Travis Sevilla, High Tech Northern High, CA
Kristy Smith, Mariemont Elementary School, CA
Rocky Smith, Oregon City High School, OR
Kathy Stanley, South Whidbey Elementary School, WA
Cynthia Suttles, Kolter Elementary School, TX
Kati Tilley, Lake Stevens High School, WA
Karla Tobar, New York City Dept. of Education, NY
Kim Vinh, Sequoia High School, CA
Lucy Willard, Cleveland High School, OR

Ahimsa and Higher Education

Gandhi's Talisman: A Guide for Living

By Andrew Moss

In August, 1947, a few months before his assassination, Mahatma Gandhi wrote a brief text that has since come to be known as "Gandhi's Talisman." Here, in its entirety, is the text:

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.

--M.K. Gandhi

We don't have a definite idea of why Gandhi wrote this text – or for whom. He may have composed it in response to a specific person's request, or he may have written it – during the violent period of British withdrawal and national partition – as a general legacy for all humanity. Whatever the case, the talisman remains today an extraordinarily compressed statement of Gandhian thought – and a guide for living for many people. After first encountering it in a caption in the Gandhi Museum in Delhi in 2006, I have since come to appreciate its depth and richness. A close reading only helps us begin understanding its myriad meanings.

A Thought Experiment

When we first encounter the talisman, we see that Gandhi frames it as a reflective activity, as a kind of thought experiment: "apply the following test . . ." Yet the talisman is not an abstract or theoretical mental exercise; Gandhi presents it as a vehicle for releasing a burdened and self-preoccupied individual from the bonds of insecurity and self-obsession: "Whenever you are in doubt, or the self becomes too much with you . . ." The key phrases that put the talisman into motion – that situate it in the realm of active life rather than pure abstraction – are "poorest and weakest man," "step you contemplate," and "swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions."

The Poorest and Weakest

Gandhi asks his reader to visualize the face of the poorest and weakest person he or she may have seen. For Gandhi, the phrase clearly refers to the

impoverished, marginalized millions on whose behalf he struggled for decades. Yet the flexibility of the phrase is such that a modern reader can think of the terms "poorest and weakest" as referring to any kind of confinement, including severe physical and emotional debility, which imprison individuals and prevent them from realizing their potential as human beings. By asking the reader to visualize the face of the other, Gandhi personalizes the reflective activity and frames it in relational terms: I and Thou.

Freedom as the Yardstick for Ethical Action

A further move that links reflection to action is Gandhi's posing of this question: "ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him." The reader must actualize the relationship to the other by reflecting deeply on the next step he or she will take. The political and moral yardstick for evaluating this step is the concept of *swaraj*, freedom. For Gandhi, *swaraj* did not simply mean political liberation from colonial rule; it also meant the fulfillment of an individual's highest potential through the mastery of one's emotions and desires. By asking, "will [this step] restore him to a control over his own life and destiny?" Gandhi makes it clear that he is not writing about charity, about doing *to* or *for* another. The contemplated step must help the other find his or her own way out of the emotional, ideological, and/or material chains that hold that person captive.

Once again the flexibility of the talisman's language reveals its depth and subtlety. When Gandhi asks, will the step "lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?" he not only reinforces the idea that individuals can be *spiritually* as well as materially impoverished; he also leaves open the clear possibility that impoverished individuals can in turn be empowered to help others. Control over one's life and one's destiny does not mean the acquisition of material possessions or comforts; it is learning to live a meaningful life in service to others – a life defined not by a shallow notion of personal independence but by an ethically grounded notion of relationship and interdependence. This is the true nature of freedom.

A Wider Vision of the Self

Often the step one contemplates may not be an overt action, gesture, or communicative expression. It may, as one considers the situation of another person, simply be a decision to listen, to take in, or to be fully present with the other. It may also, as one thinks about this other person, be a deeply reflective questioning of one's own feelings, attitudes, and ideas. In his wisdom, Gandhi did not specify the nature of this step; he only asked the reader to think most deeply about its consequences.

Gandhi concludes his text, as he began, by asserting the efficacy of this reflective activity. He calls the text a "talisman" in the confident belief that the reflection it inspires will have a liberating effect on the practitioner. As he concludes, he promises the reader that, "you will find your doubts and yourself melting away." Indeed, it is difficult for a reader not to be touched by a serious engagement with the talisman. Gandhi reminds us that no society is any better than the state of its poorest, weakest, most marginalized members – and that we are all deeply connected to one another. Yet the potential for change lies within us – moment to moment, day by day – and we find our insecurities "melting away" when we bring these understandings to our fullest consciousness.

A professor in the English and Foreign Languages Department at Cal Poly Pomona, Andrew Moss teaches in the Nonviolence Studies Minor and also serves as a faculty advisor for the program. This article originally appeared in the fall, 2012 issue of The Peace Chronicle, the newsletter of the Peace and Justice Studies Association.



Discovering the Benefits of Combining Sustainability with Happiness



"Sustainable happiness is happiness that contributes to individual, community, and/or global wellbeing without exploiting other people, the environment, or future generations."

Imagine a world where your happiness contributes to your own wellbeing, and to the wellbeing of other people, other species and the natural environment. That's sustainable happiness. It's a concept that I've applied to education for nearly a decade, including the development of a university course on sustainable happiness.

One of the seeds for my inspiration can be traced back to the Barefoot College in Rajasthan, India. The Barefoot College is a world leader in sustainability education. The entire campus is solar powered, rainwater is harvested through a roof-top collection system, and the creation of handicrafts supports local economies. Its genius extends far beyond environmental practices though. More than forty years ago, the staff at the Barefoot College established a groundbreaking education process – education that contributes to sustainable communities. Traditional knowledge, like rainwater harvesting, is combined with modern knowledge (solar power) to forge sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods. Working with infants to elders, in rural villages through-

out India the Barefoot College has become an internationally recognized leader in sustainability education. (barefootcollege.org).

Fresh from the UN Earth Summit in 1992, I had the great fortune of spending considerable time at the Barefoot College with my husband and two young children. We visited their night schools, powered by solar lamps and met representatives of their Children's Parliament. Leaders of their women's groups talked about the work they were doing to support women's rights. The Communication section of the Barefoot College was one of the most active areas on campus – creating puppets, performing plays and communicating key environmental and social justice messages.

I learned lessons about sustainability education that exceeded anything available in writing at that time. But I learned something else that I came to cherish deeply. The Barefoot College was not only a model of sustainability, it was the most wildly creative, imaginative, and joyful organization I had ever encountered. *We were living in a culture of joy.* It was an entirely new thought for me that living sustainably might also make us happier!

Returning to Canada, this thought seed continued to germinate. It took root once I began to read the research emerging from positive psychology and happiness studies. That's what we've been missing, I realized – the recognition that happiness and sustainability belong together! Further, the path to sustainable happiness cannot be found through the over consumption that is promoted in consumer societies.

Can we foster sustainable societies through learning about sustainable happiness? I believe that we can. My experience with teaching sustainable happiness is that engaging students on topics related to happiness and wellbeing is an ideal starting point. Course activities assist students to understand that their wellbeing is intertwined with the wellbeing of other people and the natural environment. We explore daily opportunities for making choices that enhance sustainable happiness. Their culminating assignment is a sustainable happiness project.

Teachers are bringing sustainable happiness into the classroom with the *Sustainable Happiness and Health Education Teacher's Guide* (available at no charge). It includes lessons that merge happiness, wellbeing, and sustainability. Sustainable happiness

Teachers' Guide on Sustainable Happiness:
sustainablehappiness.ca/teachers/
Stanford Course:
sustainablehappinesscourse.com

is creating a more hopeful narrative and it's exciting to see it embraced across many disciplines. Stanford University is now offering the online sustainable happiness course as a directed study option. This prompted me to create a *Directed Study Guide* to accompany the course. If you are a university/college professor, you may find the guide useful. If you are a student, you might want to investigate the opportu-

nity for using this for course credit as well.

I'm passionate about sharing sustainable happiness so please contact me if you have any questions or would like further information.

Catherine O'Brien is Associate Professor of Education at the Cape Breton University in Nova Scotia, Canada.
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The Yoga of Sustainable Happiness

By Adrian Villasenor-Galarza



In light of the unprecedented ecological crisis we face, the quest for sustainable living is a top priority for industrial societies. There is a great need for rediscovering the inherent reciprocity and mutual belonging between humans and the Earth. Can we, as inhabitants of industrial societies, genuinely pursue happiness without taking into consideration the wellbeing of the matrix to which we owe our existence, the Earth?

It is now evident how humans have impacted practically all ecosystems on the planet. The ubiquitous influence of one single species, amongst the estimated 10 million currently populating the Earth, has led scientists to coin the term "anthropocene" to designate a new geological era dominated by human activity. This "planetary era" has been in formation since at least the 16th century, and with the recent surge of technology, the degree of global interconnectivity has dramatically deepened. It seems that the creative powers of the human mind are equipped to express at a planetary level. The novel evolutionary stage in which the presence of the human is felt by the whole planet signifies an equally enlarged responsibility to avert the ecological crisis in the search for true happiness.

Most efforts to cultivate sustainable happiness are done from within an industrial model founded on the fallacy of unlimited natural resources, a steeped disconnection from Earth's functioning, and a distorted conception of the role and value of the human. This model assumes that there will always be fresh water, clean air, and fertile soil to feed and sustain the exponential growth of our species. Even though we know this is a fallacy, our societies still operate as if there were an endless supply of natural goods. There is an institutionalized rift between human communities and the Earth actively fostered in the name of progress and profit. The functioning of industrial societies is organized around the beliefs that humans are endowed with a higher value than the rest of creation, allowing for the manipulation and control of the Earth.

The deep ecology movement has proposed that a "long range" vision accompanied by "deep questioning" helps uncover the underlying and commonly ignored assumptions of "shallow" ecological perspec-

tives. One of the limbs of Patanjali's yoga, *pratyahara* or "sense withdrawal," serves as an antidote to the material spell casted by industrial societies. Turning attention inward helps soften our fixation with material goods and invites deep questioning regarding our common habits. Directing our attention inward and cultivating an attitude of self-study or *svadhyaya* helps unveil the unconscious habits fueling industrial societies. These habits may appear as calcified dogmas but are in reality subjected to change. Careful attention and study of the mind's dynamics and choosing to act on behalf of the Earth, even in the most insignificant ways, can cultivate a sense of discernment and a greater degree of internal freedom.

As it can be frightening to realize the great responsibility that the planetary era exerts in all industrial citizens, the knowledge that we can positively influence our surroundings teaches us about empowerment and the importance of non-violent behaviors. Yoga's emphasis on ameliorating suffering acquires planetary proportions. In search of sustainable happiness we may discover that there is no such thing as personal happiness. In a real way, everyone is everything. Sustainability and happiness are intimately entwined as humans and Earth are bound to share the same faith. The movement from the alienation prevalent in industrial societies to the realization of our membership in the planet-wide web of life makes possible to envision happiness as an expression of the radiant compassion of our true nature.

Adrian Villasenor-Galarza received his Ph.D. in Ecology, Psychology, and Religion at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, CA.



Ahimsa and National Trust

By Kaltrina Kusari

I was only eight when my country, Kosova, went through a war. Overnight, my right to be a kid was taken away from me and I was scared. Luckily I had parents who created a protective shelter which allowed me to continue flourishing as an individual. Unfortunately, many of my friends lost their parents, which hindered their development. The war was cruel, but the postwar period is proving to be just as difficult. By studying social happiness, we can see how institutions could interact in order to provide Kosova's citizens with a more stable society.

Social happiness refers to the happiness that pertains to social relationships and exists in societies which have the necessary mechanisms for human fulfillment. Human fulfillment refers to Maslow's concept of self-actualization, which states that individuals are happiest when they engage in activities that further their potential. One crucial factor in Maslow's pyramid of needs is social trust. Social trust is the idea that citizens are willing to obey regu-

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esteem.

Kosova again provides an example of how distrust hinders the personal growth of individuals and that of the society. Ever since the war ended, the Kosovar government tries to attract investors. However, the structures which assure investors an uncorrupt environment are still weak. Even though the ministry of trade has reduced the number of steps needed in order to start a business, the legal system in Kosova functions under three different legal frameworks, which make it difficult to resolve disputes. Foreign and local investors often deal with property ownership issues because the war left



many structures without concrete owners. These legal uncertainties and the poor implementation of laws hinder economic growth, therefore not allowing people to increase their living standard.

I live with the hope that one day I will be able to go back and make use of the mechanisms which I have learned about. I was only eight when the war took place, and my trust on the government was destroyed, so I can only imagine what adults experienced. I used to live in a place where my entire neighborhood was my home, and I know that Kosova can have that society again.

Kaltrina Kusari, originally from Kosova, graduated from Quest University in Canada, and wrote her undergraduate thesis on the evolution of happiness as a concept. This article is an excerpt from her presentation at the Ahimsa Center conference in 2012.

Practicing Ahimsa in Support of Women By Christian J. Murillo

About two years ago I was told, "The purpose of coming to a university is to find and understand yourself and to discover what you would enjoy doing as a profession." At Cal Poly Pomona, I have had experiences that have shaped my desire to work in the areas of social justice and peace. It all started when I came across a group called Men Against Violence (MAV). I thought MAV was a men's group against violence in general, but I learned that it was about motivating more men to get involved in preventing violence against women.



As I became more involved with the men's group and within the Violence Prevention and Women's Resource Center, I heard about an opportunity to volunteer at Project Sister Family Services. Throughout my years volunteering there I have met and been a support reference for women and children who experienced sexual assault. I often ask myself, "Isn't there a better way to stop this from happening?" Even though it is great helping survivors, it would be better to prevent this all from happening.

My belief is that men have a duty to advocate against violence toward women because men are the primary perpetrators of this violence. Violence is deeply imbedded in our society and has negative effects on all living organisms – on people, animals and on Mother Nature. Many do not realize that when we do harm unto another, it is in some way hurting us.. When women are perpetrated against, men suffer because women are interconnected to men – they are our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, and our friends. In this sense, practicing ahimsa creates happiness and wellbeing for women, and creates happiness and wellbeing for men.

I strive to one day witness the majority of men to convey the message that it is important that all people need to be equally treated and respected no matter their background, but more specifically, no matter their gender. Many women have already advocated on a mass scale for such equal treatment but it is time for more men to enlist in such change. Practicing ahimsa and generating respect towards others could translate to happiness and wellbeing for all.

Christian J. Murillo is majoring in Psychology with a minor in Women's Studies at Cal Poly. He is a member of the university's Men Against Violence organization.

Using Ahimsa to Cultivate Happiness By Rupa Parikh

As I entered college four years ago, my perception of happiness was quite different than what it is today. It's 2013 and society has made it even harder for people to lead quality lives and have intimate connections with one another. Children are now too consumed with their cell phones and adults would rather socialize via Facebook than over a cup of coffee. The media and technology have stolen from us a state of being that no amount of "likes" or Apple products can even come close to replacing. Yes, indeed, I was among the naive crowd of teenagers that needed to check their cell phone every ten seconds and I, too, idolized money more than the true qualities that life has to offer but fortunately enough, my awareness was no longer suppressed. Three years ago, my roommate handed me a brochure she felt may interest me. This brochure that advertised an event the Ahimsa Center was holding intrigued me and raised enough curiosity for me to actually visit the center and become involved with the Nonviolent Studies Minor. Initially, my question was, "What in the world is ahimsa?" and I slowly attempted an answer by taking a series of classes and challenging my life from its status



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Radical Empathy: A Nonviolent Path to Happiness and Wellbeing

By Randall Amster

The notion of developing a radical form of empathy calls upon us to manifest nonviolence and to cultivate happiness in the daily practice of our lives. The concept also includes some cutting-edge theories of human capacities for compassion, such as *mirror neurons* and *epigenetics*. Part of the aim includes fostering an authentic “ethic of care” that applies equally to the self, our societies, and the balance of the biosphere. Radical empathy serves as a pathway toward mutual wellbeing, happiness, and the realization of a sustainable peace at all levels of engagement.

Recently, scholars and practitioners alike have begun to address the nexus between sustainable wellbeing (i.e., *happiness*) at all levels and the cultivation of compassionate and empathetic relations. As Nipun Mehta, co-founder of ServiceSpace, observed in the *Daily Good*: “When we engage at the cusp of our own evolution, we can’t help but broaden from self orientation to other orientation. We honor our profound interconnection, and as we align with a natural unfolding that is greater than us, we continue to transform ourselves.” It is a *sine qua non* of social justice that the happiness and wellbeing of the one is intimately bound up with that of the many, as Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*: “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

When we extend the logic further to include the environment upon which we are all (inter)dependent, these themes come into even sharper focus. The prac-

tice of empathy becomes the keystone of sustainable wellbeing as it creates a positive feedback loop among interconnected components of a whole system. Caring for others and for the habitat in an essentially closed cycle *is* taking care of oneself, and vice-versa.

Empathetic relations ask us to consider not only our mutual interests and the potential sense of having a common future, but also to explore the emotional bonds that links us one to the other and to all life in our midst. We *feel* together, for both good and ill, and we come to understand in short order that harm to one is harm to all. A system of profound inequality, as with a slave society, is inherently untenable not only in moral terms but also because it entraps even the masters in its cycle of violence. Intriguingly, science has begun to discover (and confirm long-held intuitive understandings) that there may even be a biological basis for empathy.

Cutting-edge theories of social psychology indicate that we are not merely passive consumers of remotely decided outcomes, but rather that we possess the inherent power to shape our realities and relations as we engage them. *Mirror neurons* (sometimes also referred to as “Gandhi neurons”) provide a biological basis for understanding that when we observe others’ (re)actions, it stimulates a similar response in ourselves; thus, wellbeing begets wellbeing, and suffering begets suffering. As Peace Pilgrim once said colloquially, “the world is rather like a mirror – when you smile at it, it smiles at you.” In this light, as V.S.

Ramachandran wrote in 2009, mirror neurons provide “the neural basis of ... the reciprocity of self awareness and other awareness.” The burgeoning field of *epigenetics* further explores how trauma can be passed down intergenerationally, suggesting that there is a complex relationship between what we feel, how we act in the world, and our genetic evolution.

As humankind rapidly approaches an apparent tipping point in our capacity to sustain and survive, we directly confront the critical questions of this era. Can we emphasize self-care, care of the other, and care of the environment in our lives and work? What are the new challenges and opportunities that will continue to arise as conditions likely worsen around the globe? Can we become re-encharmed with “the world we have” (as Thich Nhat Hanh says) and thus reclaim a sense of wonder and reverence? Far from mere academic exercises, engaging these queries through the lens of empathy can inform our daily practice by promoting personal happiness, mutual wellbeing, and ecological sustainability all at once. It is, in the end, the path of *ahimsa* that promises our salvation.

Randall Amster, J.D., Ph.D., teaches Peace Studies and is the Graduate Chair of Humanities at Prescott College in Arizona, serves as Executive Director of the Peace & Justice Studies Association, and is Editor-in-Chief for New Clear Vision.



Parikh, cont. from page 6

quo.

The Nonviolence Studies minor at Cal Poly Pomona allows me to approach life at a slower pace. As a college student, it seems as if I’m working towards a future and happiness is waiting to greet me with open arms. Living in that mindset can’t be more debilitating. The desire to have a career, a marriage, etc. bars most of us from the happiness that is available to us today. Only a few months from being a college graduate, I want to slow it down and enjoy the ride. The minor has provided me with an outlook on life that my Biology major probably wouldn’t have been able to. Classes that the Nonviolence Studies program requires, such as Stress Management, Literature in War in Peace, Women in a Global Perspective, have opened my eyes the world around me; learning about alternative approaches to handling stress or the reading autobiographies of the heroic Nagasaki/Hiroshima survivors has humbled me and learn to appreciate all that surrounds us.

As Happiness Expert Lisa Cypers Kamen put it, it’s important to know that happiness is an inside job. It won’t come to those who are idle; it will come to those who seek it. And just as I’ve learned, happi-

ness doesn’t only come when you’re making steady money and you can afford to buy a car. It is a feature of the journey you are on.

Rupa Parikh is a senior majoring in Biology and minoring in Nonviolent Studies. She is on the executive board for the governing body in the College of Science.

A Step Towards Change and Peace

By Megan Hans

At the Ahimsa and Sustainable Happiness Conference, I attended a workshop provided by Catherine O’Brien, and read the following excerpt from Thich Nhat Hanh:

If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either.



So we can say that the cloud and the paper *inter-are*.

Since the conference, this passage has continued to strike a chord, leaving an imprint in my heart and in my mind. It is this philosophy of interbeing that is an essential component to *ahimsa*, as well as to the concept and practice of sustainable happiness.

Our current capitalistic, global economy promotes a materialistic outlook on life and where the instant gratification of our desires is expected to be fulfilled. While we are constantly in an unsatisfied state of wanting that is supported through globalization, we are concurrently stimulating insecurity and competition amongst the people of supposed ‘underdeveloped’ countries, increasing crime and poverty, and plundering the environment of its resources and beauty. Thus, the characteristics of this system and the privileges that we are accustomed to are upheld at the expense of human rights and human freedoms. With this in mind, it behooves us to question what we can do – as individuals and/or as a community – to create and mobilize change into our personal lives and our society. This can be daunting when we first learn about what is happen-

cont. on page 11

FEATURED SPEAKERS 2010 - 2012



CHRISTOPHER KEY CHAPPLE is Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology at Loyola Marymount University. A specialist in the religions of India, he has published more than a dozen books, including *In Praise of Mother Earth: The Prthivi Sukta* (2012), *Yoga and the Luminous* (2012), and *Reconciling Yogas* (2003). He serves on the advisory boards for the Forum on Religion and Ecology (Yale), the Green Yoga Association (Oakland), and the Ahimsa Center (Pomona). He edits the journal *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* (Brill).

MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI is a Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Management at Claremont Graduate University, and Founding Director, Quality of Life Research Center (QLRC), a non-profit research institute that studies positive psychology. His books include *Flow, The Evolving Self, Creativity, and Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet* (co-authored with Howard Gardner and William Damon). Csikszentmihalyi is a member of the American Academy of Education, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the National Academy of Leisure Studies.



NADJA FURLAN is a Research Associate at the Science and Research Centre of Koper, and Assistant Professor of Religion in the Dept. of Philosophy at University of Primorska, Slovenia. Her research interests include Eco-feminist Theology and the contemporary ecological crisis. A Fulbright Scholar, her publications include two books on women, religion, gender and marriage, and she edited a special issue of the journal *Poligrafi, enske in religija* (Women and Religion).. During the war in Kosovo, she worked for two months as a volunteer in a refugee centre in Drac, Albania.



FARAH GODREJ is assistant professor of Political Science at the University of California-Riverside. Her research interests are Indian political thought, Gandhian political thought, cosmopolitanism, and comparative political theory. She has authored several articles including, "Nonviolence and Gandhi's Truth: A Method for Moral and Political Arbitration," in the *Review of Politics*. Her book manuscript, *Cosmopolitan Political Thought: Method, Practice, Discipline*, is forthcoming from Oxford University Press. She serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Gandhian Studies*.



VEENA RANI HOWARD teaches in the Religious Studies Department and Asian Studies Program at the University of Oregon. Her research interests include Hinduism, Gandhi's philosophy of asceticism, and Comparative Religions. Her publications include "Gandhi, The Mahatma: Evolving Narratives and Native Discourse in Gandhi Studies" in *Religion Compass* (2007). She is the author of *Gandhi's Ascetic Activism: Renunciation and Social Action* (Albany: SUNY Press, forthcoming 2013).



PADMANABH S. JAINI is Professor Emeritus of Buddhist Studies and co-founder of the Group in Buddhist Studies at UC Berkeley. A Buddhist and Jainist scholar, his major publications include *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women* (1991), *Collected Papers on Jaina Studies* (2000), and *Collected Papers on Buddhist Studies* (2001). He has been featured in numerous forums, including in the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (UK). Most recently, Prof. Jaini was honored with the Ahimsa Award, given by the Institute of Jainology, U.K.



MIRA KAMDAR is an award-winning author whose books include *Planet India: The Turbulent Rise of the Largest Democracy and the Future of Our World* (Scribner, 2008). Her memoir, *Motiba's Tattoos: A Granddaughter's Journey into Her Indian Family's Past* (Public Affairs, 2000) which was a 2000 Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Selection and won the 2002 Washington Book Award. Kamdar is a Senior Fellow at the World Policy Institute and an Associate Fellow of the Asia Society where she was a Bernard Schwartz Fellow in 2008.



K-12 Teacher Panelists



Susana Barkataki most recently taught humanities at the Sequoyah School in Pasadena, CA. She was a 2005 Ahimsa Fellow.



Christopher Greenslate, a former teacher at High Tech High in San Diego, is now pursuing his Ed.D. at Vanderbilt University. He was a 2009 Ahimsa Fellow.



Michele Milner, a 2007 Ahimsa Fellow, taught at the Sequoyah School and has received the Shattuck Award for dedication to public interest law.

FEATURED SPEAKERS 2010 - 2012



DARRIN M. McMAHON is Professor of History at Florida State University, and author of *Happiness: A History*, awarded Best Books of the Year honors for 2006 by the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Library Journal*, and *Slate Magazine*. His books include *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (2001). A frequent contributor to the *Boston Globe* and *Wall Street Journal*, McMahon is currently completing a history of the idea of genius in Western thought (forthcoming 2013).

ANTHONY PAREL, a political philosopher, is among the world's leading scholars on Gandhi. and professor *emeritus* of Political Science at the University of Calgary, Canada. His major books include *Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006); *Gandhi, Freedom and Self-Rule*, ed., (Lexington Books, 2000); *Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*," ed., (Cambridge University Press, 1997, 2009); *Comparative Political Philosophy*, ed. with R. C. Keith, (Lexington Books, 2003). and *The Machiavellian Cosmos*, (Yale University Press, 1992).



CHANDRAKANT PATEL is an HP Senior Fellow and Director of the Sustainable Information Technology Laboratory at Hewlett Packard Laboratories. He has been a pioneer in management of available energy as a key resource in "smart" data centers, and most recently, in application of the IT ecosystem to enable a net positive impact on the environment. A Fellow of IEEE, he has authored numerous papers and has been granted more than 100 U.S. Patents. He has been profiled by ABC-KGO television in its Emmy Award winning series "Profiles of Excellence" for contributions to science.

MEDHA PATKAR is an environmental and human rights activist who has led the struggle against the controversial Sardar Sarovar Project on the Narmada River in Gujarat, India. She founded the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA, Save the Narmada) and the National Alliance of People's Movements dedicated to alternative development paradigms. She has worked in Bombay slums and tribal areas, and served on the World Commission on Dams, and on water and energy issues across the world. She has received Amnesty International's Human Rights Defender's Award.



PAUL REDEKOP is Professor of Conflict Resolution Studies at Menno Simons College at the University of Winnipeg, Canada. The author of numerous articles in sociology and peace and conflict studies, his most recent book is *Changing Paradigms: Punishment and restorative discipline* (2008), and wrote the chapter, "Restorative Responses to Human Rights Violations by Peacekeepers: Enhancing Human Security?" a book chapter in *Mainstreaming Human Security in Peace Operations and Crisis Management* (Routledge, 2010).

RAKESH SARIN is the Paine Chair in Management at the Anderson School of Business at UCLA. He is the co-author of *Engineering Happiness: A New Approach for Building a Joyful Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012). Sarin was recently invited to discuss Engineering Happiness at a TED conference. His theoretical interests are in preference theory, decisions under uncertainty and equity and fairness in decision-making.



JEFF SMITH is co-founder and CEO of LUNAR, an award-winning design firms in Silicon Valley. Jeff also co-founded Nova Cruz Products, Satellite Models and, most recently, T'emogique. Under his leadership, LUNAR has become a world leader in creating successful, memorable products for the consumer, technology and medical industries. He has received numerous design awards and has been an active speaker at MIT's Enterprise Forum, the Wharton School, Design Management Institute, and Industrial Designers Society of America.

K-12 Teacher Panelists



Susan Milan has taught for over 15 years at the South Whidbey School in Washington State. She is a 2009 Ahimsa Fellow.



Tazeen Rashid, a 2011 Ahimsa Fellow, teaches AP Social Studies and Economics at Suncoast Community High School in Florida.



Peggy Sia, a 2009 Ahimsa Fellow, is a teacher at Palm Elementary School in Los Angeles County.

Ahimsa and K-12 Education

Ahimsa as a Counterbalance to Violent Thought

By Teresa Burke

"What is war?" ten-year old Jaafar asks me. His question comes in response to my reprimand to, "Make peace not war." This came because his play is too aggressive. He shapes his hand into a gun and aims it at another student in class. He has already been punched and scratched and subject to an ambush as a result. The consequences of aggression can be dire. I need to teach him. I need to keep him safe.

Having come a few months ago to the U.S. from Iraq, I am sure Jaafar has a better grasp of war than I do. He just doesn't have the English label for it. What sign can I use to effectively convey the meaning of such a word? How can I introduce a counter thought? How can I help to support his family who moved to the United States to escape violence?

I motion for him to sit next to me, and I draw a picture of a gun. "Gun?" he asks. "Yes," I reply. Then, I draw a circle around the gun and put a large slash through it showing the universal sign for 'no.' His rapid head-nodding confirms he understands, and he says, "No guns. No fighting," in the voice of experience that belies his small stature. Not satisfied I am providing a counterbalance for him to contemplate, I am buried in thought when he says, "In Syria, guns." I nod and say, "In Syria, war. Guns and war." The understanding of the new word brightens his face.

Holding my palms up and making a balancing motion, I try to convey the idea of opposites. I then draw a peace sign on the other side of the page. The crease lines in his forehead reveal his lack of understanding. I use hand motions again to convey opposites and state, "Peace," pointing to the sign. He looks at me with eyes that have seen too much and time freezes as thoughts seem to spin in his head.

With a smile breaking across his face he says, "No guns. Peace?" I laugh aloud with pleasure and repeat, "Peace!" Then I squeeze my thumbs and forefingers together on each hand, close my eyes, take a deep breath and say, "Peace." Peeking through my lashes, I see him mimicking my motions. This word will be the secret code I use with him to nurture an alternate to aggression.

In the days that follow, I feel deeply that familiar sense of drive, desperation even, to provide a counterbalance to violent thought: to inform my students of alternate realities and to challenge the images that have flooded their vi-

sion so heavily since they were small. Their own happiness is at stake, to say nothing of our mutual future.

If I can calm the aggression and introduce peaceful ways for students to interact and play with each other, I can take the first steps towards building community in the classroom. A classroom built on a sense of community and mutual respect can help shape a young person's experience and way of thinking. It also builds an interconnectedness which then leads to a sense of unity. The more effective I am in creating a sense of unity, the greater the learning that takes place. Interconnectedness is the fundamental concept behind cooperative learning— and the foundation of ahimsa.

Jaafar doesn't realize it, but he is hearing and experiencing realities different than what he has known. He too sees the surprise on the face of the student conducting the survey. He understands that it is not just the teacher who has a different view on guns and gun violence. He is undergoing a personal transformation.

His journey will be his own, but during his time in my class, he will learn of Gandhi and the concept of ahimsa. He will listen to me talk of compassion and forgiveness. He will experience a sense of community - a community united behind a common purpose. He will know that there are people who believe that all living things are connected. He will also participate in a reader's theater where nonviolent protest is used against bullying and in a mock protest march against an artificially manufactured injustice. He will gain some mastery of the English language, and "peace" will have been one of his first words.

Teresa Burke is a 5th grade teacher in northern California, and was a 2005 Ahimsa Fellow.



The Transformative Optimism of America's Teachers

By Christian Bracho

Teachers often feel helpless or powerless to deal with the violence they see in their classrooms and communities. Since 2005, after my Fellowship at the Ahimsa Center, I've now had to serve as one of the teacher-mentors at Ahimsa institutes focused on the nonviolent journeys of Gandhi, King, and Chavez. Through these experiences, I have met over 130 teachers who believe in alternatives for dealing with violence, and come to the Center optimistic that they can create change in their classrooms, schools and communities.

Last summer, the Center sent a survey to these Ahimsa Fellows- teachers who attend the summer institutes- aiming to document their experiences learning while here at Cal Poly and applying what they learn back home. Teachers consistently wrote that the Institute was a transformative experience for them, articulating what the philosopher Cesar Rossatto has called "transformative optimism," a term Monisha Bajaj has described as critical in understanding the outcomes of peace education initiatives. When teachers feel empowered to create change, and believe that they are "viable and necessary participant(s) in the collective process of social change," they express transformative optimism, and do work both in and outside the classroom to cultivate peace and nonviolence, as they are called to do in UNESCO's *Manifesto 2000*.

At the K-12 Institutes, as teachers study the philosophy and practice of nonviolence under the direction of Center Director Dr. Tara Sethia, teachers work with academic and professional experts, like the Gandhian scholar Anthony J. Parel. One teacher from Massachusetts wrote: "I don't remember ever being so alert and thoughtful during any other educational experience I've had. It challenged the way I see the world." Many of our Ahimsa Fellows say that these powerful learning experiences transformed how they thought of themselves— as teachers *and* as human beings— and how they lead their personal and professional lives in and outside the classroom.

The Ahimsa Fellows have taught lessons on concepts like ahimsa, unity, satyagraha, nonviolent resistance, justice, and civilization. They do so at all grade levels, from elementary to high school, and in all kinds of subjects, from math, to humanities, to social studies and art, and in effect transform their classrooms and schools by exposing students and colleagues to the principles of nonviolence. In doing so, teachers transformed their relationships. One teacher wrote, "I put more emphasis on teaching problem solving and non-violent ways to address issues. I developed deep relationships with each student and encouraged them to develop relationships with each other." It is in accounts like these that we see the transformative optimism of America's teachers, and how they strive to "be the change they wish to see in the world."

Christian Bracho, a doctoral candidate studying International Education at New York University, was a 2005 Ahimsa Fellow.



For K-12 curriculum produced by the Center's Ahimsa Fellows, please visit

<http://www.csupomona.edu/~ahimsacenter/k12/>

Living Large: Expanded Consciousness through Non-violence

By Vikas Srivastava

Living Large is a theory that I use to convince high school students of the benefit of committing to non-violence, compassion and social change. It is part of “The Project of Change” – integrating Ahimsa and technology to create effective social change – that I developed as a result of my participation in the 2007 K-12 Institute. The Project of Change includes theories that developed over the years as I incorporated non-violence in my classroom and curriculum. The Project of Change is not only to teach Ahimsa and/or encourage social change – but to plant the seeds for a lifelong commitment to Ahimsa.

We “live large” by accepting deep metaphysical interconnections with our surroundings, experiences and subtle intuitive messages.

Living Large is based on the assumption that self-benefit is at the heart of most (if not all) our actions. For example, when we act out of compassion for others, we do it for the satisfaction we feel afterwards. The truth is, very little (if any) of our daily lifestyle creates significant change (i.e. being vegan has not proven to save cows; recycling has not slowed global warming or reduced mainstream consumption/waste) but this does not prevent us from taking action. The act itself is a validation of our principles and that validation serves our own self-perception. Simply “feeling good” does not seem sufficient to explain the dedication demonstrated or the benefit received by Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr. and many, many others – nor did it explain my own personal determination.

Living Large refers to expanded consciousness beyond the confines of our physical bodies, individual existence, material space and conceptual time. Common experience makes evident that this reality does in fact exist, however we are limited in our ability to access this reality at will. This reality refers to unexplainable coincidences between our thoughts and events. For example, when we think of someone just before they call (regardless of the distance), or intuitive feelings about a future event (regardless of time). This reality also refers to our ability to receive information through metaphysical mediums, such as understanding pets’ thoughts without verbal communication, or intuition about a person or place.

Therefore, intuitive feelings despite distance, intuitive information regardless of time, and intuitive communication outside of verbal mediums undoubtedly exists (and we may be receiving it). However, we often find we are unable to utilize it when we want/need to. This “unpredictable coincidence” continues as long as we “live small”: disconnected from other life forms and limited to conceiving only the present

moment. We dismiss these events as mere coincidences and fail to absorb the significance of each life event that offers insight into our path and purpose in life. We refuse to accept the consequence and power of our intentions.

We “live large” by accepting deep metaphysical interconnections with our surroundings, experiences and subtle intuitive messages. In other words, the degree to which we identify with our environment (all life forms) is directly proportionate to the degree of “largeness” of our living. As we expand our consciousness, our notion of self expands to include life forms beyond our physical material form. Through this union, we begin to receive metaphysical communication from verbal and non-verbal mediums such as other people’s thoughts, future events, animals, plants and auras.

This requires a stable state-of-mind as well as a sincere relationship with other life forms. A stable state-of-mind is one that is still enough to perceive subtle energies and communication (such as a state of meditation). A sincere relationship with other life forms is based on identification which results in compassion and non-violence. For example, we often understand our own pets in a way that others may not be able to. We understand specific needs such as food, bathroom breaks or attention. As we care for a specific pet overtime, this ability to communicate becomes stronger and more accurate. Basically, as we *Live Large* external life forms become an extension of ourselves— therefore we cannot ignore or encourage violence against our (extended) self. Dedication to Ahimsa develops a bond with life forms that expands the consciousness through compassion and allows metaphysical communication to occur. Through this communication with the “universe” we find our path and purpose in life.

One can choose to live small comparable to driving without a map; or one can live large comparable to an map-like aerial view or “GPS for life”. This is the wisdom that drives non-violent leadership and lifestyles. Ahimsa will not remove obstacles or bring wealth; but it will give one the stability to see the true nature of reality and his/her place in it— and enable one to remove obstacles or manifest wealth.

Vikas Srivastava, a 2007 Ahimsa Fellow, is Assistant Principal at Pacific Academy, Educational Consultant (Third Eye Praxis) and founder of Music Moves the World.



Teaching Nonviolence and Sustainable Happiness

By Andrew Duden

I teach at a high school in a community that exemplifies market-based rhetoric concerning what students should learn and what teachers should teach. There is an implicit contract in what we do: high academic and athletic achievement in high school will get you to college, college will get you a good job, a good job will earn you wealth, and wealth will bring you happiness. However, this culture of achievement, individual celebrity, and competition does not guarantee happiness.



I participated in the Ahimsa Institute in 2011. As an *ahimsaka*, my challenge has been to model and instruct students in these skills necessary to be a nonviolent, compassionate steward of our high school. My first step with students involves the simple act of

My students and I discuss how all mistakes can be healed through acts of truth and reconciliation. In sharing our stories, we foster critical truths of ahimsa.

storytelling to achieve self-rule or *swaraj*. Students write personal narratives about acts of violence and analyze how those incidents potentially could be morally transformative. In order to prepare students to tell their own story, I have students read the first chapter of Dr. Tara Sethia’s book, *Gandhi: Pioneer of Non-violent Social Change*, which allows students to learn how even Gandhi’s childhood stories are accounts of his moral self-examination and practice of compassion.

Writing and sharing these stories is difficult for students. However, Gandhi instructs that in order to attain *swaraj*, one must become totally vulnerable to truth. We discuss how mistakes, wrought by our own shortcomings and limitations, cause harm even when we did not intend to cause harm. Yet, all mistakes can be healed through acts of truth and reconciliation. In sharing our stories with each other, we foster three critical truths of ahimsa: personal moments of reconciliation and forgiveness are historically important; communal sharing of weaknesses that we all possess enhances compassion; in order to gain knowledge of truth, we must pursue constant moral self-examination. This contemplation promotes happiness.

In addition, over the past school year, with the partnership of many stakeholders, I initiated a composting and garden program. A garden engages students in the practice of daily common labor or *swadeshi* and allows students to gain a deeper connection between ahimsa and ecological thinking. Dilafruz Williams and Jonathan Brown, in their book *Learning*

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A Drink From the Well

By Eusebio Travis Sevilla



To undertake a journey toward nonviolence is not an easy thing to do. Fortunately, I work in a school environment that does a lot to be fully inclusive and do the minimum amount of institutional violence towards its teachers and students. I am also lucky to be an art teacher when most schools are cutting the arts, sports, etc. in order to emphasize the test taking subjects and adhere to national and state standards. Yet, I still encountered realities that brought into question my ability to stay on a nonviolent path.

Ironically the systematic obstacles were not the problem. The real challenges were in my daily life, and my response to certain behaviors and situations that, despite my training, reared their ugliness from time to time. I found myself impatient and upset at the perceived entitlement I saw in my students and their parents, when I exposed them to problems in the world and didn't see them "feeling" as I did towards the suffering of others and our planet. This is not to say no students felt empathy towards others. But, on the whole, I didn't feel my passions were hitting home with students.

The Ahimsa Conference could not have come at a better time; given the topic of discussion was not just happiness, but "sustainable happiness," I knew I had to attend: I needed to "drink from the well" again, a phrase many of my fellow teachers used as we engaged in lively discussions before and after

the conference sessions. Coming back into the fold to hear about the fields of Positive Psychology, research on ego reduction, and the history of "happiness" reenergized my desire to stay on the path I had embarked on two years ago as a 2011 Ahimsa Fellow. It enabled me to go back to my students and my school and continue to "be the change I want to see." Hearing some of the speakers reminded me that it isn't about perfection, but about the growth of the self, and the work that that entails. This has never been more prescient in my life until about a week ago.

As I write this two Fridays ago a terrible and unspeakable act of violence was perpetrated in Newtown, CT. As the news trickled to the West Coast during the day, it was more and more dismal. I found myself at a total loss and truly depleted of hope. I was in a desperate state, unable to hold back tears as I thought about the ramifications of that act on the persons involved, on us as a culture, and as a country.

The Monday after the events in Newtown, I met with my group of Advisory students and had

an incredible discussion with them, not about guns or gun control, or mental health and access to care. Instead our discussion began with the reading of a Robert Kennedy speech and a deep hard look at ourselves. I asked my students to think about how each of them is capable of doing something positive each day for another person, and how each of us is capable of making the world a positive place with our choices and our actions. It became apparent just how important the work that the Ahimsa Center is doing, and how important it was for me to have been to the conference a few weeks earlier. I realized that I am making positive change in the world each day, and that the fire to do so was never fully extinguished. I just needed another drink from the well.

Attending the conference helped to remind me to forgive myself and others, and to continue to pursue nonviolence in my life if I want to sustain happiness. A quote from Gandhiji helped me process these recent events, and I turn to it often in the face of challenging situations: "When I despair, I remember that all through history the ways of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants, and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end they always fall. Think of it—always."

Eusebio Travis Sevilla, a 2011 Ahimsa Fellow, is an artist and educator teaching at High Tech High North County in San Diego.



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Gardens and Sustainability Education, write, "Nonviolence is key here. In gardening, we cannot go far without aiding the soil with respectful attitude and action." (p. 45)

The garden program emphasizes *sarvodaya*. The program's success depends on our collective investment in the project. Every day, students in my Political Action Seminar (PAS) class take buckets to the cafeteria during lunch to collect food waste. The collected food waste is turned into composted soil for the garden. Through their labor, students gain awareness of practices that nurture the environment rather than contribute to its destruction. It also raises their awareness about our responsibility to community and environmental stewardship.

I continually remind myself that ahimsa takes a lifetime of practice. Time is essential to ahimsa. Cultivating a garden is slow work. The daily practice of *swaraj*, *swadeshi*, *karma yoga* and *sarvodaya* with my students has become my work as an educator. As a result, we find liberation from the dominant market-based, cultural contract, and achieve more sustainable happiness.

Andrew Duden teaches world history and politics at Lake Oswego High School in Lake Oswego, Oregon, and was a 2011 Ahimsa Fellow.

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ing throughout the world and how it affects us.

When I first started taking classes for the Nonviolence Studies minor here at Cal Poly Pomona, that is exactly how I felt – overwhelmed and even a little guilty. I asked myself, where do we begin this process of change? Luckily, in my studies, I had exemplars like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. that I could turn to for guidance. As a student, not only in college, but in life, I continue to learn more about global issues, gaining new and different perspectives along the way – knowledge and perspectives that I can share with others. I feel as if the words of Thich Nhat Hanh and the lessons on sustainable happiness have come at the perfect time in my study of nonviolence and in my life. In her workshop, O'Brien shared with us an activity that she gives her students – an exercise in which the student reflects upon his or her day-to-day decisions, recording how

they feel, how it affects him or her, how it affects others, and how it affects the environment. It is this approach to the decision-making process that I have begun to incorporate into my life.

Megan Hans is a senior majoring in Pure Mathematics and minoring in Nonviolence Studies. She is also a delegate for Cal Poly Pomona's Model UN Team.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Several sponsorship opportunities are available, including opportunities for naming a public lecture, a conference, and the Ahimsa Center. In addition to these, the center welcomes donations in any amount.

If you are interested in exploring how you can get involved with the Center or wish to donate to the Center, please call (909) 869-3868 or email tsethia@csupomona.edu

Humanization of Violent Children through Nonviolent Resistance

By Saskia Van Goelst Meijer

In my research on nonviolence as a tool for humanization, I use a Gandhian framework that can be used both as a tool for analysing specific situations, and as a starting point for devising a course of action and a mode of reflection— as does Israeli psychologist Haim Omer, in his work with violent or abusive children. The first element of the framework is *satya*, the truth of a situation. The next element is *Ahimsa*, which is related to *satya*, because to be able to do no harm we should be clear about our intentions and how they relate to our practise. The third element, *tapasya* literally means heat, but in this context means self-suffering. In any nonviolent practice, *sarvodaya*, the fourth aspect, is also at stake. If we want to solve a conflict nonviolently, the welfare of our opponent is at much at stake as our own— even if we feel that the other party might not deserve it. Doing this can very well be considered a form of *tapasya* and at the same time is a practise of *ahimsa*. The final aspect of nonviolence is *swadeshi/ swaraj*, which amounts to a special form of autonomy.

Omer developed a method for working with violent and abusive children based on the principles of nonviolence, and called it Nonviolent Resistance

(NVR). Omer observed that, faced with children's extreme behaviour like violent outburst, addiction and criminality, parents and caretakers often don't know how to respond and oscillate between 'giving in' or 'lashing out'; to keep the peace. Both responses escalate the problem. Omer's method aims at resisting the extreme behaviour, without escalating the situation.

In line with the element of *satya*, parents are asked to examine their own role in the escalating process. Instead of hiding the problem, parents enlist support from family, friends, teachers or other parents. Parents are also completely open with the child that they will use NVR, communicating to the child 'we will not give in, but we will not give up.' Parents refrain from violence or the use of humiliating speech and learn a number of actions to take when the child shows its problematic behaviour. Parents must develop stamina and determination in withstanding attacks and provocations and controlling their own reactions (*tapasya*). The aim of the method is not to overcome or subdue the child, but to protect both the child as well as the parents from the destructive effects of the violence.

NVR rests on the principle of 'new authority', a form of exercising authority not based on controlling the child, but on the parents controlling their own behaviour. Parents resist the violent behaviour and restore their authority. 'Opting for

nonviolent resistance means acting so that the perpetuation of oppression and violence is gradually made impossible' (Omer, 2004, p. 7/8). Parents are also encouraged to perform acts of reconciliation and respect towards the child (without surrendering), emphasizing and maintaining the positive aspects of the relationship. Thus they keep showing that although the problem needs to stop, they see the child as more than just a problem.

Omer's method is tailored very specifically for working with violent children in everyday situations like family life, school and the community. Yet, it rests on the same principles that are part of every nonviolent 'effort'. Whether it is at a massive scale, like a social movement fighting government injustices or on a very private level like family life, the elements of *satya*, *ahimsa*, *tapasya*, *sarvodaya* and *swadeshi/swaraj* are always present. Through applying those five elements one addresses the inhumanity, while protecting the human—including oneself.

Saskia Van Goelst Meijer is a doctoral candidate at the University for Humanistics in Utrecht, the Netherlands, where she is a junior researcher.



Michael Tobias Presents New Film: "Yasuni- A Meditation on Life"

This film, about one of the world's most biologically diverse locations, first premiered at the Rio + 20 Summit in June of 2012, where Tobias also delivered a speech as the keynote conclusion to a two hour session that included the President of Ecuador, the past President of Chile, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand and current Chief of UNDP – Right Honorable Helen Clark, the Ecuadorian Secretary of State, Dr. Ivonne Baki, as well as the Secretary on the Environment for Bhutan, Dr. Ugyen Tshewang, and Vandana Shiva, founder of Navdanya.

At the Ahimsa Center Conference, Tobias described in his roving discussion following the film how happiness and non-violence are – as in the case of Yasuni – inextricably tied to human love of nature (biophilia); to our commitment to the values espoused by the Jains, the Todays, the Bishnoi, the Quakers, and many other tribes and cultures throughout time and geography that embrace Ahimsa in their hearts and minds.

What was salient about Tobias' presentation was his firm belief that if we act with true and unwavering idealism in favor of Mother Earth, our pragmatic details will follow in the same spirit. There was no dialectical dreaming or hesitancy on this point: he was



Yasuni, the Earth's most biologically diverse sanctuary.

firm in his resolve that the human species has what it takes to get this colossal hat-trick right. To empower women so that they can choose their own destinies; to empower kids who will be the dreamers of tomorrow; to empower today's leadership and adult world to remind them that they are kids at heart, in the same spirit as Don Quixote, Doctor Dolittle, and Thoreau.

Tobias recommended existing communities that have shown a true commitment to nation-wide ecological conscience, including Suriname, Denmark, San Marino, Andorra and Bhutan. But he also reminded us that political borders are obsolete; that we are all one; that regionalism and communalism has also typically favored – throughout hominid history – small, sustainable groups – not group minds but group collectivity.

And he referenced such contemporary examples as Mountain Gorilla cultures, orangutan cultures, Magellanic penguin cultures, macaw cultures, but also collectives like the organic wine growers in Andalucia.

Citing Gandhi, Mahavira, Albert Schweitzer, and great biologists throughout history, as well as endowing even the humblest bacterium with a soul and an imagination, Tobias – the President of Dancing Star Foundation – challenged us – both with his film and his personage – to merge our daily toil with our great ideals in the service of Earth, a pledge, he confided, was predicated by his own love of life partner, fellow ecologist, filmmaker and writer, the animal rights luminary Jane Gray Morrison.

Michael Tobias is a world-renowned global ecologist, author, filmmaker, historian, and explorer. The author of more than 35 books and director / producer of nearly 100 films, documentaries and T.V. series, Tobias is the President and CEO of the Dancing Star Foundation.



Ahimsa and Community

Meditation and Happiness

By Dr. Sunil Sharma



There are many reasons why we feel unhappy, and there are different levels at which we can look at unhappiness. At one level, we are unhappy because we don't have what we

want or the world isn't the way we would like it to be. We are annoyed that people do not behave the way we would like them to behave. At another level, we are unhappy because we focus on thoughts that create fear, anger and frustration rather than thoughts that create optimism, satisfaction and joy. Life just seems to be one problem after another. At a further level, we feel unhappy because we feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of activity we have to contend with. Our minds are constantly agitated - all the things we have to get done, all our responsibilities, all the challenges we are facing and a multitude of aspirations we have set ourselves. In the face of all this agitation, it is difficult for the mind to find a moment of stillness where it can think clearly, relax and not feel overwhelmed.

Whether we realize this or not, we are living a limited truth based on a limited sense of who we are, what we are capable of, and what our purpose is. Our world-view is blinkered because our awareness is limited. We spend our lives competing instead of cooperating. We criticize more than we praise. We are too busy and focused on our activity to be still and listen. Our consciousness is agitated and our awareness is focused on 'me and my problems'. The overall result is fear, anger, loneliness and unhappiness. It's a circular problem - we make choices detrimental to our wellbeing because our awareness is limited, and our awareness is limited because we make detrimental choices!

Meditation helps us break out of this this cycle. Meditation is a method of managing our state of consciousness and expanding our awareness. At the

physical level, meditation reduces stress in the body by relaxing the muscles and giving the body a chance to disengage from the thoughts that are creating the negative emotions of fear and anger. It is the negative thoughts and emotions that generate stress in the body, and this in turn affects our hormonal balance, blood pressure, and immune system. There are sufficient studies now to confirm that meditation helps improve physical wellness, but the physical benefits of meditation were known to meditators long before the scientific studies.

Meditation also creates a state of stillness in the mind. In this state there is more clarity and our awareness of reality expands. We are able to think more clearly and more creatively. With this expanded awareness we are more likely to make better choices - choices that create less agitation in the mind. As we make better choices, we find ourselves in a better place, with less chaos and a greater sense of connection with people around us. We are then less prone to feeling isolated and being critical of the world around us. Our relationships improve, both at work and at home. Our expanded awareness also expands our world-view. We see greater connections and greater possibilities. We feel more connected to a bigger picture and this feeling of connection reduces fear. We also become more tolerant of people who are different and situations that are not ideal.

So, directly or indirectly, meditation reduces fear and anger. Both these emotions limit our ability to think clearly and to feel the positive emotions of love, compassion and kindness. As fear and anger subside, we automatically feel more love and compassion towards others, we have more clarity about our lives and more satisfaction with ourselves and the world. This makes us feel happier.

*Dr. Sunil Sharma is the co-director of East-West School of Integrative Healing Arts in North Liberty, Iowa, where he teaches life skills and meditation, and the author of **From Here to Happiness**.*

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Ahimsa and Combat Trauma Recovery: Positive Psychology in Action

By Lisa Cypers Kamen

Adversity is a part the human experience; it's a harsh fact of life. None of us will leave this earth without suffering. We are all warriors fighting battles internally and externally. Trauma, death, sickness, violence, and other adversities will inevitably appear in our lives, as that is the very nature of living. After any disaster strikes, we are left to pick up the pieces. The good news is that with training, our traumas and suffering can become a part of the fabric of who we are rather than what defines us.

Trauma has a glimmering silver lining - even in the case of Veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Yes, trauma annihilates a part of our innocence, but she can also be one of our greatest teachers. Sometimes, it just takes a little work to get the gist of the lesson. And a community of support can help us get to that point.

One of the most serious issues facing our nation is the plight of our Veterans, who are suffering from PTSD at record rates as they struggle to reintegrate into the civilian world. We must organize ourselves as a community in united support of our Veterans. We need to heal the visible and invisible wounds of war for our personal wellbeing, the welfare of our families and the collective flourishing of our nation. We can achieve this through positive psychology and a little happiness. Naysayers may argue that I must be crazy to suggest that happiness is an important goal for our Veterans after combat deployment. However, if you replace the word happiness with peace, contentment, wellbeing, thriving, flourishing or balance, suddenly this becomes a more serious, deeper and noble pursuit. These are universal desires, just like happiness.

While I will never have firsthand knowledge of the experiences that deployed servicewomen or servicemen endure, the mission I chose to accept was to share what I do know: the importance of Positive Psychology, integrated wellbeing, mindfulness, emotional non-violence and the keys to a more joy-filled life. The goal of my work is the transformation of Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) into Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG). This process requires one to transcend tragic or negative events, synthesizing them in order to find a greater purpose and meaning in life. Many veterans cannot realize their capacity for happiness because of conditions such as PTSD. But we are all capable of happiness and must look within to find it. Happiness is an inside job.

The critical issue of PTSD is complicated by stigma. The media espouses a burgeoning epidemic of suicide, homicide, addiction, violence, divorce and second-hand trauma. Our government cannot handle the financial burden of care for our Veterans nor does

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its standard treatment fully address the heart of the matter. Meanwhile, our Veterans return from war having experienced horrific events that accumulate quickly, especially after multiple deployments. They are physically, mentally and emotionally overloaded with stress.

There is mistrust, guilt, shame, embarrassment and a host of other emotions in the warrior mind that prevent Veterans from seeking help. Realizing this tremendous unmet need, I began developing an "outside the box" curriculum to reduce PTSD stigma and guide our warriors to recovery from the traumas of war. In 2010, I founded Harvesting Happiness for Heroes, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that delivers stigma-free combat recovery services for Veterans and their loved ones. Through positive psychology coaching, HH4Heroes helps Veterans balance their minds, bodies and emotions to achieve greater wellbeing. Core areas of treatment include yoga and meditation, as well as constructive dialogue on the principles of positive psychology.

Ahimsa has always been central to Harvesting Happiness 4 Heroes' mission. In order for soldiers to adapt their focus, tenacity, courage and mission-driven ethos to their new lives, they must first let go of all violent thoughts, words and actions. The peaceful warrior starts from within, and requires a kindness to oneself as well as to others. Ahimsa is a guiding force in this journey toward self-mastery and reclaiming a positive post-war life. You might say to yourself that by nature happiness and war are a paradox. However, through my work with Veterans, I have discovered that ahimsa can help our traumatized heroes apply their battlefield experiences to a productive, happy civilian life. Through Harvesting Happiness 4 Heroes programs like retreats, Battle Buddy, Return to Duty corporate training and R.E.B.O.O.T., our new Online virtual coaching classrooms designed to reach underserved areas, our Veterans can vanish their violent, harmful thoughts and reclaim their lives in the civilian world. To learn more about Harvesting Happiness for Heroes and Integrated Combat Trauma Recovery, visit www.HH4Heroes.org.

Lisa Cypers Kamen, Executive Director of Harvesting Happiness for Heroes, is the author of Got Happiness Yet?

Love in Action: The Occupy Los Angeles Movement

By Michele Milner

The causes and conditions that spawn a social movement are varied and the formula mysterious. In one's lifetime, it is far more likely that a social movement will not ripen and materialize. While Gandhi and M.L. King, Jr. were considered leaders of the social movements of their time, a closer study reveals the myriad of participants, also leaders in their own right, who made significant contributions. Both of these concepts drew me to participate in Occupy Los Angeles. The horizontal and consensus-based decision-making process appealed to me because of the importance it places on inclusion and the prospect of finding a place for myself within the movement.

I landed at the People's University of Occupy Los Angeles (OLA), which consisted of a propped-up blue tarp, a white board and another blue tarp on the ground for people to sit upon. The library, of similar construction, resided next door. I felt very comfortable in this makeshift world. Erasable markers, hand-outs, books, a computer to show videos, and articles in hand, I arrived each week to facilitate study about Gandhian nonviolence. It became increasingly clear that the participants wanted to apply the theory, not merely learn it, so each class was geared towards application and we made many references to the pragmatism of Gene Sharp's work. Practice proved much more difficult than theory for us as we trans-

The protesters' actions demonstrated an understanding that the strength of the movement came from the discipline to act nonviolently.

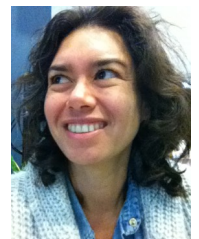
formed into the Nonviolent Strategy group. We asked many questions and struggled with answers: "How do we realize and internalize that we, the people, hold the power and yet relinquish it daily to the government or corporations?" "And then how do we reclaim our power?" "How do we generate a powerful symbol, like khadi (homespun cloth) for India, that will resonate with and inspire the 99%?" "What motivates a mass movement?"

At every OLA General Assembly (open, participatory, democratic meetings to seek consensus on or denial of proposals), a participant read a statement of the movement's commitment to nonviolence. Nonviolence as love in action was evident in so many aspects of the occupation and the movement. Hundreds of people were trained to act nonviolently in the face of arrest or police brutality. Nonviolent methods of conflict resolution were developed and implemented in the occupation. For example, if someone broke a rule, people gathered around to bear witness and hold the space, rather than harangue the person. This usually invited the perpetrator to recon-

sider and reflect upon his offensive action. Particularly inspiring was a huge painting of Gandhi that flew gallantly high in the ranks of marchers, along with a fully set up tent, symbolically defying the rows and rows of officers armed in riot gear who pushed up against the unarmed and peacefully assembled people. Indeed, at the police raid on November 30, 2011 to disband the occupation, the vast majority of protesters acted nonviolently in the face of aggressive police action. The protesters' actions demonstrated an understanding that the strength of the movement came from the discipline to act nonviolently, to act in accord with our own vision of a peaceful world, to make each action count as an end in and of itself.

Our Nonviolent Strategy group realized that our wellbeing or happiness rested upon community, and decided gardening would incorporate many of our values: food security, empowerment, respect for the environment, autonomy from agribusiness, healing, contact with the earth, eating healthfully and generosity. On that morning, gardening seemed to arise as our symbol, our own American khadi. Upon the suggestion of a skid row resident, we were encouraged to start in the shadows of City Hall. We began at the Jonah Project, a homeless shelter, and planted several tomato plants propagated by high school students in the valley and donated to us by Enrich L.A. We planted trees donated by the Tree People and plants bought from an award we unexpectedly received from the Agape Church. Planting on a parkway at 6th and Gladys Streets seemed to promote exactly what we had set out to do: build community. Several of the residents took ownership of the plot, helped prepare the land, watered, made decisions, and planted alongside us. Just as we began to build community and find hope, the plants were suddenly torn out. The residents were irate, and for a time it seemed that our garden ultimately created the opposite of what we intended. We investigated and found out that a maintenance worker from an adjacent non-profit organization, with whom we had previously been in contact, was responsible. While recognizing our disappointment, this became a wonderful opportunity to practice nonviolence and build bridges.

Although the Occupy Movement may not have the visibility it initially had, we know that the journey has commenced, and the path is made by walking with dedication and intention to create social change by touching the truth that we all long for: belonging and community. So we walk, and as we walk, we are love in action.



A 2007 Ahimsa Fellow, Michele Milner is a mother of 3 working toward ahimsa through activism, gardening, meditation, yoga and art.



My life is my message.

--M.K. Gandhi

ABOUT THE AHIMSA CENTER

Established in 2004 in the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, the Ahimsa Center is focused on interdisciplinary teaching and learning about nonviolence and its practical applications at personal, interpersonal, societal, national, and international levels. Educational and outreach initiatives of the Center facilitate an understanding of ahimsa as a positive force informing the ways of thinking as well as living.

The Center provides an institutional forum to innovatively serve and foster synergistic interactions among many important stakeholders.

Educational initiatives of the Center, such as the establishment of the Nonviolence Studies Minor on our campus, help students acquire an appreciation of nonviolence at intellectual and practical levels.

To integrate in the K-12 curricula an interdisciplinary understanding of nonviolence and nonviolent social change, the center has launched a fellowship program for the K-12 educators and offers summer institutions for them. Finally, for the benefits of the larger community, the Center organizes Conference, symposiums, lectures, dialogues, workshops, and special events focusing on a deeper understanding of nonviolence as a way of life.

The Center is playing a pioneering role by fostering a vision in which each individual is an important player in the building and sustaining a culture of nonviolence. It is a vision for cooperation and Collaboration among fellow human beings on the basis of mutual respect, trust, and self restraint. It is a vision where one sees that any violence inflicted on others is a violence inflicted on oneself.

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Speakers, Sponsors, and Panelists at Ahimsa and Sustainable Happiness Conference, 2012