



# AHIMSA CENTER

NONVIOLENCE IN THOUGHT AND ACTION

[www.cpp.edu/ahimsacenter](http://www.cpp.edu/ahimsacenter)

2018-2019

NEWSLETTER

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

**GREETINGS** to the seekers and supporters of ahimsa! In this issue, I wish to draw your attention to the positive value of gratitude.

Gratitude comes from the Latin word *gratus*, which means thankful. It is an expression of appreciation. Appreciation for what we have. Appreciation of what we have received from individuals, family, community or nature. In a way, it is an acknowledgement that the source of what we have and accomplished is more than us. Such a source may be known to us or it could simply be a higher power. Some call it *samskara*, that is, impressions rooted in our lives and experiences waiting to come to fruition.

When should we be grateful and for what? We do not have to wait to feel thankful for something big to happen in our lives. There is never anything "small" for being grateful. Nor does one have to be grateful for only positive things. Sometimes negative situations, challenges or difficulties can become instrumental in making us achieve meaningful things. We can be grateful for such situations as well.

The more one recognizes and reflects on the gifts and opportunities one has, the more one is likely to be kind and generous to others, thus contributing to what a leading expert on the psychology of gratitude, Robert Emmons, calls "emotional prosperity." Building such prosperity in turn improves one's quality of life. By being thankful for what one gets or has, one can uncover a well of happiness and wellbeing. According to Deepak

Chopra, an inspirational author and founder of the Chopra Center for Wellbeing, experiencing gratitude means being in touch with your soul. It means connected to one's inner self. Cultivating gratitude leads to evolution of one's love and care for others.

Contemplating on gratitude leads to digging deeper into one's inner self, in the realm of lived experiences. Daily reflections on gratitude can create a boundless heart making us happy and more empathetic toward others. It is a way of training the mind for positive experiences. By sharing such experiences we can multiply the benefits of gratitude and wellbeing. Such sharing can be done in variety of ways. For example, it can be done by simply recording expressions of gratefulness in a diary what some call keeping a gratitude journal—a daily, or weekly practice.

Gratitude is contagious. Its expression evokes positive emotions of joy and happiness among others. Some of us may express our sense of gratitude through serving others, or "paying forward." By helping others, we also promote our emotional wellbeing.

I am grateful for the gifts of love, encouragement and support I have received in life. I am grateful to those who have inspired me to live a meaningful life, and to be a life-long learner. I am also grateful for the challenges in life as they have made me a stronger person.

This is a special year as it marks two important

events: a birth centennial year of Acharya Mahapragya and 150th birth year of Mahatma Gandhi. I am extremely grateful for their exemplary lives and their message of ahimsa, which have been continuous sources of inspiration for me.

I am thankful to be a part of an effort to create a culture of ahimsa. I wish to thank all our sponsors for their kind and continued support of the Center and its initiatives in nonviolence and nonviolent social change; the contributors for sharing their ideas and wisdom; the guest editor, Dr. Danita Dodson, for her enthusiastic and creative effort in helping put the newsletter together, and to the readers for their sustained interest and engagement with ahimsa.

**Tara Sethia** is a professor of history. As the Director of the Center, she coordinates the interdisciplinary Minor in Non-violence Studies, directs the K-12 educator Institutes on Nonviolence, conceptualizes, organizes and hosts Center's conferences. Her books include *Ahimsa, Anekanta and Jainism; Gandhi: Pioneer of Nonviolent Social Change*; and *The Living Gandhi*. She teaches courses on the history of India and South Asia, Nonviolence and Social Change; and senior thesis—a capstone course for history majors.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Director	1
Ela Gandhi Speaks on Inequality	3
Center honors Drs. Narayan	3
Stacy Sims gives the Narayan Lecture on Nonviolence	3
Announcement of Pradeep and Meenakshi Iyer Public Lecture	3
Ahimsa and Higher Education	
Let Ahimsa Ring: The Transformative Power of the Rhetoric of Civility By Daan Pan	4
How to Find Leaders Aligned with Ahimsa By Viviane Seyranian	4
Yogmaya Neupane: Nepal's First Female Revolutionary By Gunjan Thapa	5
Featured Programs and Special Events	5
Conference on Transformative Power of Education	
Civil Rights Icon Bernard Lafayette Leads Workshop on	
Nonviolence	6
International Conference on Inclusive Democracy	7
Ahimsa Center Sponsors Support a New Plant-Based Minor	7
Ahimsa and K-12 Education	8
Fulfilling a Goal By Donna Hill	8
Sarvodaya in Practice: A Farm Internship Program By Andrew Duden	8
Mindfulness in Schools: A Path to Swaraj By Adam Dennis	8
Voices of Student Changemakers By Susan Milan	9
Change Agents: Nonviolent Leaders of Tomorrow By Shara Carder	10
Design for Good in the Classroom By Travis Sevilla	10
Ahimsa and Community	
The Gandhian Growth Mindset by Vikas Srivastava	11
Babies, Tofu, and Mathematics By Steve Bernstein	11
	12
About the Center	
Summer Seminar for Educators	12

### Sponsorship Opportunities

Several sponsorship opportunities are available, including opportunities for naming a public lecture, a conference, and the Ahimsa Center. 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 contact the Director (909) 869-3868 or email [tsethia@cpp.edu](mailto:tsethia@cpp.edu).

### Ahimsa Patrons

- Hamilton and Denise Brewart

### Ahimsa Sponsors

- Darbari S. Seth Foundation
- Prem and Sandhya Jain
- Jasvant and Meera Modi
- Pravin and Sudha Mody
- Bipin and Rekha Shah
- Jagdish and Madhu Sheth

### Charter Sponsors

- Gems International (Harish & Sunil Daga)
- Navindra and Madhu Jain
- JAINA
- Romesh and Kathleen Wadhvani

### Founding Sponsors

- Ratan and Madhu Baid
- Manilal and Savita Mehta
- Tulsi and Gita Savani
- Girish and Datta Shah
- Nitin and Hiten Shah
- Jayesh and Ramila Shah
- Jeff Smith
- Ravi and Vandana Tilak

### Sustaining Sponsors

- Vikram and Upma Budhraj
- Akabar and Nisreen Firdosy
- Pradeep and Meenakshi Iyer
- Shankar and Malathi Narayan

### Major Sponsors

- Sanjay and Harshada Kucheria
- Suresh and Vimala Lodha
- Lunar Design
- Vasana and Neerja Raman
- Sarva Mangal Trust (Manu & Rika Shah)

### Sponsors

- Naren and Kusum Bakshi
- The Dalai Lama Foundation
- Navin and Pratima Doshi
- Vikram and Anjana Kamdar
- Steve McCauley
- Pramod and Roshni Patel

### Supporters

- Subramaniam and Ulhas Bala
- Amarjit Gill
- Chetan and Nita Sanghvi
- Sharad and Shakuntala Saraf
- Mary Schriener



Executive Editor: **Dr. Tara Sethia**  
Guest Editor: **Dr. Danita Dodson**



## Ela Gandhi Speaks on Inequality

Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of Mohandas K. Gandhi and a social activist in Durban, South Africa—the initial field for Mahatma Gandhi’s experiments with truth—spoke on campus on Inequality. She had overseen the process of first democratic elections in post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, she served in the South African Parliament and was a Chancellor of Durban University of Technology.

She addressed how can we deal with escalating inequalities, increasing homelessness, growing poverty, and violence around us? Drawing upon the key concepts and ideas of her grandfather, Ela Gandhi unraveled a new approach to economics and shared her insights on addressing the growing inequalities of various sorts.



Ela Gandhi with students



Ela Gandhi with Indian Community Leaders

## Center Recognizes Drs. Shankar and Malathi Narayan

The 2019 public lecture was named after sustaining sponsors, Drs. Shankar and Malathi Narayan. The lecture was delivered on Sunday, June 23 by Stacy Sims (see below). She spoke about her journey to mindfulness and Connected ness. It was followed by dinner and reception.



From Left:  
Tara Sethia;  
Dr. Shankar  
Narayan,  
Speaker  
Stacy Sims;  
Dr. Malathi  
Narayan.

### UPCOMING PROGRAM: FALL 2019

Pradeep and Meenakshi Iyer Public Lecture on Nonviolence

“The Relevance of Gandhi for Our Fractured World “

By David Barun Kumar Thomas

Saturday October 19, 2019 at 10:30 a.m. Followed by Vegetarian-Vegan Lunch

Bronco Student Center, Ursa Major Room



# Ahimsa and Higher Education

## Let Ahimsa Ring: The Transformative Power of the Rhetoric of Civility



Today, America is in war: a rhetorical war of civility against incivility. Plaguing the social media and polluting the civic atmosphere of the public arena, the rhetoric

of incivility is an evil of many antics: demagoguery, propaganda, fallacy, deception, defamation, stereotyping, fear-mongering, rumor-mongering, media-bashing, name-calling, smearing campaign, character assassination . . . The rhetoric of incivility is the rhetoric of hate, bigotry, or hypocrisy. It is irrational, unethical, and anti-democratic, in the face of which we are compelled to ask, "Is such rhetoric of the false, the bad, and the ugly the new rhetorical normalcy of the public narrative today?"

The rhetorical frenzy we now encounter almost seems a *deja vu* of the politicized and factionalized rhetorical feud of China's Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, many individuals in this country are bewildered and bedeviled by moral confusion amidst a rhetorical anarchy. Public opinion is losing its moral compass, and the moral decency of the public narrative is being undermined by the toxic rhetoric of incivility. As Dr. Martin Luther King astutely observes, "Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity. Hate destroys a man's sense of values and his objectivity. It causes him to describe the beautiful as ugly and the ugly as beautiful, and to confuse the true with the false and the false with the true" (*Strength to Love*).

It is our common awareness that democracy sustains itself by a civic narrative articulated in the rhetoric of civility. The rhetoric of incivility is verbal violence hurting rather than harmonizing the social fabric, which, if mainstreamed and institutionalized, corrodes the rhetorical foundation of democracy. What Geroge Orwell wrote prophetically more than seventy years ago still rings true today: "[T]he present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and . . . one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end."

According to Orwell, "Political language . . . is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. One cannot change this all in a moment, but one can at least change one's own habits" (*Politics and the English Language*). To effectively stem the onslaught of verbal violence, it is imperative to re-civilize our collective civic tongue by promoting positive rhetorical models as exemplified by Mahatma Gandhi and King, whose transformative legacies empower us to engage the current rhetorical crisis, inspiring us in our pursuit of social justice toward a re-civilized civic narrative with regenerated rhetorical resonance.

Character education begins at home; education of rhetorical civility begins in the classroom. The rhetoric of civility plays a crucial transformative role in college education. A learning-centered English class may adopt a cross-cultural perspective, using selected public speeches and political writings by Gandhi and King as texts exemplifying the rhetoric of civility in contrast with sample texts from the current social media that exhibit the rhetoric of incivility. Engaging students in a contrastive rhetorical study in the spirit of academic inquiry, this class helps raise their awareness about the current rhetorical divide in this country and the urgency of responding to the rhetorical crisis.

This class also compares, as antithetical rhetorical samples, the graceful interaction between Krishna and Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* with the rageful exchange between Agamemnon and Achilles in the *Iliad*. In addition, it incorporates a comparison of the rhetorical influence of the *Gita* as a classical model of rhetorical civility on both Gandhi and Henry David Thoreau and the rhetorical influence of Gandhi and Thoreau on King. As Gandhi eloquently teaches, "Keep your thoughts positive, because your thoughts become your words. Keep your words positive, because your words become your behavior. Keep your behavior positive, because your behavior become your habits. Keep your habits positive, because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive, because your values become your destiny" Following the guidance of Gandhi and King, this class promotes the rhetoric of reason capable of persuading, enlightening,

and inspiring, while exposing the rhetoric of rage that resorts to ranting, feuding, and cursing.

In a realistic sense, King's dream envisioned more than half a century ago has not entirely come true, as our country remains deeply and increasingly divided along political and ideological lines, and the divisive rhetoric of incivility remains influential among a sizable proportion of our population. What is even worse is that the rhetoric of incivility tends to become part of many politicians' public parlance for the purpose of instigating or energizing their partisan power base. We have a long way to go, and there is hard work cut out for us. Hopefully, our road will be travelled by more and more people practicing and promoting the rhetoric of civility, which is essentially the rhetoric of ahimsa. As Gandhi explains, "Ahimsa is the highest duty. Even if we cannot practice it in full, we must try to understand its spirit and refrain as far as is humanly possible from violence." Let the rhetoric of ahimsa begin with us all. Let ahimsa ring!

*Dr. Da'an Pan is Professor in the Department of English and Foreign Languages at Cal Poly Pomona. He teaches a course on War and Peace in Literature as part of the Nonviolence Studies Minor.*

## How to Find Leaders Aligned with Ahimsa By Viviane Seyranian, Ph.D.



We are gearing up for the American elections again, a prime time when politicians communicate with the American public. In an era of fake news and social media (i.e., self-marketing), how

do we determine a leader's true essence and whether he or she can adequately represent us on the public stage? I am a social psychologist who studies American leadership communication (Seyranian, 2011, 2014, 2017), among other topics. My work suggests that the words that American leaders use in their speeches act as windows into their goals, visions, and motivations. If you really want to get to know a leader, pay very close attention to his or her communication. But be careful: it is not about reading *between* the leader's words. Focus on how he or she defines "who we are" as Americans, that is, American identity. What word choices are used? Who is "we" (Americans)? Who are "they" (non-Americans)? Leaders will often provide a very clear

*Continued on following page*

Continued from page 4

“sense of “who we are” and how we are different from them.” These identity word choices can provide evidence about whether leaders are aligned with Ahimsa or not. Leaders with extremist tendencies tend to talk about “who we are” in a way that relegates “us” as special or superior in some important way while casting other groups as derogatory, low status, dangerous, or immoral (e.g., criminals). This sows the seeds of division which is violence.

How can we gauge Ahimsa-aligned leaders? One way is to search for evidence of the genuine benevolence of a leader through his or her choice of words that align with nonviolence. Nonviolent communication transcends the idea of “us” versus “them.” Other groups (“they”) are mentioned very little, if at all. Nonviolent communication defines “we” in broad, inclusive brushstrokes that merge multiple groups into one. The goal becomes to serve the highest good of all and not the narrow interests of one group or subgroup at the expense of another. It focuses on similarities that connect all people. It breaks walls between people. It underlines shared human experience, common norms and values, while highlighting the potential comradery between people in the group. Nelson Mandela illustrates this type of communication in his famous speech on the docks: “During my lifetime, I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

So in the next election cycle, listen closely to what American leaders say about “who we are” and “who they are.” This simple tactic is one key to recognizing the motivations of leaders and to picking out the leader most closely aligned with Ahimsa. In this way, you can be empowered to cast your vote in favor of uplifting our society and humanity as a whole.

**Dr. Viviane Seyranian** is Assistant Professor of Social Psychology at Cal Poly Pomona. She is currently developing a course in Positive Psychology.

## Yogmaya Neupane: Nepal's First Female Revolutionary

By Gunjan Thapa

Nepal's rule under the Rana Kingdom (1846-1951) was marked by violence, destruction, and inequality. Nepali people were imprisoned for any act deemed unfit by the authorities leading to widespread oppression. Yogmaya Neupane (1860-1941), a women's rights activist and a poet, led the fight against injustice and political oppression. Her collection of poems, *Sarwartha Yoghani*, is a contribution to feminist and social justice causes.

Neupane lived during a time when cultural traditions were held in greater regard than one's own life. Married when she was seven, she became a victim of domestic abuse. As her first act of rebellion, she fled from this abuse and returned to her parents' home. However, due to Nepali customs, Neupane was not welcomed back into her community and faced ostracization. Her second act of rebellion was to remarry a Brahmin boy, which went against the customs of marriage for women during that time and was highly frowned upon in Nepal's Hindu society. She and her husband fled to Assam, India. Neupane is believed to have married a third time before renouncing the institution of marriage altogether and becoming an ascetic.

Her journey to becoming an ascetic started after she returned to Nepal in 1917. She met many religious leaders and started to practice *sadhana*, a form of meditative practice that included meditating for days near a fire, meditating in the cold, fasting, etc. Subsequently she gained followers in Nepal. She often spoke against discriminatory practices towards lower caste groups, women, and those of lower socioeconomic status. Oppressed peoples were naturally drawn to her and followed her in the fight for equality and social justice in a society averse to such values and dictated by the caste system. Neupane's fight gave a voice to the voiceless, empowering the lower caste and the downtrodden to fight against Rana rule.

In her fight, Neupane drew upon the ideas of nonviolence to fight against the corruption and oppression of the state. Her sharp criticism of the Rana rule during a time when this could be severely punished is an example of speaking truth to power.



Neupane articulated her ideas through poems which were written down by her followers because she could not write herself. Her ideas were collected into a 24-point appeal that aimed to establish “Truth! Dharma! Alms!” this included ideas based around equal rights in a highly patriarchal society, including the abolition of Sati, which was the tradition where women burned themselves upon the funeral pyre of their dead husband. Also, in 1918 Neupane helped to influence the first organization of Nepali women, *Nari Samiti*, which got rid of Sati tradition. Her 24-point plan was accepted by the Rana kingdom; however, the Rana rulers refused to follow the guidelines and started to suppress the movements of Neupane's group. As the government took more brutal actions against her, she and over 200 disciples tried to commit mass suicide. The Rana Regime arrested those at the event, fearing that if the mass suicide occurred they would face pressures from the rest of the people.

On July 4, 1941, Yogmaya along with 68 followers committed *Jal Samadhi*. The ritualistic mass suicide was enacted with her 68 followers, who all believed in her ideas and are alleged to have stated, “May the unjust Rana government be destroyed! May Dharma be established?” *Jal Samadhi* was the final sacrifice that Yogmaya Neupane and her support made against the rule of the Rana Kingdom. Those who died were from different parts of the caste system; Dalits, Brahmins, Chettris all came together to support Neupane. However, news of Yogmaya was heavily censored until recently when her followers helped to promote her work and ideas. In November 2016, the Nepali government issued a postage stamp in her honor, helping to cement her place in the Nepalese society.

Yogmaya Neupane was ahead of her times. Her collection of poems was published later by her followers. As more people and groups learn about Nepal and their leaders, they should keep in mind Nepal's first female revolutionary. Yogmaya Neupane, a woman in Nepal's heavily repressive society, saw the injustices in the world around her and sought to establish a Nepal guided by dharma and the principle of equality.

**Gunjan Thapa**, a Political Science Major at Cal Poly Pomona, is pursuing a Minor in Nonviolence Studies and plans to graduate in 2019-2020





## Center Hosts Conference on Transformative Power of Education: Lessons from Gandhi, King, Chavez and Man-

The Ahimsa Center hosted a multidisciplinary conference, **Transformative Power of Education: Lessons from Gandhi, King, Chavez and Mandela**, in October 2018. This conference celebrated the ushering of the 150<sup>th</sup> birth year of Gandhi, the 50<sup>th</sup> death anniversary year of King, the 25<sup>th</sup> death anniversary year of Chavez, and the birth Centenary year



of Mandela. Over the period of three days, the conference featured distinguished key speakers, including Linda Biehl, Jose Calderon, Chitra Golestani, and Bernard Lafayette—an icon from the civil rights movement—and twenty educators. The speakers and panelists represented diverse disciplinary backgrounds and fields of knowledge.



## Civil Rights Icon, Bernard Lafayette, Leads a Workshop on Nonviolence

This two-hour workshop by Dr. Lafayette introduced participants to the key concepts and important background information about nonviolence, including core values, conflict analysis, nonviolent historical movements, dynamics of social change, outstanding leaders in nonviolent movements, and the impact of nonviolent training and education on global movements.

Below are : University President Dr. Coley (left), Dr. Lafayette and Mrs. Lafayette (center), and Dr. Sethia (right)



### ENGAGED AUDIENCE





## Ahimsa Center Hosts International Conference on Inclusive Democracy



Commemorating the 70<sup>th</sup> year of India’s emergence as the world’s largest democracy, the Center hosted an international conference on Building an Inclusive Democracy.

The conference deliberated, among many themes and topics, on two fundamentally important questions: Given the challenges democracy faces in today’s world, what are the lessons *for* India? Given its unique experience as the world’s largest and most diverse democracy, what are the lessons *from* India? The conference featured internationally known scholars (seen on this page) from United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Israel and India, who reflected on the challenges and prospects for the future of Indian democracy. Drawn from multiple fields of knowledge, they offered their insights and strategies for making Indian democracy more inclusive and stronger in nature.



The conference focused on topics such as demos and democracy, freedom, democracy and satyagraha, demagoguery in contemporary India, mutual respect and regard for truth, opportunities for inclusion, Indian legal system, the educational challenge and social movements in contemporary India. The conference included the “Art of Inclusion” Sitar Concert by Dr. Srinivas Reddy, who was accompanied by Hemant Ekbote on Tabla. A documentary, Gandhi’s Gift was screened by the co-producer, Cynthia Lukas.



The conference concluded with speaker-roundtable “Deliberation to Action: How to Build a More Inclusive democracy,” featuring Rajni Bakshi, Rajmohan Gandhi, Devesh Kapur, Anastasia Piliavsky, Tara Sethia and Mrinalini Sinha.



## AHIMSA CENTER DONORS, BIPIN AND REKHA SHAH, SUPPORT A NEW MINOR IN PLANT BASED NUTRITION



“Vegetarian or plant-based food is friendlier to ecology and the environment. Having a plant-based minor should be a good option for students to study and then explore it further for themselves in their careers. If students don’t get exposure to alternative foods, such as plant-based foods, they have not attained the full breadth of knowledge required to know the entire scope of what kind of foods to offer to people,” Shah said. The generous gift by the donors will “jump start” a new minor in the Huntley College of Agriculture at Cal Poly Pomona.

# Ahimsa and K-12 Education

## Fulfilling a Goal

By Donna Hill



One of the most difficult dilemmas we face daily is balancing the stresses of witnessing what is happening in our country and the world with consciously cultivating nonviolent actions and thoughts in our lives. This balance seems increasingly

precarious. As our fast-paced environment has become digital, our stress levels seem to have increased. More and more students complain of being over-stressed, some even suffer from panic attacks. Social media, video games, and other technologies create an external world that fascinates us and dominates our consciousness leaving us no time for reflection, silence, and compassion for self and others.

Many who choose to follow the path of mindfulness and Gandhi's non-violent way of life seek environments of support, but we also may seek to transform the environments where we live and work. It can be a daunting task. Where do we start when our personal growth requires us to expand beyond our classroom and the people in our sphere of influence?

For a few years, it has been my desire to create classes in stress management for students. To prepare myself, I took online certificate classes through PESI, Inc. and Sounds True, participated in conferences with MARC at UCLA, and experienced a variety of mindfulness meditation retreats. I felt ready to begin the work of developing after-school classes. The first person I told was the magnet school coordinator, Jennifer Macon, who recognized the need and was very supportive. The second person I contacted was the magnet counselor, Lori Howe; I shared my ideas and asked if she was interested in teaching the classes with me. This would accomplish two things: first, the counselor would gain the experience and information for herself and could continue the classes; second, having the counselor present might allow parents to feel more comfortable with their teens taking the classes. Not only did Lori agree to co-teaching, but she also went to the principal, Cindy Duong, to get permission. The principal approved us to start in February and even offered to pay me.

As I work on the curriculum I envision covering in the course topics such as the impact of thoughts on behavior, the importance of focus, self-reflection and silence, breathing techniques, awareness of emotions, the fleeting nature of thought, and nonviolent communication skills. However, the challenge is to make the infor-

mation and techniques accessible to teenagers, to keep them interested, and to motivate them to apply what they learn to their daily lives.

Ever since I became an Ahimsa Fellow and attended Ahimsa conferences, I have felt the need to share with students and colleagues the knowledge of a life of nonviolence. I have observed that despite multiple articles on stress reduction and mindfulness in magazines and on social media, few teenagers seem to think they have any control over their own stress levels and personal growth. I intend to see if direct experience through the after-school workshops will make the difference.

*Donna Hill, a 2005 Ahimsa Fellow, has taught high school for 33 years, primarily at Cleveland Humanities Magnet. Though retired, she remains com-*

## Sarvodaya in Practice: A Farm Internship Program

By Andrew Duden



Gandhi taught self-preservation, self-governance and universal edification in the rural villages of India. His desire to lift up the multi-

tudes of India's rural population was born in part out of his reading of John Ruskin's *Unto this Last*, which he translated into Gujarati with the title *Sarvodaya*. Roughly translated, *sarvodaya* means "the uplift of all"—a desire that all people achieve moral, social, political and economic edification. In order to emulate Gandhi and *sarvodaya*, I teach a farm program for high school students at a local farm in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

The Luscher School to Farm Internship allows students to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to grow food on a farm, serving the community in a variety of capacities. *Sarvodaya* at our farm means a positive interdependence among every stakeholder in the program such that everyone involved can see in a simple, fundamental way that the beneficial actions of one actor is essential to the well-being of the entire system. It requires a win-win, non-zero sum game. All participants in the system must be dependent on each other, must hold each other accountable, and must take responsibility for each other in order for *sarvodaya* to be actualized. We call the people in this system "partners" as opposed to competitors.

As *sarvodaya* is nurtured, it means more learning, more growth, and more thriving for everyone involved in the program. Several students were interns last year and during the summer; some have returned for a second year at the farm. This affords

those students opportunity to see a full four-season growth cycle at the farm and to mentor others. We have a farm stand in our local farmers market and provide year-round, organic produce to Hunger Fighters, a local food pantry. We have a "football farm stand" on game nights in the fall. Currently, we are working with other faculty at the high school to create a café for teachers and students to enjoy delicious, farm-to-table lunch offerings. Also, we are now working collaboratively with the Luscher staff to develop a K-12 curriculum where our high school students act as mentors for younger students on the farm. Our students will design the infrastructure of the children's garden, the curriculum, and the mentorship programs to enhance the summer program for pre-K through middle school students.

As Gandhi perhaps envisioned, students become community leaders who are curious about the natural world, creative in their design ideas, and able to work together harmoniously in kinship. The result is farm fresh produce and food products for all members of the community. In this small way, I often bear witness to Gandhi's principle of *sarvodaya*.

*Andrew Duden, a 2011 Ahimsa Fellow, teaches social studies and the Luscher School to Farm Internship at Lake Oswego High School.*

## Mindfulness in Schools: A Path to Swaraj

By Adam Dennis



Anxiety ripples through schools like an electrical current, buzzing from student and teacher to building engineers and custodians; it sizzles in classrooms, hallways, department offices,

and teachers' lounges. Like a virus, it has infected public education at a crisis level. From studies in the UK to polls taken by U.S. teachers' unions to student surveys, it is beyond clear that something must be done to change the culture of stress and anxiety.

It is not enough to offer professional development during an in-service. It is not enough to bring in guest speakers for assemblies. To change stress level in schools, we must change our value systems around work and wellness.

Four years ago I began teaching meditation in my English classes to give students a new life skill: stress management. It was my way of bringing *swaraj* into the classroom through personal transformation. The first five minutes of each class are dedicated to various kinds of meditation. My students consistently have loved this and have asked for longer meditation time as nowhere else in the school day do they learn to breathe and get grounded. Also, each fall I offer mindfulness professional development training



sessions for my district.

However, these are not nearly enough. I'm only one teacher. I see a small fraction of the student population and only about 60 teachers in my professional development workshops.

To create a culture that prioritizes mental and emotional health, schools must create formal mindfulness classes for all students staffed by teachers trained in mindfulness concepts and practice. These classes need a scope and sequence curriculum, budgets, and dedicated school space. These trained teachers can then become mindfulness resources in schools, guiding the staff and administration to implement the concepts in everything from the master schedule to the frequency and ways that meetings will be conducted. Principals who regularly communicate with parents via newsletter or organized chat sessions can emphasize this paradigm shift by giving voice to it on par with college and career readiness, life-long learners, AP/dual-credit/IB classes, etc. A regular, organized meditation time for staff can be built into a schedule in the same way that early releases or late arrivals have been established to accommodate for PLCs in many school districts.

Teachers could learn ways to incorporate mindfulness micro-lessons into their lesson planning. Mindfulness starts organically with one teacher in one classroom. In that one classroom there needs to be a thorough curriculum plan as complete as any for a traditional academic subject. Following this class along with student feedback, the teacher can then work up the chain and around the school to grow a mindfulness program.

Having begun with such an individual classroom practice, I now co-teach a for-credit Mindfulness and Yoga class that accommodates up to 60 students each semester. My next immediate goal is to write a formal curriculum that I can share with others so they may petition their schools to create similar opportunities for students.

Gandhi lived and promoted a sturdy sense of grounded self, where empathy and nonviolence begin. We must give our young people skills to walk their own nonviolent paths through the world, and I think that begins with transforming inner self-violence into healthy self-compassion. Mindfulness in schools is a start.

**Adam Dennis** is a 2015 Ahimsa fellow who has been an English teacher for 17 years. Currently he teaches Sophomore and Junior English classes along with a Mindfulness elective in a small public school just outside of Portland, Oregon.

## Voices of Student Changemakers

By Susan Milan



This month marks a full decade since I received a brief email regarding a fellowship opportunity to study Gandhi and King and to develop lessons rooted in nonviolent social change. My ongoing journey continues to be trans-

formational as I learn and grow with the Ahimsa Institute and connect with so many passionate educators working to bring the principles of nonviolence to our youth. As educators, we are called to action to propel our students into meaningful, productive, and intentional actions, guided and fueled by satyagraha, truth or soul force.

I feel that my most effective professional place is relating directly with the students, striving each day to be a positive force in their lives. Gandhi recognized the importance of youth in positive social change. In *Young India*, he states, "If we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children." It has become my mission and my guiding force to provide space, time, and support for empowered youth to envision and create the world we wish to inhabit.

In addition to teaching middle school science, I have had the opportunity to experiment with a new course this school year: the "Changemakers" class. The course action projects are conceptualized, developed, and led by the students themselves, who feel inspired by lessons I teach on Gandhi, King, and other nonviolent leaders. There are several issues percolating in the hearts and minds of these students, including resource use, inclusivity, books for the library, and perspectives on kneeling during the anthem. This has affirmed for me that by encouraging and facilitating student choice, these middle school students are able to excel beyond typical classroom expectations.

One of their projects is on reducing food waste through a school composting system. Led by two 8th-grade students, this project expands on our district garden program. Adeline and Rain, who began by looking more broadly at reducing waste and then narrowed their focus to food waste after lunch, observed, "We are working on creating a compost system for extra lunch food that kids don't eat at lunch. Having a system that is used for extra food instead of tossing the extra food in the garbage is important because the food we don't eat can actually benefit our school gardens by contributing to a system that makes all the composted food help our plants and later hopefully use the food in our school lunches. Putting food that could be composted in the trash which would later end up in

the landfill, becomes methane, which is a part of climate change."

Another important issue addresses the negative health and environmental impacts resulting from the use of plastics. This project, completely student-led, has developed different branches, including raising awareness and providing reusable water bottles for all students to encourage the "boycott" of single-use plastic water bottles sold in school vending machines. Students have organized themselves and have effectively reached out to our principal and the community to help address this issue. As Audrey states, "Over the past two months our group, the Reducibles, has been figuring out solutions for limiting the use of plastic in our schools." In their effort to make a difference, Camilla adds, "In Changemakers, my group is trying to get water bottles for everyone in 7th to 12th grade. I really do think that our school would benefit from this and so would the planet!" Wesly and Myca explain, "We are working on a way to educate people on the damage that pollution is doing to the ocean. We find it very important that youth educate their peers because if it is coming from an adult it is just another lecture. I really think we're making a change."

The third project group consists of three students who are focused on creating a culture of nonviolence throughout the school. As Mimi, Pearl, and Lily describe, "We are a group that makes posters for our school. The posters are about diversity, bullying, and making people feel better about themselves. Our goal is to help prevent bullying. Also, we are trying to help our school community see that everyone is a part of the same human race and needs to be treated with the same respect."

My work as an educator has become very personal as I focus on creating spaces for youth to feel empowered to "create beauty," as Winona LaDuke, indigenous environmental justice activist and leader, beckons us. This goes well with "be the change" and Gandhi's concept of constructive program. The work is inspired by Dr. Bernard Lafayette's call to action, who was tasked by Martin Luther King, Jr. to "institutionalize and internationalize" nonviolence. In their passionate actions, our youth need us to serve as facilitators, supporters, and mentors. As Gandhi states in *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*, "I have reserved students to the last. I have always cultivated close contact with them. They know me and I know them. I know that they are the hope of the future."

**Susan Milan** has taught for 22 years in the South Whidbey Schools in Washington State. She teaches 7th grade life science. A 2009 Ahimsa Fellow, she has been a facilitator in two institutes.

*K-12 Section continued on page 10*

## Ahimsa & K-12 Education

### Change Agents: Nonviolent Leaders of Tomorrow

By Shara Carder



How can we help the youth of today to become the nonviolent "change agents" of tomorrow? Are the Gandhis of the world an anomaly? Or, are they individuals who learn from

the life experiences of the nonviolent leaders who came before them? In the spring of 2017, such questions weighed heavily on my mind. Donald Trump had become our president and I was overcome with shock and fear for the future.

I shared my concerns with Mari Tapeç, a fellow elementary school teacher at Collins Elementary School. We both agreed that it was no longer enough to educate our students to thrive academically. Our society was desperately in need of a generation of young people who would develop social and political awareness. But how could this be done? We agreed that the best way to help young people develop into engaged citizens dedicated to peaceful change was to give them direct experience in planning and implementing improvement projects in their school and community. In these projects, students would take the leadership roles, teachers as their guides.

With the approval of our proposal from Steve Woo, the principal, the "Change Agents" group was formed. It began with twenty bright, enthusiastic students who were members of "Expect Respect," a team chosen by teachers to perform important duties at school, such as helping on the kindergarten yard during morning recess.

During the 2017-2018 year, the Change Agents planned and initiated four projects, thanks to their enthusiasm and diligence. They also created committees, each responsible for a different project. The projects included "Kindness Week," a week with a different activity each day promoting kindness; "Art by the Trees," monthly art projects for students during lunch recess; and "Buddy Benches," a beautifully-painted bench in the kindergarten playground where a student with no one to play with could go to meet a new friend. The fourth project was the creation of a painted tree where the students wrote and attached short notes to show their support of fellow students at Stoneman Douglass High School. Later in the year, I created an iMovie, featuring these student projects

The Change Agents were quickly proving

that they had meaningful ideas about how to create a kinder, more inclusive school community. I was the teacher responsible for helping the students plan "Kindness Week." For assistance, I reached out the Collins PTA. They promptly responded, volunteering to help the Change Agents during Kindness Week with handing out materials and managing the crowds.

Given the success, Mr. Woo was eager to have the Change Agents continue during the 2018-2019 school year. In accordance with the original plan, the group carried out a community improvement project to support animals in need, collaborating with the Humane Society of Silicon Valley. The Change Agents created activities to give students a chance to help homeless pets and to raise awareness in the school community. Three distinct committees orchestrated the project. One group learned to make pet toys and blankets; they then taught other students to craft these items at the party. A second group decided to create a holiday song and skit about helping homeless pets. A third group raised awareness for pets by asking members of the parent community to bake holiday cookies, and at the party they invited each student to decorate one colorful animal cookie. The Change Agents were filled with energy and enthusiasm on the night of the Holiday Party!

Through such projects, the Change Agents have discovered the joy of planning and implementing projects to help humans and animals alike. One of these students gave testament to this idea, saying, "Being kind is not going to hurt you; it is just going to make you feel better."

*Shara Carder is an educator in the Cupertino Union School District in northern California. A 2011 Ahimsa Fellow, she was inspired to create a student group called "The Change Agents."*

### Design for Good in the Classroom

By Travis Sevilla



I had no idea what to expect when I learned that I would be an Ahimsa Institute Fellow in the summer of 2011. During my time at the institute, my colleagues and I heard from speakers and experts on topics related to Gandhi and Cesar Chavez. We discussed nonviolence as a group of educators, and in our temporary housing we shared our thoughts on how to integrate this new knowledge into our practices. What came of that two weeks has been one

of the most profound and changing experiences for me as an educator and as a person. Today, I now start each class with a mindfulness meditation. Also, I am a better and more compassionate person and teacher. Most profoundly, how I approach the nature of my class has changed.

At a recent conference at the Ahimsa Center, I was honored to share the podium with some fascinating human beings doing amazing things in practices of nonviolence. In my role as a presenter, I shared my thoughts on the impact that Gandhi and the Ahimsa institute have had on my practice, and I spoke about "Designing for Good in the Classroom." The title has a double meaning. On the primary level as an educator and person, it alludes to how I treat, listen to, and feel compassion for my students and coworkers. How I approach mundane tasks like grading has shifted to what I feel is a more compassionate and meaningful method. I have incorporated the previously-mentioned meditations in an effort to help students be more aware and compassionate in their own lives. The second meaning involves the types of projects we tackle. As artists and designers in my digital art and design classes, we are the de facto culture-makers in society, creating all the visual forms of communication going out into the world. This is an area where I feel that putting theory into practice is paramount as the effects are real. In this capacity we engage in collaborative projects with businesses and organizations that have a positive impact on people and or the planet.

"Design for Good" means that creative producers we can make choices in the types of clients with whom we work in order to move forward an agenda of nonviolence. As teachers, we can move toward a more aware generation by getting students to understand the reality of working for corporations that have major impact on the world. To date my students and I have worked with surf-industry companies that use recycled and upcycled materials, with companies that provide wheelchairs and mobility access to people with disabilities, and with environmental and natural resource organizations. "Design for Good" provides an opportunity for students not only to learn art techniques and communication skills but also to learn that their choices matter and that they have the power to impact the world in a positive way.

*Travis Sevilla, a 2011 Ahimsa Center Fellow, is an educator in San Diego California. A lifelong artist, he incorporates his passion for the environment.*

*Travis Sevilla, a 2011 Ahimsa Center Fellow, is an educator in San Diego California. A lifelong artist, he incorporates his passion for the environment.*



# Ahimsa and Community

## The Gandhian Growth Mindset

By Vikas P. Srivastava, M.Ed.



The Gandhian Growth Mindset is a path of personal transformation that supports nonviolent social change. The framework summarizes a shift in focus from political activism to spiritual liberation that characterizes the evolution of Gandhi and other well-known leaders

of nonviolent revolutions. Nonviolence encompasses both social equity and personal growth regardless of where one begins the journey. The pendulum swings between a deepening understanding and broadening application towards the interconnected web of existence. How can we integrate a Gandhian Growth Mindset into K-12 curriculum to foster a continual emphasis on personal growth, resilience, and empowerment embedded in nonviolence and social equity?

The change in Gandhi's primary emphasis from political change to personal growth is reflected in his shift in motivation from attaining the comforts of the privileged to addressing the needs of the most impoverished. Whereas his political activism initially fostered personal transformation, his newfound commitment to personal growth became the most effective leverage for social change. This continuous cycle—embodying the change, embraces discomfort, and empowers the self—is the Gandhian Growth Mindset.

This mindset does not negate the demand for social change. Instead, it shifts the impetus from external entitlement to internal empowerment. Entitlement is a perceived right to a privilege often accompanied by an active resistance to an external force responsible for the denial and distribution of that privilege. Empowerment is an awareness of freedom and resources within oneself accompanied by a resilience towards any inconsistency with the outer world. The act of renunciation and the resulting discomfort both facilitate transformation from entitlement to empowerment and from resistance to resilience by embodying social change without the reassurance of external cooperation. Revolutionary leaders have often commented on the freedom of the soul despite physical imprisonment.

In essence, embodying social change through nonviolence and renunciation embraces discomfort to serve a larger purpose and results in self-empowerment. In K-12 curriculum, this could translate into project-based learning that compels students to seek an acceptable level of discomfort

to address the need for social change. An example is research on a form of violence inherent in the production of a product accompanied by a personal commitment to renounce the use of that specific product. Excelling in education is often equated with the pursuit of comfort and privilege. Discomfort, resilience, empowerment, and social equity should not be seen as in opposition to education.

**Vikas Srivastava**, a 2007 Ahimsa Fellow, is Director of Mindfulness at Legacy Early College Charter School in South Carolina.

## Babies, Tofu, and Mathematics

By Steve Bernstein

Maria, Yasmine and Alma were three of my students. After forty years of teaching challenged teens, I finally landed my dream job: helping pregnant teens and teen moms get



their high school diplomas and move on with their lives.

As we wrapped up our math lesson, Alma asked, "Hey Mister, you wanna have lunch with us? Meet us in fifteen minutes. We gotta check on our babies down in daycare first."

The lunchroom was loud, packed with moms, babies, and expectant moms. I made my way through, high-fiving students. When I passed Mariester's table, she beamed as she held Ralphie and yelled, "Mister, Mister, come see my baby!" I looked into Ralphie's eyes and smiled. He smiled back. "He really likes you, Mister. Here, hold him," Mariester said. Spending time with the moms and their babies was always the best part of my day.

I finally made it to my students' table, but before I had a chance to sit down, Maria announced, "I want you to hold my baby girl too, Mister. Her name is Angel. Come see us after school. I'll meet you here before we go home."

"Sounds good. Let's eat." That Monday the food was mofongo from the Puerto Rican restaurant down the street.

"Mister! Have some mofongo," Yasmine offered. "It's so good. Mi abuela taught me how to make it. I fry platanos and smash them up with chicharrones."

"What's chicharrones, Yasmine?"

"Pig! Puerco!" Yasmine offered me a piece on her fork, "Here, Mister. Try it."

"Oh, no thanks, Yasmine."

"Mister, whassamatter? You don't like our food?"

"Rice and beans, si. Mofongo, no gracias." I opened my lunch box and laid out my meal: a salad with tofu, polenta with roasted tomatoes, and fresh fruit.

Pointing to the tofu, Maria wrinkled her nose and said, "What's that?"

"You think that's nasty? Ladies, you keep telling me how you 'get it' when I teach you something. I'm going to tell you about a time that I learned something new. Thirty years ago a friend invited me to an animal rights meeting."

"Mister, I love, Petey, my Chihuahua. I want him to be happy," Yasmine said.

Deep in thought, Maria asked, "So, Mister, this mofongo, this burrito, this pepperoni. It's *dead* animals. People killed them, Mister?"

"Si. I believe animals are not here for me to eat. They should have the right to live."

"So that's why you eat vegetables and that tofu. I get it. But there's nothing wrong with ice cream, is there, Mister?"

"Maria, I'm not saying anything is wrong or right. That's for you to decide. Do you know where ice cream comes from?"

"Cows, right? From their milk?"

"Exactly. So Maria, you're pregnant, right? How's it feel?"

"I feel sick all the time, like I'm gonna puke. Mostly not too good."

"Yeah, so a female cow has to be kept pregnant all the time so she can have babies and make milk, which goes to humans. That milk is for baby cows. Think about it. Pregnant most of her life. And then what happens? Each calf is taken away, often within hours of birth. You're a mom. How do you think that would feel? Most cows are treated like things, not like living creatures. I decided I didn't want to pay someone to kill animals for me to eat."

"I get it, Mister," Maria said. She put her spoon down in the bowl of melted ice cream and asked, "Can I try that tofu?"

**Steve Bernstein** is a humane educator, special education teacher, animal rights activist and mentor to at-risk teens. In 2017 he self-published his memoir, *Stories from the Stoop*.

## ABOUT THE AHIMSA CENTER

Established in 2003-04 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 in higher education, K-12 education, & community at large.

Educational initiatives of the Center, such as the interdisciplinary Minor in Nonviolence Studies on our campus, help students understand nonviolence and nonviolent social change at intellectual and practical levels and in a global context.

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 conferences, symposia, 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.

### Ahimsa Center

California State Polytechnic University  
Pomona, CA 91768

**Director: Dr. Tara Sethia**  
(909) 869-3868/tsethia@cpp.edu

### Center Hosts Summer Seminar for Educators Leading Projects in Nonviolent Change

In this week-long residential and intensive Ahimsa Summer Seminar, educators were selected to work on their individual projects. They include the following: a book project featuring essays on the teaching and learning of nonviolence, a compilation of select curriculum developed at the past Ahimsa Institutes, development of a course on Mindfulness, a project on art mindfulness and peacebuilding, a Hancock Heroes project to facilitate youth leadership program anchored in values related to ahimsa, a development of course syllabus on school to farm project based on Gandhi's principles of *swaraj* and *sarvodaya*, and a workshop on how to create a dialogue on race.

