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Another Gandhi: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“It is one of the strange ironies of the modern world that the greatest Christian of the twentieth century was not a member of the Christian church” this quote was said by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as part of sermon that he gave on Gandhi (King Jr. 147). This quote says a lot about the view that King had for Gandhi. Had these two men lived during the same time they would have had a lot in common and a lot to talk about together. Both men fought for the people that were considered to be “the least of these,” those that others would consider outcasts or underappreciated in their surroundings (King 184). It has been said that Martin Luther King Jr. was the Gandhi of his time, using peaceful alternatives to help set his people free during the Civil Rights Movement.

While still in seminary Martin Luther King Jr. was introduced to Gandhi through sermons and speeches that he heard during his schooling (King 182). It did not take long for King to be drawn to these writing and the words that he had been told about Gandhi. In fact only five years before the Montgomery bus boycott in which King first read the works of Gandhi in the end reading at least six books total (King 183).

It was said that at the beginning of the movement for African Americans rights had been limited with the only reason for them being taken away was based on the color of there skin. When it came to starting this powerful movement they needed a leader. Looking for “a black Gandhi” to lead there people to freedom. Many men were suggested, but ultimately they needed a born leader with an inner passion. This passion should include

many of the skills that Gandhi himself possessed as well as keeping the peace through this struggle (King 178). Not to much later a decision was reached, to find the perfect man for the job, a young Baptist preacher fresh out of seminary, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the right man for the job.

There was a time in which many African Americans that became leaders of the Civil Rights Movement went to India to see the way in which they handled the earlier conflict. While in India they were welcomed by Gandhi himself. The people on the trip invited Gandhi to come to the United States and help them fight against a different kind of injustice. Gandhi turned them down, telling these people to remember the ways that conflict was handled in India and apply this to their new movement (King 178). This is exactly what Dr. King did when he was placed to lead the movement. He used the information and the knowledge that he gained during his seminary days, the lessons of Gandhi. Gandhi's ideals were tweaked by Dr. King to fit his new surroundings and a slightly different battle. Almost everything that was done during the movement in America was somehow related to what King knew himself about nonviolence and also what he learned from the expert, Gandhi.

King much like Gandhi was a born leader caring more about another then they do about themselves. A scripture that adequately explains both men goes like this, “‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Luke 6:42). Within this passage this shows how both of these men were not only critical of the actions of their people but were just as critical of them. Neither one of them was afraid to admit that they had made a mistake. Along with this they not only ordered other people around them but both of these men

served as the center of the movement leading the way to equality for their people, no matter the consequence. This is the way that both of these men choose to live their life, and even died fighting for a cause that they believed in.

The first link between these two men was when both men were treated poorly because of the color of their skin. Both men were following the law as they had every other day. That is until one day in which one man had to give his seat to a white man while the other who was sitting in his first class seat while wearing his suit was forced to move to third class. This is the point at which both men decided that they were tired of being treated this way and needed to stand up for themselves and others that were treated similarly. No one else can stand up for someone until they are willing to stand up for themselves (Herman 120).

Before you can solve a problem, a person needs to do their research; discovering the back story to the conflict as well as how it affects people. It is at this time that the person knows the struggles of his or her people and can then begin to come up with alternatives to solve the given problem. This research needs to combine how the conflict was started, how are the people involved are being treated, what are the alternatives, and how is every person that wants to be involved? Both men also turned to their faith as another alternative. One a Christian while the other a Hindu both looked to their own faith as a way to solve problems. Another place that was a place of inspiration for both was the words of God as found in the Bible (Herman 120). For in this one book it tells people how to treat one another and how to solve all of our problems.

Both of these men lived an open life, in which people around them always knew what was going on in each of their lives. This was not by choice though, however they both

came to discover that their lives were an open book and because of this they decided that they did not need to have any secrets in both of their lives (King Jr. 152). In fact it is better for the surrounding people to know their name so that they could become household names that seemed to approachable, a person of the people.

Salt March verses the Civil Rights protests. Despite being against the law and persecution could happen to anyone who followed. This did not matter to them, for in their eyes every protest was one step closer to the peace that they wanted in their homeland. However while moving through both of these movements, the people involved were instructed to not hit back. When violence was directed at them, they were to not fight back. They were instructed to simply stand there and take it; for this made a larger impact on the people who were initiating the violence (King Jr. 150).

Before becoming involved in any movement led by either King or Gandhi participants were encouraged to sign a commitment card. This card basically proved that all members involved were truly passionate about the cause. The items mentioned on the card included the ways in which the people should be living their life. Not only during the movement but also included in your every day life. King in particular goes into detail explaining the importance of each component. The most important component of the movement is to keep your faith strong throughout. This should be done through daily meditation on the teachings of Jesus, to also walk and talk in the manner of love (as Jesus taught the disciples), and finally pray that all men would one day be free. Remember to remain nonviolent; you are seeking justice and reconciliation not victory. Sacrifice your own personal wishes so that all men might be free. Be courteous to friends and foes alike, they are people too and nothing is gained from being helpful towards another human being.

Provide acts of service to your community and also to the world. Refrain from acts of violence whether this is from your hand, tongue or heart for all are equally bad. Work towards being health physically, mentally, and spiritually. These are all extremely important to King which is why he had all participants sign this card. And every component of the card comes directly from a lesson that he learned from the master, Gandhi.

Both of these men were inspirational speakers. They knew how to get their messages across and motivate the people around them to join the cause. It only took a small group with a passion and a passionate leader for it to lead to millions and millions of people banning together to protest against unjust causes (King Jr. 150). And more importantly to bring people together that otherwise would be separated. Brothers, sisters, cousins that had been separated by skin color or faith could now unit as brothers and sisters in Christ. “And prevent humiliation and segregation in there own land” (King Jr. 148).

After hearing the words of Gandhi, King said this, “I [King] was to become convinced that Gandhi’s way was the only just and practical way for oppressed people everywhere to overcome social and political injustice” (Herman 121). At the point of peace we will meet physical with soul force which is exactly what Gandhi referred to in his own term, Satyagraha (Herman 121).

The civil rights movement has been described in many ways. It however was interestingly called, “Gandhi’s monsoon, the independence of India, was stirring up tornadoes in America”. This most effectively states that Gandhi not only affected India with his nonviolent acts that spread throughout the world. It was also through Gandhi that King remained his faith in humanity. Including the power of Christian love as a relationship to the people around you and through this love all barriers will cease to exist (Cortright 54).

What impressed King more than anything else was Gandhi's interaction with everyone involved in the India crisis. They won independence without arousing any hatred in the British people. And in the end as Gandhi had predicted, the British gave up and left without any anger or violence. This was also King's goal for the United States, that one day the conflict would be over and there would be no hard feelings. For the "white people" would appreciate their African American brothers and sisters; no anger or violence would exist. We are now done fighting this war and in the end African Americans were given their rights back, King and his followers remained faithful to Gandhianism (Cortright 55).

Two men living at different times and in different places both fought for the rights of the people within their own country. Despite the violence that was directed at them both men remained peaceful. "Neither man ever owned an instrument of violence. And had nothing but love and understanding, goodwill in their heart for the people who they were seeking to defeat them and who were exploiting and humiliating their people" (King Jr. 150). With saying this both men were hated and despised by others. They were afraid of what these two men could do. They had no gun, they never struck a man with a finger, and they banded together and motivated others to fight for a cause that they each felt strongly about.

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