Slow Peace: A Gandhian Inspired Approach to Post Secondary Education

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With thanks to the amazing students who have helped me to think about these issues

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
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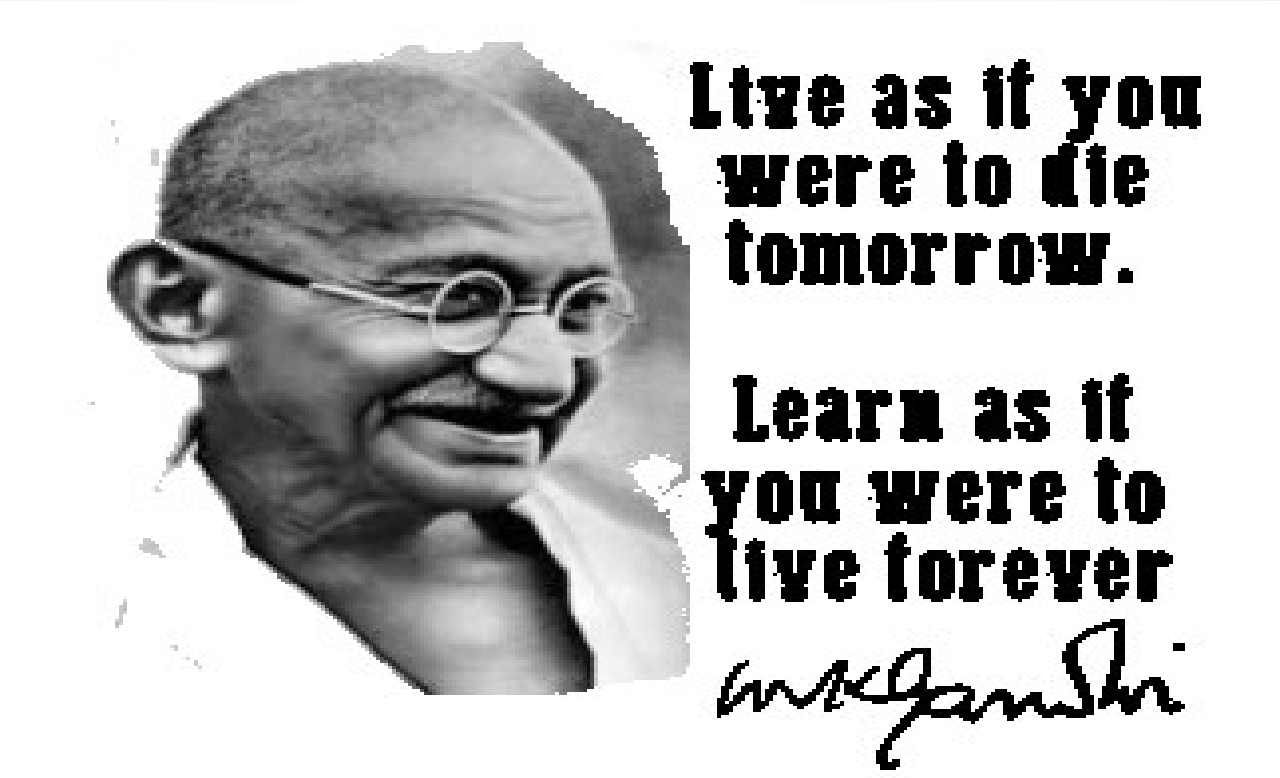
FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

Mahatma Gandhi Summer Institute,

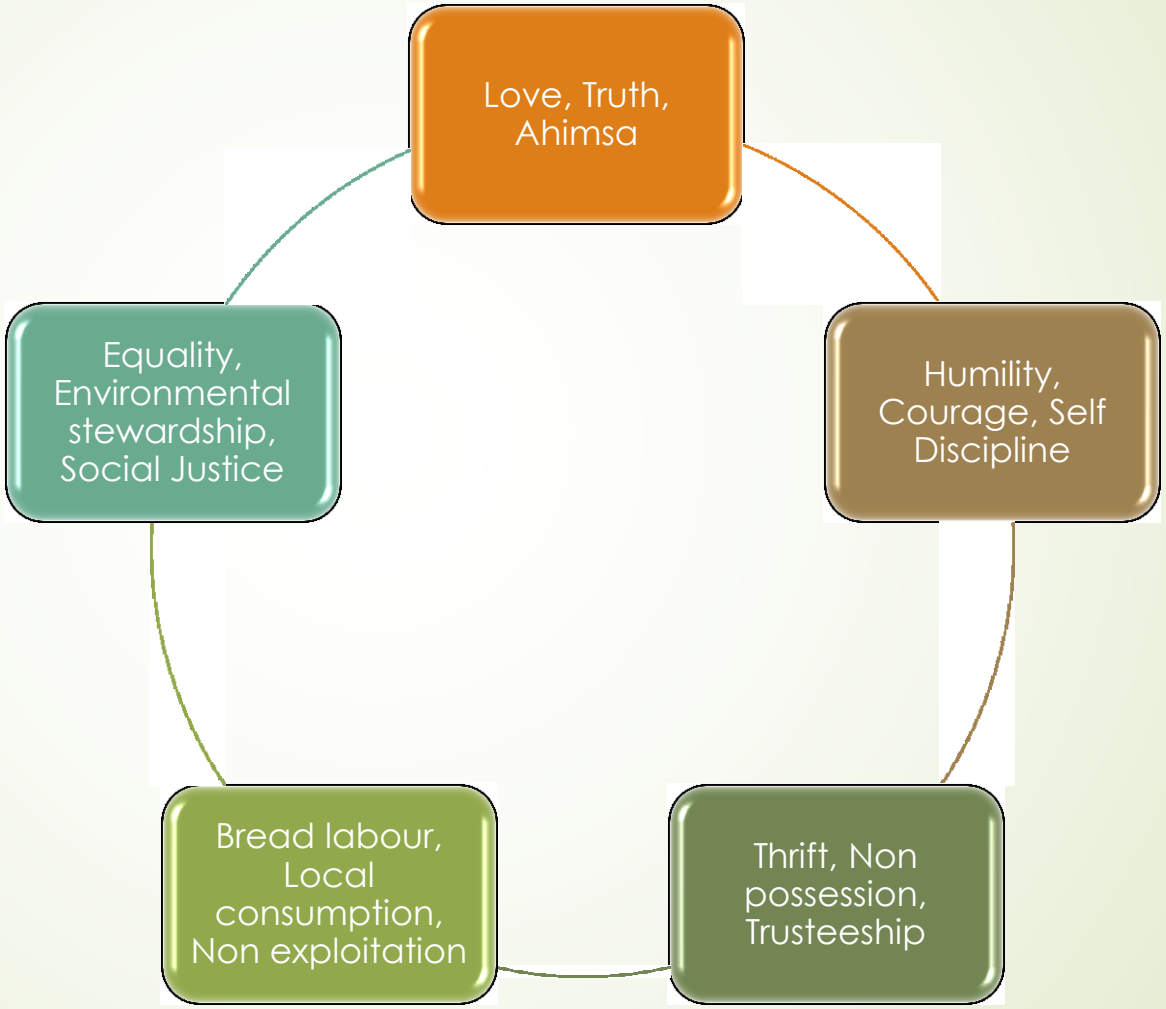
University of Alberta & The Mahatma Gandhi Canadian Foundation For World Peace

- 2 week summer institute
- 10th year
- Toward a Gandhian Pedagogy

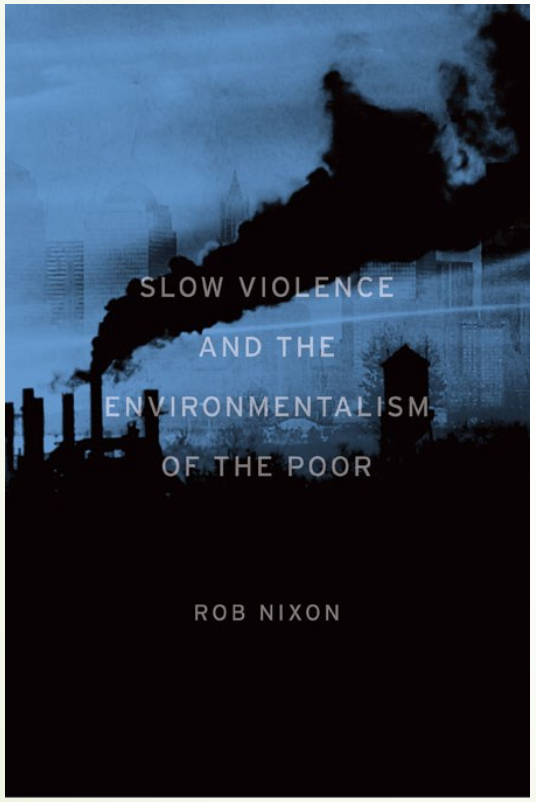
Slow peace


Live as if you
were to die
tomorrow.
Learn as if
you were to
live forever

Key Gandhian Principles



Slow Violence



- a violence that grows gradually & out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all." (Nixon, 2011, p.2)

Slow violence

- slow violence generally happens to people and places that most of the world (read the elites) sees as unimportant
- the people who are most affected are not heard or listened to

Postulates of slow peace

- Our particular approach to peace and nonviolence follows from Gandhian principles, particularly a commitment to ahimsa;
- What gets in the way of realizing ahimsa is the presence of violence. Much of the violence in the world is slow violence that goes largely unnoticed because it happens through practices and processes that are normalized and sanctioned, and primarily affects the most marginalized and dispossessed people of the world;
- Attention to any form of violence necessitates concomitant attention to a practice of nonviolence that would address it;
- Slow peace must begin by stepping back to understand the taken-for-granted practices that contribute to various forms of slow violence with particular attention to the ways in which those practices are embodied in the work we do as educators and researchers;
- It is important to focus on a specific form of violence writ large as well as thinking about day to day practices that sustain this type of violence in one's local context; and
- A recognition that to be effective slow peace requires a commitment to sustained action through a variety of forms and practices.

Ahimsa in a post secondary setting

- Importance of creating relationship
- Creating conditions for intrinsic motivation for learning
- Listening and learning from each other before critique
- Dialogue not debate
- Thinking about and supporting all of the people involved in the teaching and learning of a student
- Creativity and imagination

Enacting Gandhian Transformation Through Dialogue

- *ahimsa* as Gandhi advocated is founded on: a belief in the unity of life, nonviolence in thought, word, and deed, sacrifice of self in the service of others, equity, love of one's opponents, compassion and forgiveness, respect for the just laws of the State, and openness and communication.

Slow violence in post secondary

- Hierarchy and invisibility
- Culture of critique
- Culture of competition (e.g. grading on a curve)
- **What else?????** (In groups think of other examples of slow violence you have encountered in post-secondary and try to think of nonviolent ways to address these)

Returning to Ahimsa

- Ahimsa is the ideal of not doing harm in thought, word, or deed.
- Ahimsa is powerful and it flows around obstacles of small-mindedness, fear, jealousy, anger, conspiracy, and destructive hierarchies.
- Ahimsa leads to the uplift of the whole community.
- Ahimsa insists on the unity of all living beings.
- Ahimsa is love.

“The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would solve most of the world’s problems.”

M. K. Gandhi

Slow peace

unnoticed

it does not seek to announce itself

slow peace

small steps

constant rethinking

continual action

not one thing

or an easily discernible series of steps

demanding

patience

humility

compassion

critique

slow peace

engagement through ahimsa

Thank-you

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Learning to be peace

- Addressing consumerism, egocentrism, and exploitation
- Committing personally and professionally
- Focusing on noticing and taking responsibility

Addressing Barriers and Isolation

- Murals on concrete barricades
- Year-long school-wide peace initiative
- Thanksgiving food drive
- Kindness Boxes
- Peace Quilt

Gandhian principles

- *Ahimsa*
- *Sarvodaya*
- *Aparigraha* or non-possession
- Equality in terms of dignity and status
- Trusteeship
- Non-exploitation