Gandhi: An Apostle of Peace and Nonviolence
Tributes at Fresno State
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“Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”
- Albert Einstein

Mahatma Gandhi, the great spiritual social and political leader of India is considered the most revered figure of the 20th Century. He still is and will remain so because of his message of peace, love and the universal relevance of the principle of nonviolence. Recognizing his immense contribution to freedom struggles across the world, human rights and novel method of mass mobilization (Satyagraha) to fight oppression, the United Nations General Assembly on June 15, 2007 designated Oct. 2nd, Gandhi’s birthday, as International Day of Nonviolence which is now observed by 193 member nations.

Gandhi, who led India to achieve its independence through nonviolent means from British Rule in 1947 influenced and inspired many leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, Dalai Lama, Cesar E. Chavez, Lech Walesa, Aung San Su Kyi and others who carried their struggles based on the philosophy of nonviolence. His moral and novel methods brought down colonialism, imperialism and dictatorships and strengthened the roots of popular sovereignty of civil, political and economic rights. He is regarded as the father of the human rights movement of the 20th century and the patron saint of peace and environmental justice oriented struggles of the modern era. The original phase of Arab Spring and the Occupy movement in USA got inspiration from Gandhi and used nonviolent tactics in their overall approach.

Though born in India on Oct. 2, 1869 and known as the father of Indian Nation, Gandhi really belongs to the whole humanity because of the universality of his message and teachings which have special significance and relevance in today’s troubled world mired in religious hatred, political division, racial prejudice and human exploitation. Dr. King spoke of Gandhi: "Gandhi was inevitable. If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk."

Though Gandhi's birthday has now become an international observance, Fresno State has been commemorating his birthday since 1990 with a powerful message of “Stop the Hate, Stop the Violence, Build a Culture of Peace.” In his Proclamation, Dr. Joseph I Castro, President of California State University, Fresno declared that our campus community will join the world community to honor Mahatma Gandhi on his 145th birthday on Thursday, Oct. 2 with a candle light vigil for world peace at 7:30 pm in the Peace Garden and through the community celebration which starts at 9:30 am on Saturday, Oct. 4th in the Peace Garden. In the City of Fresno's Proclamation, Mayor Ashley Swearengin and the City Council of Fresno have declared Mahatma Gandhi's birthday as “Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Day” in the City of Fresno. The celebration at Fresno State includes a garlanding and flower ceremony, musical tribute, cultural dances, guided meditation and a pledge against hate. Many community and civic leaders have been invited. Join us to celebrate the 145th birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, the patron saint of the Peace movement and Father of the Human Rights movement in the 20th century. Admission is free. Call 559-435-2212 for additional information and to get a campus parking code for the Oct. 2nd candle light vigil event.