

The 2023 Gandhi, Mandela, King Conference Resolutions

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Generic Resolutions (09 June 2023)

WHEREAS, in the history of late 19th century and 20th century history of struggle for peace and justice through nonviolent means and action,

- Mahatma Gandhi is internationally recognised, revered and followed, as an icon of nonviolent resistance, mobilisation and action against the brutal colonising, exploitative and repressive and suppressive British empire, both in South Africa and in India;
- Martin Luther King Jr. is internationally celebrated as the icon of civil rights, social justice and equity in the nonviolent struggle against the United States of America's history of slavery, federal and state black repression and repression of citizens, as well as the international wars perpetrated on citizens of other parts of the world, similar to other world powers; and
- Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela is internationally honoured and esteemed for his struggle for a free and fair, liberated South Africa, his struggle for the establishing of South Africa is a constitutional democracy with a system of national, provincial and local levels of government and an independent judiciary, as well as his catalysing of national reconciliation and negotiation for peace, equity, justice, and the universal recognition of the human dignity of all, and nation building,

THEREFORE,

Congress RESOLVES to,

- Lead, Conduct and Support scholarship, research and decolonising knowledge generation and education, of the highest international standards, concerning the formative and innovative contributions of Gandhi, Mandela and King, to the world's histories of struggle for peace and justice for all, through *Satyagraha*, or truth force, for nonviolent change (*Ahimsa*);
- Promote, further, and create, and deploy the requisite media to advance the intergenerational shared vision of Gandhi, Mandela and King for the achievement of world-wide peace and justice for all and a world free of all forms of exploitation, repression, suppression and oppression, in constructive and contextually-relevant ways;
- Educate, mentor and guide, and train leaders of the future who are inspired by Gandhi, Mandela and King, for accountable, ethically humanizing leadership according to conscious African cultural mindsets of healing, service to community, as well as communal self-sufficiency (*swadeshi*), self-rule or self-governance (*Swaraj*) as forms of self- and communal empowerment, and co-operative and communitarian living (*Sarvodaya*).
- Intellectualise, conscientise, sensitize, and inculcate ideas and practices of critical analysis, similar to Gandhi, Mandela and King – including their own lives, conduct, attitudes and perceptions –, and intervention, education and mobilisation of scientifically-informed, ethical action, concerning the most prevalent forms of people's social suppression and suffering, due to gender-based violence, all forms of racism, and class exploitation, so as to foster healthy senses of identity, religious and cultural inclusivity, family values, and the use of media as a tool to address GBV, ethnicity and otherness;
- Foster thought, scholarship, language and teaching and learning on human rights, in terms of the legacies of Gandhi, Mandela and King, that serve emancipation (equal rights and good labour), the ethics of human dignity and rights, nonviolence, peace, and service to community, and

collective nonviolent action, through non-retaliation, non-resistance, decolonial agency that regenerate ecosystems and vegetarianism, amongst others;

- Educate, raise awareness and mobilise for nonviolent resistance and nonviolent methods of conflict resolution as humanising processes, to address various forms of conflict and oppression, including mobilisation at grassroots, so as to use community-level actions in driving broader social transformation, or generate social transformation from below, and the fostering of love and interconnectedness;
- Decolonise education which among others involve to develop syllabi, curricula and courses about Gandhi, Mandela and King, that involve both humanistic approaches of pedagogy, methodology, media as well and content knowledge, including knowledge of leadership and leadership skills, *Ubuntu*-founded and *Ubuntu*-inspired ethical conduct and behaviour, resolving conflict in community through nonviolent means, liberation pedagogies that foster critical thinking and social transformation and not conformity, generating knowledge at grassroots levels, from, with, and by and for the people, so as to achieve human psychological freedom, truth, peace, and transcendental energy.
- Advise that all future GMK scholarly conferences need to take place within interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary as well as social media, and digital and cyber technology thematised evidence-based research frameworks, as per the Youth Symposium resolutions.

Below, we provide a summary as we have received the resolutions from the roundtables on their deliberations and decisions and proposals concerning the conference topic: Peace and Justice for all: Mobilising for Nonviolent Change (*Ahimsa*)¹.



¹ Verbatim transcripts of each of the Roundtable resolutions will also be published together with the respective volumes.

Resolutions on Seminal Programme Topics

Youth Symposium (06 June 2023)

The key resolutions that emerged from the Youth Symposium panels, are as follows:

- Education – There was a strong call for the decolonisation of the education system, coupled with the need for creating a curriculum that is in line with that decolonisation process. There is a need to upskill young people and using education as a tool to achieve social justice.
- There is also a need for intergenerational conversations. This means, while there is a need for the youth to lead, there is a strong need for intergenerational cooperation and engagement in building a more cohesive education and scholarship and research culture and future.
- There is a need to study and change, structural and institutional violence, inherited from the colonial and apartheid eras, and not just focus on the symptoms of violence.
- There is a need to focus in the decolonising of education, in respect of the protection of gender rights, especially for young girls and women.
- Climate change is a key issue that needs to be engaged and addressed globally, and especially for communities vulnerable to climate change.
- There is also a need for taking small actions in addressing the day-to-day challenges, similar to how Gandhi, Mandela and King did so.
- Finally, as per the original GMK2023 CfP and the closing address by Mr. Keshav Gupta, all future GMK scholarly conferences need to take place within interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary as well as social media, and digital and cyber technologies research frameworks.

**Conference Academic Roundtables
(08 – 09 June 2023)**

**ROUNDTABLE 1: GMK, their Vision/s for the
World, and Communication Technologies/ eMedia in the
21st Century**

- a) Gandhi, Mandela and King, during their lifetimes and in their activisms, represented and intervened on behalf of the marginalized, excluded, downtrodden and suppressed. In various ways they realized part of their visions of transforming the plight of the oppressed to equity and equal opportunity, become a reality in India, the USA, and South Africa. They used the media in their struggles for democracy, equity and social justice. The legacy of these media, e.g. *Indian Opinion*, must be continued.
- b) Attendees need to explore the critical position of all forms of alternative media, ranging from the uses of indigenous languages in community newspapers (thinking of democratizing spaces) to social media, and the internet, for purposes of,
- i) conscientising those in power about the plight of the poor and oppressed, so as to put systems in place to improve their quality of life;
 - ii) mobilising the marginalised, poor and oppressed, at grassroots levels, to work together in their own communities, in non-racial ways, so as to improve their quality of living, related to health, education, the environment, and general human wellbeing;
 - iii) giving voice to/ amplifying the voice of the marginalised with effective media structures – i.e. that serves as links between the lives of people and the distribution of useful information in their own areas;
 - iv) empowering rural people and people in townships who, even though they are citizens, and therefore equal in a non-racial state, still suffer under the colonial-inherited ‘decentralized’ ‘power’ dating from colonial times (Mamdani);

v) exploring historical success in utilizing vernaculars/ indigenous languages for the improvement of the quality of life and education of people; and

vi) fostering gender inclusivity, socially and economically, and politically.

The ideas and values of these great icons of the struggles for freedom, must be taken to the community.

c) We need to start alternative media/ community newspaper systems in hardcopy and online, with information that will be useful and inspiring to the poor, oppressed and marginalised. We need initiatives that can serve as hubs to generate content for local, national and international distribution.

d) We need to add other significant leaders in South Africa, to the significance of Gandhi, Mandela, and King, and then too, also not just ‘praise’ them for their very significant achievements, but also critically engage with their thought, and this must start with demythologizing the three.

ROUNDTABLE 2: GMK, and Sustainable Self-rule Governance and Development

a) Governance and government leadership have become capitalistic and have lost the heart for human value which was visible in the leadership/ lives of the three icons. The issue is to connect with and use African mindsets/ worldviews in leadership and administration. The principles and values or ethics of the three icons can be used as a source of inspiration for ethical humanizing leadership where equality is practiced and not just spoken about. Leaders should be kept accountable.

b) Gender, health and governance in Africa should be conscious of African cultural mindsets and healing systems – as became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, there was a massive move of people back to the African cultural values. Health service providers should have a connection with indigenous cultural mindsets. There is need for mutuality between western and indigenous health systems, especially in health. We

need to design ways and means and also through advocacy, implement the use of traditional medicines in formal institutions like clinics and hospitals, and also allow traditional healers, to practice in clinics and hospitals.

c) Leaderships and governance system should promote Gandhian '*swadeshi*', i.e. that one should be self-sufficient, and emphasize manual labour for one's own wellbeing, and use of resources develops oneself. Dependence on the outside world should be minimised or eradicated. *Swaraj*, ('self-rule' or 'self-governance', is a doctrine that empowers people, not to be dependent on outside forces, for their own wellbeing, that can be used to manipulate and control them – like British colonialism during Gandhi's time. It relates to means of subsistence as well as structures and ways of self-governance.

d) Imbalances and inequalities or access to resources, in society should be minimized. If resources only exist in one sphere, there will be push factors to access these resources. There is need for an equilibrium of access to resources, to have real peace. The gap between the rich and poor must be closed and balanced to have an equilibrium. There is need for an equilibrium in nature for the control of climate impacts and the production of food.

e) On nonviolence – violence is even more prevalent in today's world than in Gandhi's. There is need for an education system, a government system and social systems that promote non-violent means to resolve conflicts. This also applies to non-violent access of natural resources, which means that if nature is not cared for and nurtured, all people might perish.

f) In view of points 7.2 a) – e) above, democracy as it is implemented in Africa, is a problem. It functions more like a system from outside Africa, which actually continues to enforce western and colonizing systems, and not as a system that cultivates self-rule and self-subsistence.

In African democracies, elected leaders from the citizenry become corrupt, and then seek to stay on in power once elected, and do not want to serve their country through integrative democratic systems. This raises questions about how traditional African systems of self-governance could be integrated and deployed as part of modern African constitutions, so as to prevent forms of corruption and related excesses.

g) Elected leaders must be educated about the fact that they can only be re-elected, if they are honoured by the people, in terms of the lived experience of the people.

h) *Sarvodaya* and co-operative and communitarian living: The ideals of Phoenix settlement and the lived experience of people in communal living must be explored, as these aim at the ‘upliftment of all’ equally, and the equal ‘progress of all’.

i) People who foster communal living, will practice the inclusive ethics for which Gandhi, Mandela, and King stood for – each in their own ways – and support and uplift the poor, develop communities, accept and accommodate migrants, prevent forms of ‘afro-phobia’ and xenophobia, that are caused by the competition for low-paying jobs, limited good in poor and poverty-stricken communities, at micro scales. At macro-scales, Africa exports its raw materials through corrupt practices, which only come back to Africa in processed forms, and which are too expensive to buy or acquire for poor Africans.

j) The Gandhi Centre in Pietermaritzburg to become a Centre for KZN community engagement and activism, similar to the Ujamaa Centre, to engage the above topics, but and especially also concentrating on education for Peace and Justice and Nonviolence.

k) Academics to influence the decolonizing of education, and curriculum transformation to include the ideals and values of GMK as exemplified in this conference.

l) We need a massive drive of literature in different languages on GMK.

ROUNDTABLE 3: GMK, Women, Health, and Equity in Governance and Economic Education

The subject of women, health and equity in governance and economic education is a serious human rights issue that does not only require us to address it from a nonviolent perspective but through a holistic approach that would embody all facets of life. So, issues concerning women, health and governance, are human rights issues.

In this roundtable, there were a variety of papers that touched on a number of issues such as Gender-based violence, racism, identity, class, religious inclusivity, use of media as a tool to address GBV, ethnicity and otherness.

Some of the recommendations, include the following:

- a) The GMK2023 conference has brought to the fore the thought, lives, work and accomplishments of these icons of the struggle against a wide variety of forms of oppression, for liberation and freedom. There is now a need to move forward and bring the works of these legends into different contexts. Who is Mandela, Ghandi and King to the women, youth, people of other ethnicities and identities, poor communities and others living on the margins of society today? We need more scholarly work on this matter, so as to expand their significance for people the world over, including marginalised ethnicities.
- b) How can we respond to the critical thinking of these great legends as scholars from our own social local situations, contested spaces and different cultural value systems? We need more scholarly research and reflection on this focus – not just historically, but contextually, as these manifest in contemporary realities.
- c) How does GMK’s critical thinking, teach about social cohesion?
- d) GBV can be viewed as a pandemic in some contexts. Can the UN alone be viewed as a catalyst for addressing GBV, or, is it possible to explore how the legacies of Gandhi, Mandela and King can serve education and upliftment about GBV? We need more scholarly reflection on this, given the complexities of their own lives.
- e) The roundtable calls for the promotion of a social campaign and the use of social media to address GBV in the broader framework of Women’s Health and wellbeing.
- f) Since the roundtable focuses on women, it is imperative, that the voices of the wives and female members of the families of these great men could be used for the promotion of the health and wellbeing of women.

- g) Following on e), the roundtable decided that this matter must be centrally engaged in, in the next GMK conference. What were these women's contributions, in the making of these three great men? The inclusion of the women would also help to demonstrate the contributions of these women to the values of family, national and global life.

ROUNDTABLE 4: GMK, Human Rights, and Nonracial Global Peace and Justice through Nonviolent Action

- a) Gandhi is a seminally significant figure in world history, for his thought and teachings about collective nonviolent action, as a response to the institutionalised racism he experienced on the Pietermaritzburg train station.
- b) It is important to pursue Gandhian principles of nonviolence, and non-retaliation, non-resistance, and vegetarianism, amongst others.
- c) Ghandhi, Kallenbach, and Tolstoy's message of emancipation (equal rights and good labour), the ethics of human dignity and rights, nonviolence, peace, and trusteeship are needed in all our societies and especially in South Africa, where corruption is rife.
- d) Scholarship about how nonviolence (*Ahimsa*) is superior to violence, should be developed, especially in our thinking through and developing of programmes of decolonial agency that regenerate ecosystems and transform our society.
- e) The human conflict with the environment needs to be engaged at all relevant fronts, and people need to devise ways and means to work together constructively, using integrated principles, techniques, and technologies that are transdisciplinary and trans-epidemic.
- f) The need for linguistic justice. There is a need to bridge the language policies and curriculum towards a fostering of understandings and practices of non-violence in communities and societies (South Africa).
- g) To engage a) – f) above, we need to i) contextualize the principles and

philosophies of Mandela, Gandhi, and King; which will ii) require re-reading the constitutions and laws of our countries in ethical ways; and iii) explore how citizens could be intentionally educated in terms of these values.

- h) In continuing scholarship, and conferences, we need to rekindle the visions for peace, justice and reconciliation – Mandela’s vision.
- i) And, since there was an imbalance in celebrating our heroes – at this conference, Gandhi featured most – we need to also put greater emphasis on the legacies of Mandela and King. In this regard, in future, a visit to Mandela Capture site, close to Pietermaritzburg, is imperative. Sections of future programmes could be at the capture site.
- j) There is a need for a longer conference, so that there is ample time to both deliver papers and for attendees to engage presenters and their papers, as well as each other. We need more time to engage the issues that were raised at the conference, throughout the week.

We call for education and dialogue with the view of empowering people to know that non-violence and human dignity are superior to violence.

ROUNDTABLE 5: GMK, and How to Understand, and Intervene in World and Regional Conflicts through Nonviolence

a) A central theme across various presentations in this roundtable, is the *use of nonviolent resistance and conflict resolution to address various forms of conflict and oppression*. As expected at a conference such as this, nonviolent methods of conflict resolution were highlighted as effective strategies for achieving peace and justice.

b) *Education and Awareness*: Several presentations touched upon the role of education and increased awareness in promoting nonviolence, conflict resolution, and social transformation. Whether through peace education programs like the Alternatives to Violence Project, the educational role of Reggae music, or the importance of understanding the role of mass media in

conflict, presentations underscored the power of education as a tool for change. Education provides powerful tools to overcome conflict.

c) A central focus should be the *exploration and support of grassroots movements and change from below*. Echoing the bottom-up approaches championed by Gandhi, King, and Mandela, the conference emphasizes the power of individual and community-level actions in driving broader social transformation. This focus reinforces the idea that sustainable change often emerges from the ground up, guided by the collective efforts of local communities. This was also emphasised in keynote 3, by Dr. Johnny Mack and several other speakers.

d) The themes of *love and interconnectedness* also surfaced in some of the presentations, and this again resonated with some of the keynote presentations at the conference. These themes also speak to the importance of *humanising processes* in conflict transformation and social change.

ROUNDTABLE 6: Learning and Teaching about Gandhi, Mandela and King

a) The current education system in South Africa, needs to be liberated. We need to develop the form and content of knowledge about Gandhi, Mandela and King, so that it could be used in education across curricula. This will start to re-dress the fact that there is limited content and exposure to the 3 icons in the syllabus and curriculum at school and higher education levels. It will also provide a decolonizing approach and system that may be used to engage transformation in education, and the points raised below.

b) Generically, the same is true about the teaching about and learning about knowledge of leadership and leadership skills in school and higher education levels. Specifically, work related to the leadership of Gandhi, Mandela and King, within their own historical contexts, and how it relates to the resolving of conflict, peace and justice, and how to achieve these ideals through nonviolent means, may serve the development of such curricula and syllabi.

c) There is also a very limited exposure of children and students to morality

and values as well as a framework for ethical behavior, in primary, secondary and tertiary curricula and syllabi rooted in African worldviews and culture. Relatedly, there is also limited content and exposure to acceptable social behavior and soft skills required for community development and nation-building. On this, the *Ubuntu* principles should become more prevalent in education, and the understanding of 'I am because we are' – *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (isiZulu)/ Motho ke motho ka batho (SeSotho)*. Further research and collaboration are needed to address these focuses.

d) The current education system leads to a negative learning environment based on conformity. The roundtable calls for a decolonising and liberation education that adopts technology to enhance creativity and independent learning. Liberation education resonates with the American Freedom Libraries initiative which provide access to knowledge, and to marginalized communities. Liberation education also has to be actionable, so that the learning of peace, non-violence, and social skills through the peace learning circles initiatives at the school level, could be taught and practiced. Not conformity, but creativity is needed.

e) GMK legacies, museums, archives and libraries for decolonial intellectualising and teaching and learning. The decolonial has become a very, very important approach for opening-up creative intellectual spaces for knowledge transformation and knowledge generation in the global South. There must be increased access to knowledge for the marginalized, across the spectrum of education.

f) To achieve human psychological freedom, truth, peace, and transcendental energy are crucial. Humanistic approaches are required to resolve issues of injustice even within legal frameworks. And, ultimately, a healthy mind leads to a healthy body which in turn leads to positive thinking.

g) There is a need for the development of the network of anybody who is interested in teaching and learning to come forward and educate people as a community of practice

Revolutionary Values and their Practical Implementation

- a) All forms of racism and economic exclusion must be analysed and addressed, from perspectives of revolutionary values.
- b) There is a need to work towards achieving the goals of the National Development Plan in South Africa, the UN Millennium Goals, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- c) There must be a monitoring and evaluation plan put in place to measure achievements.
- d) There must be a committee, to develop strategic partnerships, and action plans.

The Way Forward

The conference calls for more scholarship and research and scholarly engagements of the topics of the conference.

The conference calls for the organisers to pursue organising a similar conference in other relevant parts of the world, and at planned intervals, (every two years?) in Pietermaritzburg.

We call on all available recordings of conference presentations to be made available online.

We call on the organisers to pursue the publication of all keynote papers and presentations, and their distribution internationally.

Conclusion

In the interest of the spreading of world peace and justice through nonviolent means programme, and given the institutional and institutionalising dynamics related to the lives and work of Gandhi, Mandela and King, and the numerous foundations and institutions in their name,

Congress calls on,

planned research emanating from the conference, as well as future conferences and research, for nonviolent peace and justice, that seek to optimally involve all these organisations, including as many scholars, organic and public intellectuals as well as peace and justice through nonviolence activists, as possible, from all over the world.

Scholarship and Knowledge connected to the beginnings and continued legacies of Gandhi, Mandela and King, related to peace and justice through nonviolent means, need to be formatively and innovatively developed that may be integrated into existing and newly-founded educational syllabi, curricula, and courses for all age groups, across the teaching and learning landscapes, globally.

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