

2007 GANDHI AWARD ESSAY ENTRIES

High School ...

Second Prize

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Grade - 11

Mahatma Gandhi was born in India under British rule, yet died in the free nation of India. Gandhi's principles of civil disobedience inspire the world to uphold their own principles without surrender. Often mistaken for a passive resistance, civil disobedience is essentially nonviolent opposition. Followers of civil disobedience feel justice cannot be achieved by using the same means necessary that inflicted the injustice in the first place. This form of protest is a long process, but ensures equality eternally. Followers do not use anger, swearing, or violence because any unjust means of retaliation means giving up purpose the fight. Instead, civil disobedience followers must endure the suffering of others and defend their principles with their life, a form of martyrdom which the followers have everything to lose, including their property, loved ones, and life for their values.

"Peace will not come out of a clash of arms but out of justice lived and done by unarmed nations in the face of odds."

Mohandas Gandhi was studying law at an early age when he was transferred to a firm in South Africa where he was beaten by white authorities, told to take off his turban, and was forced to face other racial injustices. Five years later, Gandhi began teaching his philosophies of nonviolent protest, which transformed the masses to demand their liberties because they refused to be referred to as merely Indian immigrants. When Gandhi traveled back to India, the British rule was unjust towards Indians, who wanted their independence. Seeing that non violent protest worked in South Africa (which recognized certain Indian rights after Gandhi's opposition), Gandhi spread a nationwide

movement against the British. Along with patience, on August 15, 1947, the people of India recognized the sacrifice of their lives was worth the independence of their country.

Mohandas Gandhi's influence on Indian independence has inspired many people worldwide to use non cooperation by means of non violent protest to achieve equality. Especially important in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's was Martin Luther King Jr.'s non violent speeches and influence on the masses. Because of bus boycotters such as Rosa Parks, along with the Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee, the protests of the blacks led to racial equality. These protests have not only affected those in need of equality, but also the people who disagree with the decisions of the government. From the Vietnam War to the War in Iraq, non violent protest has been used as an attempt to bring peace about nations along with an effort to bring soldiers home from war. Civil disobedience is an outlet for many citizens to voice their beliefs without aggression. With principles such as self sacrifice and self restraint, non violent protesters are regarded with respect for upholding their values based on truth and justice. Civil disobedience is the most powerful weapon used against an enemy. The use of the masses putting their lives on the line to fight for their beliefs never fails.