

Arun Gandhi Visits Ottawa, Canada March 15

by Koozma J. Tarasoff,
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On March 15, 2009, I had a chance to meet Arun and hear his talk at the [Global Peace and Prosperity Rally](#) held at the [Canadian Montessori Academy](#) in Ottawa, Canada. This was one of many simultaneous prayers being held around the world networked as the [United Prayer to Stimulate Economy From the Ground Up](#).

[Arun Manilal Gandhi](#) (born April 14, 1934, Durban, South Africa) is the fifth grandson of Mohandas Gandhi through his second son Manilal. Following the footsteps of his grandfather, he is also a socio-political activist, although he abstains from following the ascetic lifestyle of his grandfather.

Since 1987, Arun and his entire family have been living in the United States where he founded the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Non-Violence hosted by the Christian Brothers University, a Catholic academic institution. This institute was dedicated to applying the principles of nonviolence to both local and global situations.

As the featured guest

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Global Interfaith Prayer Rally

March 15th

"Be the change
you wish to see
in the world."

M. K. GANDHI

Event poster



speaker, Arun shared his learning from his grandfather with whom he lived from 1946 until his assassination in 1948. Essentially his grandfather impressed on him three major lessons:

1. He said that 80 percent of hatred and anger leads to violence. Hence we need to manage anger so that we do not escalate the problem. Instead we need to discover ways of using this 'energy' positively. Grandfather reminded us that anger is like electricity: 'Use the energy wisely for the good of humanity.'

When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in 1948, Arun felt extreme anger and wanted to take revenge on the assassin immediately. Then he remembered his grandfather's words: 'Never react immediately in anger.' First stop, then find a solution. Following that, Arun returned to South Africa and worked for almost 20 years before moving to the USA.

2. The concept of '[ahimsa](#)' or non-violence is central to the Gandhian approach of overcoming evil with good. Mahatma continued to remind us that violence is a learned experience —

Arun Manilal Gandhi



Vasko Delev and family meet Arun Gandhi

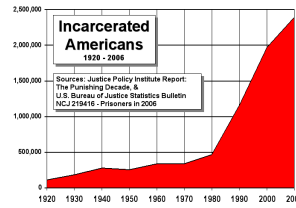


Grandfather William Commanda, Circle of Nations elder



Montessori student waters tree that Grandfather Commanda planted

and this behaviour can be unlearned. Once people learn not to hate, but to love one another, then there is no need to destroy the other person. There is no need for wars.



Click image for prison population statistics

3. And here the Golden Rule comes into full play as we do unto others what we would want others to do unto us. Having witnessed India's struggle to free itself from British rule, Arun saw the first-hand effects of a national campaign for liberation which was carried out through both violent and nonviolent means. These events strongly influenced him.

The importance of building relationships is the last message that we need to pay attention to, according to his grandfather, said Arun. Relationships require respect, understanding, and appreciation for our equal humanity. His grandfather said this appreciation is a selfless action and is an attitude of concern for all. Our task is to get people to become better citizens.

Once we understand these lessons, says Arun, the big task follows. 'We have to change ourselves if we want to change the world.' Here we need to understand

ourselves and our role in it. We need to remember that there are two types of violence: Physical and passive. Passive violence, for example, includes stereotyping, name calling, keeping people in poverty because of inequality and greed, putting down people in positions of power, doing harm to our earth with pollution, and using more resources than we need. And much more. These are not easy concepts to deal with for it involves personal introspection and responsibility.

For example, 'prisons,' Arun's grandfather used to tell him, 'should not be a place where we punish people, but a place where we reform them.' Today in the USA, says Arun, the prison and justice system is in need of major reform. Well over 7 million people were behind bars, on probation or on parole. In other words, more than 1 in 100 American adults are incarcerated today, [1 in 100 American people](#).

In addressing the meeting in the Montessori School, Arun directed his attention to the teachers and the students. 'We just don't pay enough attention in teaching children how to deal with anger. I believe that anger management and understanding anger should be a compulsory subject from elementary level right up to university.'

A touching experience at the

meeting was a seeding ceremony on stage with children surrounding a 95-year-old Native elder and wise-man Grandfather William Commanda who recently received an Order of Canada recognizing his contributions to peace and environment. Grandfather Commanda seeded a tree in a large pot as students watered it. Symbolically this was an act of seeding good ideas for the building of an environment for peace and goodwill on planet earth.

The Montessori organizers were creative in organizing this event. Admission was free, but the ticket read: 'Please contribute your idea to attract PROSPERITY. Write it on the back.' I did and it along with two other ideas were chosen to be read at the end of the meeting. My message read: 'Create a Department of Peace in Canada.' There were initial chuckles in the audience and then applause.

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