

Organization for Minorities of India

Dear Elected Official:

Thank you for taking time to consider a different perspective on the Sacramento Gandhi statue issue.

We have prepared this packet to help people understand the issue. Inside this package you will find the following contents:

1. A letter introducing the topic.
2. Information about Gandhi's promotion of segregation at the Durban post office in South Africa.
3. A black South African journalist's view on Gandhi.
4. The sworn, notarized statement of an American woman whose husband was killed by rioting followers of Gandhi.
5. A summary of the current situation of religious freedom in India and Indian minority leaders' views on Gandhi's contributions to that situation.
6. A copy of *Gandhi Under Cross-Examination* by retired U.S. Army Col. G. B. Singh and Dr. Tim Watson with a foreword by renowned Martin Luther King, Jr. scholar Dr. Lewis Baldwin. This book has been made part of the curriculum at prestigious African-American educational institutions like Spelman College in Atlanta and Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

We ask the reader to review these materials with an open mind. After letting the facts speak for themselves, the reader will likely agree that a statue of Gandhi in Sacramento would court unprecedented controversy.

For an even deeper analysis of Gandhi's life, we recommend G. B. Singh's *Gandhi: Behind the Mask of Divinity* (Prometheus Books, 2004). This can be purchased at Amazon.com or any major book retailer.

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To whom it may concern:

We are writing in opposition to a movement to honor Mohandas Gandhi, the internationally known Indian leader. One segment of the local Indian population wants to place a statue of Gandhi's likeness on the grounds of the California State Capitol. Yet as members of California's large community of Indian minorities, we are compelled to strongly protest this statue.

Books such as *Gandhi: Behind the Mask of Divinity* (Prometheus, 2004) and *Gandhi Under Cross-Examination* (Sovereign Star, 2009) have revealed how Gandhi acted upon a deep-seated prejudice against the black South Africans and the various minorities of India. One of his most notable legacies was the damage he did to these minority communities, which was so extensive after his 21 years in South Africa that black South African journalist Sentletse Diakanyo reached a startling conclusion. In a 2008 article for the *Mail & Guardian*, Diakanyo stated: "The greatest injustice against the struggle for liberation of black people was the projection of Mahatma Gandhi as committed to a cause against segregation."

While he lived in South Africa, Gandhi regularly wrote diatribes against the black natives, describing them to his Indian readers as lazy, incompetent, sex-obsessed and a danger to Indian society. He lobbied political and social bodies to expand segregation by removing the blacks from proximity to the Indian population. The source for these claims is Gandhi's original writings from the era, which were compiled into the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG). This compilation was officially sanctioned by the Indian government and can be easily located and searched on the internet. This is an absolutely unimpeachable source and it is beyond question that the writings contained were produced by Gandhi's own hand.

One shocking example of Gandhi's racism occurred in 1895, when he actively promoted racial segregation in Durban, South Africa. The local post office had two doors: one for whites and the other shared by Indians and black Africans. Being Indian, Gandhi was required to share a door with black South Africans, which deeply offended him.

After a short campaign to correct what he viewed as a problem, Gandhi summarized the results, writing: "In the Durban Post and telegraph offices there were separate entrances for natives and Asiatics and Europeans. We felt the indignity too much and many respectable Indians were insulted and called all sorts of names by the clerks at the counter. We petitioned the authorities to do away with the invidious distinction and they have now provided three separate entrances for natives, Asiatics, and Europeans." [Source: CWMG, Vol. 1, pp. 367-368]

While on a visit to his home country of India in 1896, Gandhi summarized his general opinion of black South Africans in a speech to a public audience in Bombay, stating:

"Ours is one continual struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness." [CWMG, Vol. 1, pp. 409-410]

The term "Kaffir" is a pejorative South African term for blacks which is equivalent to the 'n' word. Use of this term has been an actionable offense in South Africa since 1975. Despite always

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using it to describe black Africans, Gandhi was fully aware of the offensive nature of the word. This is demonstrated by Gandhi's comment during a religious conflict in India, when he said: "If 'Kaffir' is a term of opprobrium, how much more so is *Chandal*?" [CWMG, Vol. 28, p. 62] "*Chandal*" is a racist term for low-caste Hindus.

Gandhi's entrenched racism is further evident throughout his writings. Another example can be seen in 1904, when Gandhi wrote a letter to the Johannesburg Medical Officer of Health, protesting a decision allowing black Africans to settle in Indian neighborhoods, saying:

"Under my suggestion, the Town Council must withdraw the Kaffirs from the Location. About this mixing of the Kaffirs with the Indians, I must confess I feel most strongly. I think it is very unfair to the Indian population and it is an undue tax on even the proverbial patience of my countrymen." [CWMG, Vol. III, p. 429, Feb. 15, 1904]

Gandhi was far more interested in gaining legal superiority over the blacks than he was in gaining legal equality to the whites. He frequently protested that upper-caste Indians "have been dragged down with the Kaffir without the slightest justification" [CWMG, Vol. 3, p. 32] and protested legislation he believed "reduces Indians to a level lower than that of the Kaffirs." [CWMG, Vol. 6, p. 28] In 1908, he complained about that upper-caste Indians were being equated to the blacks. According to Gandhi, the British considered upper-caste Indians "to be so lowly and ignorant that they assume that, like the Kaffirs who can be pleased with toys and pins, we can also be fobbed off with trinkets." [CWMG, Vol. 8, p. 167]

Within Indian communities, Gandhi remains highly divisive and intensely disliked by many minorities. For instance, Mayawati, the Chief Minister of the large northern Indian state Uttar Pradesh, is one of those expressing a low view of the Indian icon. The Dalits, commonly known in the West as "Untouchables," are considered to be lowest in the Hindu caste system. In 2007, Mayawati blamed Gandhi for India's caste problems, saying, "He divided Indian society into two categories - the weaker sections and upper castes." In June 2009, Mayawati elaborated on her opinion of Gandhi, calling him a "*natakbaaz*" or "fake" who "did nothing substantial to improve the condition of the Dalits."

In an April 24, 2010 planning meeting for the Sacramento statue, organizer Sham Goyal admirably describing Gandhi as an "icon of peace." Yet he called Mayawati a "*Harijan*," stating: "If she is not grateful to Gandhi, then India would be better off if she was dead." Since then, the meeting has received widespread ethnic media coverage, splitting the Indian community along caste lines. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who was born into a Dalit family, was a contemporary of Gandhi and highly respected academic in India. Explaining the similar double-minded view of peace held by Gandhi, Ambedkar said: "If a man with God's name on his tongue and sword under his armpit deserved the appellation of a Mahatma, then Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a Mahatma."

People such as Mayawati and Ambedkar are certainly exceptions to the rule, as most of India's 160 million Dalits live in abject poverty and near slave-like conditions throughout India. However, Gandhi was an avid proponent of the Hindu caste system, saying in 1933 that "to abolish caste is to demolish Hinduism." Despite the severe prejudice faced by India's Dalits, which is often manifested in beating, rape, and even murder, Gandhi claimed: "I would resist

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with my life the separation of ‘Untouchables’ from the caste Hindus. The problem of the ‘Untouchable’ community is of comparatively little importance.”

These short quotes and excerpts are merely brief examples of Gandhi’s bigoted past. His extensive writings are full of views disparaging practically everyone except for upper-caste Hindus, including black people and Dalits. Of course, many people question whether Gandhi ever repudiated his racist views later in life. The simple truth is that he continued spreading such beliefs until his death. In 1940, for instance, years after his activities in Africa, an elderly Gandhi wrote to Adolf Hitler. Addressing the letter to his “dear friend,” he told Hitler: “We have no doubt about your bravery or devotion to your fatherland, nor do we believe that you are the monster described by your opponents.” [CWMG, Vol. 79, p. 453]

The surest indicator that Gandhi never rejected his racism is that he never apologized for the damage in which his actions resulted. However, even if his views had changed, the harm was already done. Not only did Gandhi harbor racist opinions, but he enthusiastically acted upon them by promoting racism within the Indian community, demanding segregation of blacks and Indians and even going to war against the black Africans.

Considering Gandhi’s past, we urge you and other legislators who may be asked to support legislation for a Gandhi statue to answer with an unequivocal “no.” Such a statue would quickly become an embarrassment to the state as the public becomes more aware of the reality of Gandhi’s life. Additionally, hailing Gandhi as a role model inappropriately supersedes true American heroes who actually deserve admiration, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and others.

We are gifting you with a copy of *Gandhi Under Cross-Examination* by retired U.S. Army Col. G. B. Singh and Dr. Tim Watson. The foreword is by Dr. Lewis Baldwin, a well-known Dr. King expert, who demands an open discussion of Gandhi’s lifelong struggle with racism, calling it “a challenge that no human being should ignore in this age of cynicism, violence, and terror.” We encourage you to take up that challenge. (Should you be interested in consulting with Col. Singh about the Gandhi issue, we would be happy to arrange that.)

Holding Gandhi up as a role model by erecting a statue of him in a location as prominent as the state capitol grounds would be deeply offensive to those minorities who were harmed by his ardent prejudice. Please consider replacing this commemoration of Gandhi with the celebration of someone of better character who can provide a positive role model for society.

Sincerely,

Sudesh Ram
Director, OFMI

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The Durban Post Office: Gandhi's Victory for Segregation

In 1893, Gandhi was hired to serve as legal adviser to wealthy Indian traders in Colonial South Africa. He arrived there prior to apartheid, but during a time when the nation still suffered severe political unrest and racial segregation. That same year he was allegedly the victim of racial hatred when he was thrown off a train at Pietermaritzburg for refusing to give up his seat to a white man. This event was reportedly a pivotal moment in Gandhi's life which inspired him to fight against discrimination in colonial South Africa and later to lead the independence movement in India.

(The full story of this incident and the context surrounding it is given in *Gandhi*



Durban Post Office

Under Cross-Examination. This book is by retired U.S. Army Col. G. B. Singh and Canadian professor Tim Watson, with a foreword by renowned Martin Luther King, Jr. scholar Lewis Baldwin.)

In 1895, just two years later, Gandhi began actively promoting racial segregation in Durban, South Africa. The local post office had two doors: one for whites and the other shared by Indians and black Africans. Gandhi was required to share a door with black South Africans, which deeply offended him. So he initiated a campaign to segregate the blacks from the Indians.

In his *Collected Works (CWMG)*, Vol. I, pp. 367-368, Gandhi wrote: "In the Durban Post and telegraph offices there were separate entrances for natives and Asiatics and Europeans. We felt the indignity too much and many respectable Indians were insulted and called all sorts of names by the clerks at the counter. We petitioned the authorities to do away with the invidious distinction and they have now provided three separate entrances for natives, Asiatics, and Europeans."

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In 2008, a young South African journalist named Sentletse Diakanyo published an article praising Gandhi in passing. When informed about Gandhi's real track record with the South African black population, Diakanyo completely changed his mind. He then wrote the following:

On Mahatma Gandhi, his pathetic racism and advancement of segregation of black people

by Sentletse Diakanyo

Note: This article was first published on Oct. 18, 2008 in the Thought Leader section of the Mail & Guardian. It is located here: <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/sentletse diakanyo/2008/10/17/on-mahatma-gandhi-his-pathetic-racism-and-advancement-of-segregation-of-black-people/>



The greatest injustice against the struggle for liberation of black people was the projection of Mahatma Gandhi as committed to a cause against segregation. It is a fallacy that Gandhi in his struggles had any interests of black people at heart. His was a selfish cause to advance interests of Indians while encouraging continuing subjugation of black people. Gandhi held an absurd belief that Indians, along with whites, were a superior race to black people.

He said, “the British rulers take us to be so lowly and ignorant that they assume that, like the Kaffirs who can be pleased with toys and pins, we can also be fobbed off with trinkets ... ours is one continual struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness ... Kaffirs are as a rule uncivilised — the convicts even more so. They are troublesome, very dirty and live almost like animals.”

He conspired with the oppressive white government in promotion of segregation of black people and elevating the importance of Indians above them. Indians believed in their false sense of superiority in that they frequently complained of being mixed in with black people in railway cars, lavatories, pass laws and in other regulations. They demanded special treatment and loathed being considered in the same regard as black people. He protested that, “*we are classed with the natives of South Africa — Kaffir race.*”

Gandhi ensured that Indians received their elevation above black people and helped entrench segregation laws against black people. His major achievement was the creation of a separate entrance for Indians to the Durban Post Office who previously had to share with black people.

Gandhi wrote: “In the Durban Post and telegraph offices there were separate entrances for natives and Asiatics and Europeans. We felt the indignity too much and many respectable Indians were insulted and called all sorts of names by the clerks at the counter. We petitioned the authorities to do away with the invidious distinction and they have now provided three separate entrances for natives, Asiatics and Europeans.”

There is a growing tendency to try to portray Gandhi as some messiah who also advanced the cause of black people. He cared less about the plight of black people and his sole purpose was to

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see Indians receive preferential treatment and laws be amended to that effect; while laws governing black people remained in force. He endorsed the ridiculous notion of white supremacy probably in the hope and belief that it would assist his cause for Indians.

In 1903, Gandhi remarked, “we believe as much in the purity of race as we think they do, only we believe that they would best serve the interest, which is as dear to us as it is to them, by advocating the purity of all the races and not one alone. We believe also that the white race of South Africa should be the predominating race.”

Gandhi like Winston Churchill believed that black people were stupid savages and barbarians who were prone to unprovoked violence. He believed that the oppressed black people were a threat to their own cause and Indians need to save them from themselves. He said “it means that you take them under your (Indian) wing when you have developed that power of non-violence It will be good, if you fire them (black people) with the spirit of non-violence. You will be their saviour. But if you allow yourselves to be overwhelmed and swept off your feet, it will be their and your ruin.”

Gandhi saw himself as repository of solutions to the problem black people were confronted with, yet he was stubbornly opposed to the notion of black people and Indians fighting side by side against the monster the repressive white government was.

Gandhi, while he may have pretended to sympathise with the cause of black people and to some measure tolerated them, his conduct and utterances indicate that he too detested them. He condemned miscegenation and warned Indian men against canoodling with black women. “*Some Indians do have contacts with Kaffir women. I think such contacts are fraught with grave danger. Indians would do well to avoid them altogether,*” he said. Clearly he did not condone the sexual rendezvous of some white men in the Cape.

Gandhi, the phony non-violence activist was a decorated Sergeant Major on the side of the British during the Anglo-Boer War and supported the British during the Bambatha Rebellion in 1906 where Zulu impis and chiefs were massacred. His image as a peace-loving activist, champion of civil rights and an anti-racism activist is fallacious. Mahatma Gandhi was a pathetic racist who supported wars that maimed and left thousands dead and openly expressed his admiration for the mass murderer, Adolf Hitler, to whom he wrote, “*We have no doubt about your bravery or devotion to your fatherland, nor do we believe that you are the monster described by your opponents.*”

To continue to honour and celebrate this man is to insult humanity!

Sentletse Diakanyo has a keen interest in everything else that is beyond the realm of his expertise; from world politics, history, economics, philosophy, to motor-racing. He is inquisitive about everything and a master of none. He writes what likes, without fear or favour.

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Recently, an element of the Sacramento Indian community decided to request permission from the state legislature to place a life-size Gandhi statue on the grounds of the state capitol building. California's Indo-American community is very divided on this issue, however, and many strongly oppose the idea. Here is one reason for their opposition:

Covering up the Doherty Murder

In 1921, Gandhi helped cover up the murder of an American citizen by Gandhians who were rioting during the Second *Satyagraha* Movement. His followers offered the murdered man's wife bribes and Gandhi himself presented veiled threats.

Below we have included the sworn statement of the murdered man's wife, made to a Californian notary on January 4, 1929:

State of California County of Los Angeles

ANNETTE H. DOHERTY, being first duly sworn oath, deposes and says:

My deceased husband, William Francis Doherty, an American citizen, was a mechanical and electrical engineer and business associate of Mr. Richard J. Brenchley, engaged in sand extraction at Mumbra, adjacent to Bombay, India.

On November 19th, 1921, as he was quietly proceeding to the Bombay Improvement Trust work-shops, he was set upon, his eyes were gouged out and eventually he was beaten to death by a group of rioters in a public street of Byculla, a suburb of Bombay.

This was during the visit of the Prince of Wales to India, when Gandhi was at the height of his popularity as a saint and political leader, and had, through his violent speeches against the British, worked his followers into a frenzy of race hatred. My husband was probably mistaken for a Britisher when he was murdered by Gandhi's followers.

Within three days following this killing of my husband, word was brought me from Gandhi that he greatly desired an interview with me, begging me to set a time when I would receive him. I was then stopping with an American family in Bombay. Gandhi's emissary was Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the Indian poetess and politician.

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Mrs. Naidu was greatly agitated, and made many statements to me that I feel she would now like to unsay. Her chief concern, however, was that the American public should never be allowed to hear of this outrage committed upon my husband; and she very frankly asked me my price for refraining from ever discussing or advertising the affair in America and from myself returning to America. Under no condition, said Mrs. Naidu, would they be willing that the American public should learn that they were killing people so promiscuously that even a white face cost a man's life.

As to Gandhi's request for an interview with me:

At that time he was going about so unclothed that Mrs. Naidu suggested I call upon him rather than that he come to the American home where I was stopping - inasmuch as this latter might prove embarrassing. It was therefore determined that I should see him at his own headquarters in Bombay, which I did, a motor car having been sent by him to fetch me.

Upon this occasion of my visit with Gandhi he repeated to me in substance what Mrs. Naidu had said, but even more emphatically stressed the point that Americans, because they were so much in sympathy with him in his political views, must on no account learn the details of the murder of my husband lest it hurt the success of his movement in America and prejudice our people against him.

ANNETTE HELEN DOHERTY.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 4th day of January, 1929,

**W.J. SCHISEL Notary Public in and for the County of Los Angeles,
State of California. My commission expires Jan. 18, 1931.**

[source: *Gandhi Under Cross-Examination*, G. B. Singh and Tim Watson, pp. 269-271]

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USCIRF 2009 Annual Report – Chapter on India

In 2009, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) placed India on its Watch List. This “Watch List” is used for countries which “require close monitoring due to the nature and extent of violations of religious freedom engaged in or tolerated by the governments.”

Recently, an element of the Sacramento Indian community decided to request permission from the state legislature to place a life-size Gandhi statue on the grounds of the state capitol building. Yet California’s Indo-American community is very divided over the statue and many strongly oppose the idea. Many leaders from India’s most oppressed minority group, the low-caste Dalits, have blamed Mohandas Gandhi for the divisions in Indian society which led to the current fragile condition of religious freedom.

In 2008, for instance, Mayawati, the Dalit Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state in India, said of Gandhi: “He divided Indian society into two categories - the weaker sections and upper castes.” Many years earlier, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who was a contemporary of Gandhi and the Dalit architect of India’s constitution, said: “If a man with God’s name on his tongue and sword under his armpit deserved the appellation of a Mahatma, then Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a Mahatma.”

Here are some eye-opening excerpts from the USCIRF report on India.

Hindu nationalist organizations retain broad popular support in many communities in India, in part because some provide needed services or function as community social organizations. Many of these organizations exist under the banner of the Sangh Parivar, a “family” of over 30 organizations that includes the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and the BJP. Sangh Parivar entities aggressively press for governmental policies to promote their Hindu nationalist agenda, and adhere in varying degrees to an ideology of Hindutva, which holds non-Hindus as foreign to India. [USCIRF report, p. 2]

The failure to provide justice to religious minorities targeted in violent riots in India is not a new development, and has helped foster a climate of impunity. In 1984, anti-Sikh riots erupted in Delhi following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguard. Over 4 days, nearly 3,000 Sikhs were killed, allegedly with the support of Congress Party officials. Few perpetrators were ever held accountable, and only years after the fact. In April

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2009, the Congress Party dropped Jagdish Tytler and Sajjan Kumar from its roster of general election candidates over their suspected role in the 1984 riots. In the late 1990s, there was a **marked increase in violent attacks** among members of religious communities, **particularly Muslims and Christians**, throughout India, including incidents of killings, torture, rape, and destruction of property. Perpetrators were rarely held responsible. For example, **there has been little justice for the victims of riots between Hindus and Muslims** after the 1992 destruction of the Babri mosque at a contested religious site in Ayodhya. At least 900 people, mostly Muslims, were killed in Bombay in the 1992-1993 riots, but few have been successfully prosecuted. [USCIRF report, pp. 2-3]

International human rights groups have named the VHP, RSS, BJP, and Bajrang Dal as perpetrators of the violence in Gujarat, as well as other acts of violence against non-Hindus. After a controversial 2002 non-governmental organization report described links between a Maryland-based charity and India's RSS and other "violent and sectarian Hindu organizations," Silicon Valley companies Cisco and Oracle suspended matching company donations to the charity. **India's central and state police and judicial apparatuses have neglected to consistently or adequately examine evidence linking Sangh Parivar entities such as the BHP, RSS, BJP, and Bajrang Dal to acts of violence.** [USCIRF report, pp. 3-4]