

2016 PROGRAM REPORT

08 - 19 August 16

Placerville Camp, Black Hills, South Dakota, USA

PROLOGUE

The daily news reports no shortage of leaders who champion certainty, immediacy and defensiveness. And we see no shortage of their essential tools: threat, coercion and harm. For those who desire a different approach to social change, Satyagraha Institute offers a new program to train leaders in the traditions of nonviolence.

The August 2016 Satyagraha Institute brought together 31 adults and 9 children from 5 nations to the Black Hills of South Dakota. Participants met for 12 days in a beautiful setting at Placerville Camp and Retreat Center, home to the first Institute in 2015. This 2016 August event was the third Institute, the second having been held in June of 2016 in Cuetzalan, Mexico.



Plans for 2017 are for an Institute in Monterrey, Mexico in April; the Black Hills in August; and Lagos, Nigeria in July. Each new Institute is growing organically from the efforts of past participants who want one in their home territory.

Placerville Camp pictured below, courtesy of participant Glen Gurner.





Photo by: Glen Gurner

Excellent experience! Great people,
amazing place. Beautiful experience for
learning.

SUSANA CAVAZOS LAZO

PROGRAM COORDINATOR AT NGO - MEXICO



OUR MISSION

Satyagraha Institute works to promote the understanding and practice of satyagraha as a method of social change.

Mohandas Gandhi, who famously experimented with the possibilities of nonviolence, coined the Sanskrit term *satyagraha* to identify a method of social change. Gandhi proposed that *satya* (truth) combined with *agraha* (firmness) creates a useful social power that does not rely on harming others. Gandhi often referred to this power as “truth-force.” Satyagraha is a way of directly engaging with others to work out the difficult aspects of life without resorting to coercion, harm, or ill intention. Satyagraha is the social power which arises when we act with kindness, respect, patience, generosity, and selfless service.

GOAL ONE

To increase the number of leaders trained
in the traditions of nonviolence.

Our world suffers for lack of leaders rooted in the traditions of nonviolence. When conflicts arise, many leaders teach us to wield threats, coercion, and harm. When unfamiliar perspectives disturb, many leaders rally us to certainty and defensiveness. When decisions must be made, many leaders encourage us to value self-interest, immediacy, and possession. As we follow these guides, the fabric of our community weakens, and life becomes more difficult for ourselves and others. Our goal is to create a different future by training leaders in the traditions of nonviolence.

GOAL TWO

To strengthen the community of practitioners,
teachers and future leaders who are committed
to experimenting with satyagraha in their work.

Existing and upcoming leaders in our various communities have little opportunity to spend quality time with mentors in nonviolence. Our goal is to create a place where leaders can build relationships with mentors who are familiar with the knowledge, skills, and inner life associated with nonviolent social change.



GOAL THREE

To produce the premiere training opportunity
for exploring how to create social change
using the principles and tools of satyagraha.

Training in nonviolence typically follows one of three valuable traditions:

In the **academic tradition**, many colleges and universities offer programs in peace and justice studies. These programs are essential to educating our future leaders about the theory, history, and application of nonviolent social change.

In the **activist tradition**, a variety of organizations offer programs to train community organizers how to implement successful campaigns. If we want nonviolent social change to be more than just a dream, we need to invest in developing the skills, techniques, and strategies which these programs set forth.

In **religious traditions** around the globe, adherents are taught that by observing certain principles and values, we build a peaceful world. Even with our best theory and skills, we cannot create nonviolent social change without tending to matters such as respect, forgiveness, patience, and sensitivity to the well-being of our adversaries.

These three traditions are all necessary. Taken independently, however, they each have their weaknesses. Without academic rigor, activists and religious adherents miss the benefits of critical analysis and historical insight. Without activist skill, academics and religious adherents lack the competence to convert understanding and vision into reality. And without attention to the inner life, academics and activists risk leaving behind our most potent catalysts for transforming relationships and communities.

Our goal is to provide a unique training opportunity by integrating the best of these three traditions, rooting our program in attention to scholarship, attention to strategy, and attention to the inner life.



Photo by: Glen Gurner

It was a great experience. I am looking forward to applying the principles I learnt at the Institute.

CHRISTOPHER EHIDIAMEN

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT - NIGERIA

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The 12-day program included a variety of faculty and training styles. The daily schedule typically ran from 7.00 AM to 9.00 PM, with opportunities for rest, reflection and socializing.

Morning, afternoon and evening seminars formed the core of the program. Additionally, each morning, the group gathered for meditation and discussion on the inner life. Each afternoon, there were opportunities for yoga and art. In the spirit of Gandhian ashrams, each participant also shared in some *bread labor*, simple manual labor to support the basic needs of the community.

Three days were devoted to field trips, with opportunities to learn from people, places and projects related to our theme.



UNEARTHING DEEP ROOTS

We were introduced to sacred places, where we lived and climbed together by Lakota and Dakota elders. Duane Hollow Horn Bear told us of the origin story of Lakota people and the sacred nature of the Black Hills. And Darlene Pipeboy told us about Bear Butte, where we climbed and shared food. We were reminded constantly of the special quality of the Hills as participants hiked along Rapid Creek, sat in the swings listening to the water on the stones (or sat in the creek complaining of the cold), searched for the great horned owl or climbed Harney (newly named Black Elk) Peak.



After hearing Duane speak of his great grandfather, killed in the Battle of Blue Water, a Lakota massacre General Harney directed, the group rejoiced as the highest mountain in the Hills was renamed Black Elk Peak. It resulted in a letter sent to newspapers and political leadership in the state of S.D. →

RE: Black Elk Peak

For almost two weeks, members of the Satyagraha Institute have been studying nonviolence in the traditions of Gandhi and King at Placerville Camp near Rapid City. Some of us come from South Dakota, West River and East River, native and non-native; some come from Wisconsin, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, California, and Alabama; others have joined us from Mexico, India, and Nigeria. A Lakota elder told us about how a U.S. general led 600 troops into an ambush of a Lakota village. They killed women and children as well as men, carried off prisoners, and razed the village. A baby boy who was left behind became this man's great grandfather. This event is known as the Battle of Blue Water or the Battle of Ash Hollow. The General who led those troops who killed 86 Lakota people and lost only 12 U.S. soldiers was William S. Harney.

Many of us hiked the highest peak in the Black Hills on Wednesday the 10th of August. We stood at the top, thinking about this story, thinking about the sacredness with which many people hold these Hills. This same elder explained that they do not expect to take the land away from those now settled here; they only want to be entrusted with its care, and they are working to prepare themselves for that responsibility. We stood at the top of this peak, wondering why this sacred place should be named for a man who lived out the most violent elements of our nature. When we learned the next day that its name had been changed to Black Elk Peak, we rejoiced. It seemed right that the mountain should be named for a man who had experienced a vision in that place, a vision of suffering and of healing for his own people and a recognition of their interconnectedness with all the peoples of the earth and with all of creation.

A Dakota elder among us said that whatever we do, we should do it with honor and respect. "Black Elk," she said, "he was a teacher. When young people have become disconnected from their ways, I tell them, 'Read Black Elk. He understood our ways, our beliefs.' " In his later life he organized an Indian Show in the Black Hills to teach tourists about Lakota ways and beliefs beyond glorified warfare. Millions of copies of Black Elk Speaks have been sold worldwide, in several languages, since its original publication in 1932. Still more accounts, studies, anthologies, articles, and novels have been published about Black Elk. Many people will recognize Black Elk's name. Those who do not will find it easy to learn, and some of them will seek more information after their visit. In his life and legacy Black Elk served and can continue to serve as a bridge between native and non-native peoples. The name change honors this man and promotes a way of nonviolent relations with one another and with our earth. This seems good to us.

EXPLORING THE INNER LIFE

One of the primary emphases of the Institute is enabling participants to deepen their spiritual roots, whatever their religious tradition, or even if they have none. Gandhi said, "Prayer is the key of the morning...Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action."

Each day of the Institute began with a focus on the Inner Life. There was an opportunity for everyone to gather together for silence, to reflect on the words and ideas of nonviolent leaders who went before us. Then there was a chance to share with a few others personal experiences related to the theme for the day. The theme might be Practicing Patience, or Offering Generosity, or Exploring Our Limits, or Intending No Harm, or Understanding the Adversary. Our Inner Life leadership, Clark Hanjian, provided a booklet for us with 21 of these themes to help us in this work.



COURSE OF STUDY

Several group sessions with M.P. Mathai, our Gandhian scholar from India, focused on the nature of Satyagraha. We learned about Gandhi's fasts and contemporary fasting by a serious practitioner. Other faculty and resource persons helped us understand traditions that could reinforce our understandings of nonviolence and commitments to it. We learned of Catholic social teachings, Mennonite beliefs in nonviolence and the practice of the Catholic Worker movement.



M.P. Mathai



Frank Kartheiser



Laura Brenneman

We were also confronted by major problems for those committed to nonviolence. We explored the reality of racism and looked at the dynamics of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter. We confronted the reality of a nuclear weapons base a few miles away and the poisoned environment left at Rocky Flats.



T. Marie King



LeRoy Moore

And some of our members left the Institute to visit the Sacred Stone Camp at the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota. One was a resource person for us, Chas Jewett, who may still be there. She sends periodic and helpful reports one might find on the Institute Facebook page.

Thousands have gathered at the N.D. camp, taking a stand for clean water and stopping the Dakota Access Pipeline. That struggle encouraged Institute participants to write a statement to political decision makers and media in the two state region.

An Open Letter to Governors Dalrymple, Daugaard and Branstad

We are Satyagraha Institute, meeting in the Black Hills of SD these twelve days in August 2016.

We've been studying the nonviolence of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. We believe and know in our hearts violence is not necessary for social change.

We're aware of the violence we've been perpetrating to the earth and in turn to ourselves. Our waters are increasingly polluted. Our oceans are rising and acidifying. Our glaciers are melting and our clouds are bursting with flood waters.

We ask, "can we hear the petition of First Nation Peoples to begin healing our relationship with our mother earth, upon whom we depend for nourishment, sustenance, our very health and life."

We ask, "must we allow another pipeline to cross our waters when their product endangers those waters and the climate essential to our health and life?"

We ask, "are we able to confess we sometimes put human greed above human need?"

We ask, "will decision makers lead us in a new direction toward sustainable development that respects the wisdom of First Nations Peoples?"

We ask, "can we support and encourage freedom of assembly and the protest of the Dakota Access Pipeline."

For us, we commit ourselves to follow in the footsteps of those nonviolent warriors who have gone before us, dedicated to answering human need and the rights of the earth.

For others, "we're just asking."

CRAWLING TOWARD PEACE

Our youngest satyagrahi was Joseph Novotney. Just seven months old, he delighted everyone at the gathering with his easy smile and hard work. It's hard for adults to remember the labor required to learn how to crawl. Joseph reminded us. And we were rewarded in the last several days of the Institute when he accomplished that task, on his way to standing (where he is now) and soon to be walking.

It reminded all of us that the reality of nonviolence in our world is hard work. If we are only crawling toward it now, we can pull each other up on two feet and eventually walk into the future we envision.





The things I've learned will continue to inspire and challenge me, and the people I met and came to know will do the same.

ERIKA TRITLE

UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTOR - SOUTH DAKOTA, USA



HOW WE CREATE CHANGE

Our habits of violence are deeply ingrained, so it is fair to ask "How will this program change anything?" We believe the path to change is rooted in three key principles. →

PRINCIPLE ONE

Change happens one person at a time.

In other words, a community will change only to the extent that its individual members change. To the degree that we, as individuals, shift toward the ways of nonviolence, we create ripples which alter the nature of our relationships, communities, and nations. For this reason, we subscribe to the practice of being the change we want to see. The summer institute provides time, space, and support for individuals to experiment with the tools of nonviolence and their assumptions about how conflict works.

PRINCIPLE TWO

The path to change requires face to face interaction and dialogue.

We believe in the dignity and potential of every human being, and these qualities are best nurtured by direct contact with other human beings. The summer institute provides guides who are experienced in the application of satyagraha. If we want to adopt new approaches to conflict, we need to spend quality time with those who can help us work through the difficult questions. Cell phones and computer interaction cannot match the power of studying, eating, talking, working, and relaxing with mentors.






PRINCIPLE THREE

Deep change requires time, experimentation and support.

Few of us can make quick and substantial changes for the better. We usually need years to test our options, understand the results, and gradually develop new habits. We also tend to need much encouragement along the way. The summer institute provides a concrete opportunity to support this lifetime of development.

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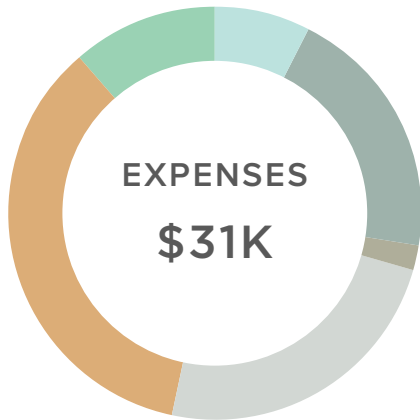
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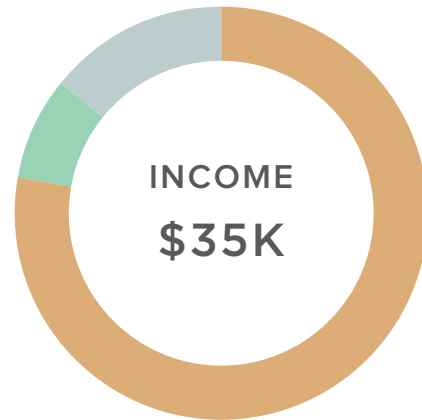
 Presenter

*Readers may be interested to know that the U.S. immigration system is seriously broken. It's not a problem of keeping people out of the country but a problem of letting them in. An applicant from Nepal, an applicant from Mexico, an applicant from Nigeria, and an applicant from Ghana were all denied visas. All of them are committed workers for nonviolence in their own places and had extensive documentation. None were given reasons. One was not even allowed to present documents, simply dismissed with one look. One was told she would receive the visa but it never came when promised.

FINANCES



- KITCHEN STAFF & FOOD / \$10,947
- FACILITY RENTAL / \$7,400
- TRAVEL FOR FACULTY & STAFF / \$6,185
- HONORARIUMS / \$3,450
- FACULTY & STAFF EXPENSES / \$2,353
- ADMINISTRATION / \$567



- INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS / \$27,577
- PARTICIPANT FEES / \$4,990
- BUSINESSES & ORGANIZATIONS / \$2,850

The 2016 program functioned on a lean budget. In an effort to keep the program affordable, the registration fee was set relatively low, not even covering the cost of food and facilities. Except for some modest honoraria, our faculty and administration were volunteer. With the help of many financial supporters, we were able to make this program a success.

Satyagraha Institute is an independent project. We are grateful to our fiscal sponsor, Dakota Rural Action, a nonprofit corporation who shares our vision and enables us to receive charitable contributions. Visit satyagrahainstitute.org/support-us to learn how you can support our cause.

DONORS

Satyagraha Institute is fortunate to have the support of the following individuals.

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