

## **The Reality of “Real Peace”**

In 1931, Mahatma Gandhi gave a speech at the Royal Teachers’ Montessori College in London. In his remarks, the great leader stated that “if we are to teach real peace in the world, and if we are to carry out a real war against war, we shall have to begin with our children.” Close to a century later, his words are still ones to follow and interpret personally. In this essay, I will explore my personal interpretation of this quotation, as well as how schools can “teach real peace” and inspire the generation of tomorrow’s leaders to wage “a [...] war against war.”

To me, this quote means that Gandhi valued the power of a child. The wise man clearly knew that teaching a youth is a far more productive exercise than trying to shape the mind of an adult. Additionally, he realized the importance of the proper audience. It is no coincidence, therefore, that this speech was given to a group of Montessori teachers. Teachers, as a whole, tend to interact with children more than anyone else, possibly excluding parents. According to the American Montessori Society’s web page, “the child [...] [interacts] with the teacher when support and/or guidance is needed” (“Introduction to Montessori Method,” n.d.) in a Montessori system of learning. Clearly, this gives the Montessori educator far more power over a child’s growth and development than an ordinary teacher would have. Thus, Gandhi had a specific reason to discuss his ideals of “real peace” at precisely the time and place he did.

Before I move into my methods of teaching “real peace,” I will first define it. To me, “real peace” is more than merely the end of war. It includes the end of prejudice and discrimination, and is the state of worldwide harmony. A world in which there is “real peace” is one of unity, where all people stand together, regardless of age, gender identity, race, religion, or socioeconomic background. Therefore, a world at “real peace” is one of unity and diversity.

What better ways of teaching real peace in schools could exist than teaching the all-important concepts of unity and diversity? Not a single one comes to mind. In my opinion, more schools should follow the example of one of the high schools I visited last fall when deciding where to apply. At this school, a specific Unity & Diversity class is taught fifty-five minutes a day, five days a week. In this class, students discuss sensitive topics, such as race relations. Uncomfortable though it may have been to have these students to have such discussions, it was ultimately a boon to be strengthened in this way. Every school should strive to adopt some sort of program emphasizing unity and diversity, be it a class, an after-school club, or merely reading peace-promoting novels in an English or literature class.

One would hope that the aforementioned methods would lead students to “carry out a [...] war against war,” but how would that be done? In today’s world, a logical strategy would be to carry out a social media campaign against war and for the ideals of unity and diversity. If celebrities with untold amounts of followers each posted just one picture with a comment relating to this theme, an audience of untold millions would be reached. Imagine the effect that would have!

Another form of “war against war,” one which Gandhi himself used quite effectively, is marching in protest. He called his most famous one his “salt march” (“Gandhi leads civil disobedience,” n.d.), a name which we can use today. Unlike the original, which was actually a protest against the British salt monopoly (“Gandhi leads civil disobedience,” n.d.), the S.A.L.T. of our march will stand for “Stop Attacking Lives Today.” “Attacking” will be used to mean not only physical violence, but also verbal injury, a form as hurtful, if not even more so.

Since we live in a world in which even the most minor incident is rewarded with seemingly endless television coverage, the S.A.L.T. March would surely be covered extensively on all four major networks, as well as countless local stations.

In conclusion, Gandhi's term "real peace" signifies to me a unified, diverse world in which there is tolerance and acceptance for all. This will not be an easy goal to attain, but hard-fought social media campaigns and marching protests will help, as will the teaching of unity and diversity in schools.

### **Works Cited**

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