“Non-violent means for conflict resolution”

Mahatma Gandhi, while fighting for India’s independence from Britain, strongly advocated the importance of non-violence “because when violence appears to be good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent”. In any kind of conflict, violence cannot be resorted to as a solution, for it only amplifies the conflict and creates the potential for a stalemate, where resolution is nowhere in sight.

Being the first generation born and brought up in America by immigrant parents, I was exposed early on to the judgmental nature of society. I cannot say that the stares and comments had no effect upon me, but I was taught and comprehended that violence will achieve nothing. I learned that working toward approaching a consensus through communication is an extremely effective tactic for resolving conflicts peacefully. Many people judge at first sight devoid of any knowledge or understanding just as my peers judged me. But when I explained to them my food, culture, or religious events, the tension between us was alleviated and they actually became intrigued by the variances in our cultures. The important part was that violence, which would have only exacerbated the situation, was not necessary in order to peacefully achieve a solution.

Gandhi strongly advocated his concept of Satyagraha, or non-violent protest, when fighting for the equality of Indians in South Africa and for the independence of India from domineering Britain. His peaceful protests and marches eventually led to Indian independence in 1947. Another proponent of these same ideals was Martin Luther King, Jr., who was actually inspired by Gandhi and his success. Even though King was arrested, abused, and his house was bombed while he fought for African American civil rights, he persisted through the obstacles staying true to his beliefs of non-violent means, and the Supreme Court declared segregation on buses as unconstitutional. To this day, we have not been able to accomplish their dreams of a
peaceful world, but people continue to advocate it. Eighteen years ago, teenage gang member Tony Hicks shot La Jolla resident Aziz Khamisa’s son, Tariq, during a robbery, and was later sentenced to 25 years to life in prison. Khamisa understood that fighting violence with violence would not accomplish anything, so he decided to work with Hicks’s father to end youth violence. He even forgave Hicks, who expressed sincere remorse, and helped him decrease his prison sentence. Through the Tariq Khamisa Foundation, Khamisa spreads his message of non-violence, forgiveness, and compassion to children in San Diego and further.

Following the ideals of Gandhi and King, accepting our surroundings and the cultures and values they expose to us is vital. We live in a world where almost every community is a mixture of various cultures, and if every individual viewed another’s culture as inferior, the world would be in shambles. Although most people embrace other customs and religions as equal to their own, this is not true for everyone. Being open-minded and aware of other cultures will decrease stereotyping and prejudice, create a less segregated society, and solve many conflicts around the world.

We have made considerable progress in resolving conflicts peacefully, however it has not been fully attained. In order to achieve this goal, society, as a whole, must strive for it. People have to comprehend the benefits of such a lifestyle and the positive impact unanimous participation could have on the world. Just as Gandhi and King had a dream and fought to pursue it, we must endeavor to live in a society destitute of violence.