



## **Indian Diaspora Council International**

Shared heritage, aspirations and interests

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### **PRESS STATEMENT**

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### **IDC RECOGNITION of 149<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY of MAHATMA GANDHI**

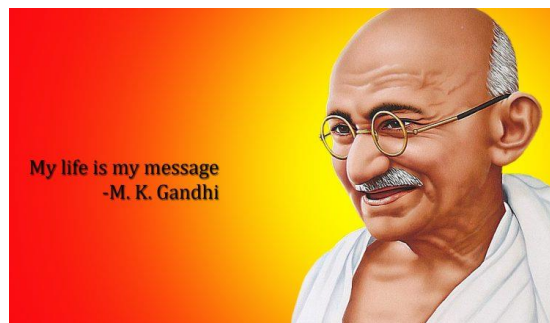
The Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC) and its global affiliates join with other organizations, agencies, officials, groups, individuals and institutions worldwide in commemorating the 149<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and pay special homage and grateful recognition of Gandhi ji as the preeminent leader of Indian independence movement in British-ruled India through non-violence means.

IDC supports this worthy and deserving tribute to Gandhi ji and Gandhian non-violence teachings for peaceful protests to achieve freedom and social justice. Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence teachings have inspired many to protest in peaceful ways against oppression, colonial rule, subjugation and violent discrimination in many countries.

Gandhi ji developed this non-violent way first and he succeeded in his goals, as India was completely freed from a European's country domination. Gandhi ji championed the cause of freedom using non-violence which encouraged many other colonies of European powers to seek and obtain freedom from colonial rule.

Others, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr of USA, using similar techniques non-violence, were successful in organizing peaceful protests and ultimately achieving freedom, easing of oppressive rule, social injustice and legally ending racial discrimination. Nelson Mandela achieved a smooth transition to majority rule in South Africa following the teachings of peace and reconciliation.

Gandhi ji's statement, "*Be the change you want to be*" is a challenge and reminder of the possibilities for good as well as the role and responsibility of everyone to be supportive of advancing social justice in even small ways.



*Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC), established in 1997, is an international non-profit organization with global affiliates and membership in 21 countries with the objective to embrace, engage, and enhance the shared heritage, aspirations, and interests of persons of Indian origin with optimum inclusivity.*

## **Statements by IDC members worldwide**

### **Hélène Gressier – IDC Guadeloupe/Martinique**

Gandhi, this small Indian man, so frail, born 149 years ago, did not seem to be designated for a destiny so universal and true.

Yet just by its sweetness exerted on people more than 300 million people, it transmitted a unique influence in World History: the teaching of non-violence; he himself wrote: "I can say without arrogance and humility, my message and my methods in what they essential, are for the entire world, we further affirm that in this humanity that drives us, we faithfully follow the truth, and that we will refrain from violence against the lives, persons and property. " We learned with him, the ultimate realities of chaos-world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and we know that the Universality of the new man, is now today, in twenty seconds; because Gandhi inspired the peoples of the Earth, it was the "Voice of those who had no right", it was Walker all women and all men that we would not see, even in India invaded and colonized by Britain under Nehru, the division of India into two states: India and Pakistan. This partition of his beloved homeland for Gandhi was a terrible heartbreak, India had failed. At 77, he undertook a great and arduous pilgrimage in the most troubled areas to try to re-establish peace between the communities, because there was tough "negotiations" with Congress, There were massacres and forced conversions of Hindus by Muslims, tens of thousands of refugees and Hindus indulged in cruel reprisals.

In reading the messages of love and peace, left by Gandhi, who reached us in the Caribbean and Occi tooth, we cannot forget, Henry Sidambarom born of Indian parents, who had defended in 1923 the "right to exist" Indians of Guadeloupe, to finally enjoy all the rights civic and social: He was the pioneer of non-violence in this new French Company.

### **Sunil Prasad – Brussels, Belgium**

If the gaining of Independence of India can be said to have been the work of any one person, it was the work of Mahatma Gandhi who led the people of India for freedom based on truth and non-violence.

### **Roop Persaud – New York & Florida, USA**

MAHATMA GANDHI's 149<sup>TH</sup> BIRTH ANNIVERSARY: The Mahatma is India's unique gift to the World and it has endured for 149 years to date (2018).

From Europe we have had: Adolph Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Churchill and various nefarious kings and queens of England, among others, who generally devastated humanity and exploited the wealth of the world. India's Gandhi did not engage in any of this immorality.

His ideas and methodology intended for the betterment of mankind and an upliftment of the morality of humanity have provided practical and political benefits to India, the USA and South Africa. They can benefit any and all who wishes to apply them.

### **Oscar Ramjeet – Florida, USA**

Indian Diapora Council (IDC) joins with tens of millions across the world in paying tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 149th birthday. Born Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 and was assassinated on January 30, 1948, at the age of 78.

A British trained Barrister, Gandhi cast aside his waist coat and pinned stripped suit and donned the Indian tradition garb of dhoti and shawl and championed the cause of the Indians against the British to gain independence for India. He also fought the cause of South Africans and was jailed both in India and South Africa where he was humiliated and thrown out of a train.

Known for his non-violence and civil disobedience, Gandhi ji won the admiration of the world for the manner in which he championed the cause of freedom, and as a result many other colonies of European powers sought and obtained freedom from colonial rule.

Closer home Rev Martin Luther King Jr patterned Gandhi's non-violent protests and as a result gained national and world wide recognition so much so that the United States government declared the third Monday in January a national holiday in honor of King's birthday.

May their souls rest in eternal peace.

### **Jean Regis Ramasamy – Reunion Island**

In his travel between India and South Africa, Gandhiji paid tribute to the India community in Mauritius. He did so much for them. Manilall doctorji was posting there on his request. I am convinced if he had time, he will do same for Indian community in Reunion Island. Otherwise Nobel Prize Nelson Mandela fought for peace in South Africa, in following Gandhi's cause. According to me, his most valuable sentence was he say « be the change you want for the world ». At last for our own situation, Gandhiji considered himself as a « coolie », a pehle girmitya". We must continue his project of peace for humanity.

### **Dr. Satish Rai - Australia**

On behalf of the Indian Diaspora Council of Australia Inc I lend my short tribute towards commemoration of the 149th Birthday of Mahatma Gandhi on 2 October 2018.

Mahatma Gandhi played a very important role in the abolishment of the dreadful Indian indenture (girmit) system in early. After two decades of sterling work with the girmityas in South Africa, in 1915 Mahatma Gandhi joined the efforts of stalwarts such as Madan Mohan Malviya, Gopal Gokhale, Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu and Fiji girmityas Totaram Sanadhya and Kunti, to abolish the system in 1917.

Mahatma Gandhi's announcement of his first satyagrah in India proved instrumental in persuading the abolition of the global girmit pratha. As descendants of girmityas we must never forget the role of the Mahatma in the struggles of our ancestors.

### **Prof. Clem Secharan – London, UK**

The 149th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi comes at a time of disturbing darkness around the world – a resurgence of bigotry and pride in exhibiting hatred, frequently begetting violence. This goes against the fundamental tolerance of Gandhiji, for whom those who think only their way of seeing is correct should have no place in public administration. It is important to recall that he continually sought to empathize with the fears and aspirations of the other person – ever scrutinizing his own perspective and challenging his received religious precepts.

As we mark the anniversary of this great man's birth, we could do well to ponder what he said about religious certainties: Hindu defects were pressingly visible to me. If untouchability could be a part of Hinduism, it could only be a rotten part or an excrescence.

What was the meaning of saying that the Vedas were the inspired word of God? If they were inspired, why not the Bible and the Koran? I prefer to retain the label of my forefathers so long as it does not debar me from assimilating all that is good anywhere else.

This seems to me like an invitation to tear down walls, mental and physical, and to open windows unto the world.

### **Prof. Mohan K. Gautam, Leiden, Netherlands**

Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's South African rich experiences where the Indians and South Africans who were discriminated as free citizens in Africa. This idea made him to realize the necessity of an everlasting equality and peace. In Phoenix seeing the atrocities his politico-social resistance developed the three concepts, Satyagraha (fighting for justice), Sarvodaya (perfect equality) which can be realized and solved by the means of Ahimsa (non-violence) by removing conflicts and killings. Gandhi's concepts advocated globalization in multi-cultural society through socio-economic interdependence.

The non-violence has been achieved in many countries in principle on the basis of the World Peace and One World. It is a measure to combat conflicts and aggressive behavior in feelings and thoughts. Gandhi always thought that all other communities are alike and they all need peace of mind. He always cared about others and said "May noble thoughts come from all direction".

### **Khalil Rahman Ali – London, UK**

"Mahatma Gandhi was a truly inspirational leader, who along with others, achieved a major transformational change in history through an epic struggle for India's freedom. His use of non-violence has influenced others who fought injustices around the world."

"Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this, ever in flesh and blood, walked upon this earth." Albert Einstein

### **Samarassame Taniga – Paris, France**

On the second October this year is Mahatma Gandhi's 149<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is estimated that more than 108 billion humans have been born and died in this world since the period of Homo Sapiens but they all sank into oblivion except a few who have been remembered through generations for their exemplary actions. As Albert Einstein rightly said of Gandhi "Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe that such a man as this one ever in flesh and blood walked upon this Earth".

Mahatma Gandhi is remembered as unique personality with the legacies that no one before him even imagined of. They are Satyagraha, religious harmony, non-discrimination, struggle against untouchability and the ability to choose a cause which would resonate with the people of India and the world. Having the legacy of Satyagraha or non-violent opposition to injustice as his weapon, Gandhi led the Indian struggle for independence and made the British empire once the greatest empire in the world concede the independence. This paved the way for the leaders like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther king and Aung San Su Kyi to struggle in a similar way in their respective countries.

Through peaceful non-cooperation like "Salt March", he has shown the world how to achieve goals without resorting to violence even when faced with imprisonment, physical abuse or death. By the legacy of religious harmony, Gandhi encouraged always the inter-faith dialogue to live in harmony. Of the discrimination and the untouchability, he said. "My struggle against Untouchability is a struggle against all that is impure in humanity".

Seventy years after his death, Gandhi is still revered in India and throughout the world because he set an example for the world by adhering to moral principles until his death.

On this day of importance to the mankind, the Indian Diaspora Council joining hands with all its affiliates and members pays tribute to the father of the nation by rekindling his legacies.

### **Shadel Nyack Compton - Grenada**

Mahatma Gandhi is the true embodiment of what making a difference looks like. He led India to independence from British rule through his non-violent protests. He showed the world that freedom can be attained without resorting to war. Gandhi made it possible for the words peaceful and protest to co-exist. He demonstrated resistance in a way that is honorable and he fought with silent dignity. Today, as we celebrate his birthday, may we be reminded to stand for what we believe in, never compromise our values, and be a beacon of hope to everyone around us.

### **Santram Dukhbhanjan – New York, USA**

M.K. Gandhi was the first Indian who gave India global recognition and he still remains the most admired Indian historical personality outside India. As we celebrate his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, we feel a sense of pride in associating ourselves, with Mother India and hope that the world will be a better place to live in. If we follow Gandhi's teachings on non-violence.

### **Sylvia Perez - Belize**

Let's honour Mahatma Gandhi as the Hero of Satyagraha (passive resistance) on the celebration of his 150 birth anniversary. May we emulate his exemplary passive resistance to fight for freedom from our oppressors, curb racial oppression, increase economic independence, and tolerate diverse May each of our 'fast' be a passive action to help reduce political and social injustices.

### **Dr. Sharla Madho-Khargi – New York, USA**

Born with characteristics as most human beings, Mahatma Gandhi made a conscious effort to serve humanity with humility and honor. The wisdom he shared encompassed growth in development, behavior characteristics, emotions and temperament. Mahatma created a healthy and secure attachment within his soul to fulfill his life's purpose. His insightful words and actions have created a permanent platform for self-expression and inter/intra personal relations for intergenerational success. On your birthday, we celebrate your resilience and ability to positively effect social change. Thank you for your faith in humanity! Janam Din Mubarak Baapu!