Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi stands tall among the global figures of the modern era. He was a pioneer of the philosophy of non-violence that was complimented by his principle of *Satyagraha* or 'soul force'. This philosophy guided a long and courageous struggle against British rule that lasted several decades. During that struggle, Gandhi honed the philosophy of ‘non-cooperation’, which informed his many campaigns to win independence. For example, his actions under the
‘Quit India’ movement included the withdrawal of work, boycotting of British educational and legal institutions, the non-payment of taxes, the relinquishing of British titles and the boycotting of British products such as textiles.

The intensity of the British response to these actions inclusive of the incarceration of the leadership of the Indian Congress, the sentencing to death of several ‘instigators’ and the massacre of unarmed demonstrators, underscored the immorality of colonial rule. By the conclusion of World War 11 in 1945, the British had lost the moral authority, the will, as well as the means to continue colonial rule, and India won independence in August 1947. Shortly thereafter in January 1948 Gandhi was assassinated. But in a strange turn of fate, his death helped to quell some of the country’s discord and allowed the political leadership to more easily pursue Gandhi’s passionate desire for a secular state, build upon the tenets of democracy and
tolerance.

The struggle and victory for Indian independence resonated throughout the British Empire and shortly thereafter the Crown presided over the dismantling of its dominions in Pakistan, Ceylon, Libya, Gambia, the Sudan, and the Gold Coast. By the end of the 1960's the majority of the remaining colonies in Africa and the West Indies were also granted independence.

After Gandhi's demise, the struggle for civil rights and the strategy of non-violence, inspired and energized marginalized populations all over the world, in countries as diverse as the United States, Brazil and South Africa. Most notable among them was the struggle for equal rights led by Nobel Prize winner Dr. Martin Luther King. King and the Southern Leadership Christian Council changed the landscape of America when a decades long
nonviolent struggle resulted in African Americans being given the right to vote, the right to attend the same schools as their white compatriots, and to enjoy all the rights granted under the Constitution. King is famously quoted as saying that while Christ provided the overall goals for the civil rights struggle, Gandhi provided the tactics.

Later on, Nelson Mandela employed the core principles of non-violence in his early attempts to bring an end to South Africa's apartheid system. Although it took close to half a century with Mandela himself spending twenty-seven of those years behind bars, the end of apartheid came in 1994, because members of the global community were unified in their belief that apartheid was an immoral, repugnant and unjust system that could no longer be tolerated. The peaceful transfer of power from all white rule, to democracy stands out as yet another example of Gandhi's philosophy in
action. In many ways, Mandela’s oversight of apartheid’s demise brought Gandhi’s initial civil disobedience campaign in South Africa during the early part of the twentieth century, to a fitting conclusion.

Other renowned proponents of non-violence include the Dalai-Lama of Tibet, Lech Walesa of Poland, Cesar Chavez, of the US, Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma and Desmond Tutu of South Africa.

Today, sixty four years after his death, Gandhi's legacy is still relevant and resonates deeply with the challenges of a post-industrial, postmodern, globalized era where citizens of the world are more diverse but more connected than any other time in history.

His philosophy of Satyagraha provides a lens to view, analyse and provide solutions for a variety of
the world’s most intractable problems including the global financial crisis, the increasing diversity of the world's population, the crisis of leadership, and the marginalisation of whole sub sections of society including the poor, young people and women.

Gandhi's voice can be heard today as we try to negotiate our way out of the worst financial quagmire the world has seen since the Great Depression of 1939. The dominance of Keynesian economics which privileges the rule of market forces, has led to the impoverishment of large segments of the world's population, while transferring more and more of the world's assets to the rich.

Today, the richest two percent of the world's adults own more than half of the world's wealth. Gandhi promoted an approach to economic policy that was based on the belief that wealth belongs to the
society, and should be held in trust for the benefit of all. As such, economic policy is not about wealth creation but a tool to eradicate poverty, while promoting education and empowerment of the poor.

Many noted economists including Robert Freidman, Andrew Sachs and S.K. Rao believe that the Gandhian approach to economic policy is the only solution to the on-going global financial crisis. Nations should not spend more than they earn, and people should not use more than they need, to ensure the planet is protected for future generations.

The recent uprisings of marginalized groups all over the world also resonates with Gandhi's belief in the power of ordinary people coming together, sharing an idea to change an oppressive reality and achieving that purpose non-violently. The Arab spring, which began in 2010 and was led in large
part, by young people using social media platforms, helped to remove oppressive regimes. This movement was informed in large part by non-violent action. The same can be said for the massive 'Occupy' movement that gridlocked cities in North America and Europe during 2011 as ordinary people sought to redress the huge earnings and assets gap that separates the rich from the middle class and working poor.

While both of these stories are still being written, we are reminded of the power of ordinary citizens coming together to speak truth to power. In both instances, the groups were aided by the accessibility of communication technology, while all Gandhi had at his disposal was ‘word of mouth’. However, it is true that Gandhi wished to create communication software that would facilitate the open and transparent sharing of ideas, and the promotion of dialogue between different groups, which were the defining features of the two movements cited.
Most importantly, Gandhi taught us something about leadership as he always emphasized the role of personal responsibility in effecting change. Gandhi's personal life reflected his belief that 'we must be the change we seek in the world'. There was convergence between his public and private life, as he believed that every personal action was political. Gandhi lived a simple life, readily admitted to his failures and shortcomings, and kept his willingness to learn in the humble state of a student, always willing to grow from his own mistakes, and from the failures of those around him. This example of leading from in front with courage, is the type of leadership that encourages real and lasting change. It is perhaps the type of leadership needed to arrest the volatility that defines the current socio-political and economic global crisis.
Finally, his tolerance of diversity is as important today as it was sixty years ago because we live in an increasingly plural world where peaceful co-existence between groups is constantly being undermined and challenged. Gandhi believed that there was no clash of civilizations but only a pressing need for the celebration of diversity and mutual tolerance. This sentiment bears truth for every global citizen, as we all stand confident in our own identities, while acknowledging that we are constantly being re-shaped and re-invented by the presence of others. I end with the words of Gandhiji that were found written on the wall of his ashram in Ahmadabad:

‘I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.’

I thank you

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