

The Vista, March 15, 2007

IPJ praises legendary leaders of nonviolent disobedience

Acclaimed documentary "A Force More Powerful" screened with a discussion



A scene from the film "A Force More Powerful" screened in the IPJ.

RYAN BRENNAN/THE VISTA

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The Institute for Peace and Justice, as a part of the speaker and film series, showcased "A Force More Powerful: The Way of Dr. King and Gandhi" this past Monday, focusing on nonviolence and the principles and methods employed by Mohandas Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Erik Olson Fernández, director of the San Diego field office of the California School Employees Association, hosted the interactive film and lecture series, discussing the meanings, myths and influence of nonviolence.

Amid the backdrop of inspirational quotes from Gandhi and King and clips from the acclaimed documentary series, "A Force More Powerful," Fernandez emphasized the importance of understanding violence as well as its meaning and impact in order to identify with nonviolence and the commanding message it sends. Using input from the audience, Fernández put together an array of perceptions and key words that are associated with violence to help direct attention to what nonviolence denotes.

The highly participatory discussion packed with motivating handouts about King's six principles of nonviolence and 198 methods of nonviolent action utilized excerpts from the documentary depicting the start of desegregation in Nashville, Tenn. and the great influence of Gandhi during his campaign to end British rule in India by tactfully promoting civil disobedience and the citizen cultivation of salt to weaken the colonial power's authority.

Fernández used the visual aids as a sounding board to hone in on the tactical significance, breadth and depth of thought, sacrifice and discipline that is involved in orchestrating and partaking in a nonviolent movement on both a large and small scale.

As the film illustrated, coordination, unity and shrewdness in manipulating the system in a way to benefit one's movement are all necessities and methods in practicing nonviolence.

In addressing the myths and connotations of nonviolence, which range from cowardliness to ineffectiveness, Fernández conveyed through the vivid imagery of the film that the practice of nonviolence or in Gandhian terms, satyagraha is a force to be reckoned with.

The open discussion and input from the audience also suggested that the power of nonviolence can be seen not only through the humble beginnings of Nashville's desegregation or the grand scale of Gandhi's movement, but also through charismatic leaders and people fighting for their liberties around the globe.

Although nonviolence can be construed to be associated with weakness and passivity, the lecture clearly conveyed that followers of Gandhi and King nonviolent philosophy possess the awesome capacity and the willingness to suffer as well as the discipline needed to outweigh physical force and acts of violence. However, as Fernández noted, it does not take a massive movement to start igniting change through nonviolent means if people started coordinating on a smaller scale, their endeavors could potentially spread and catapult an issue to the forefront of national thought.

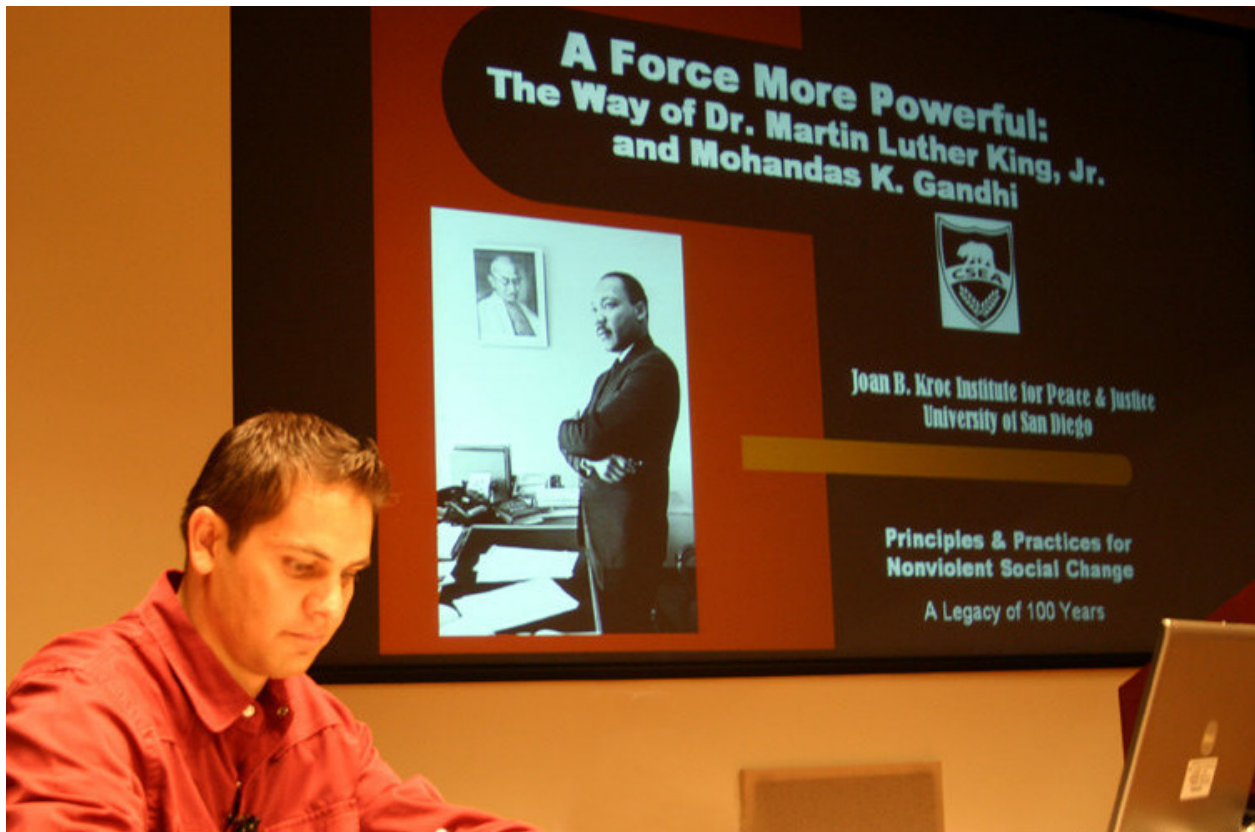


Photo by IPJ