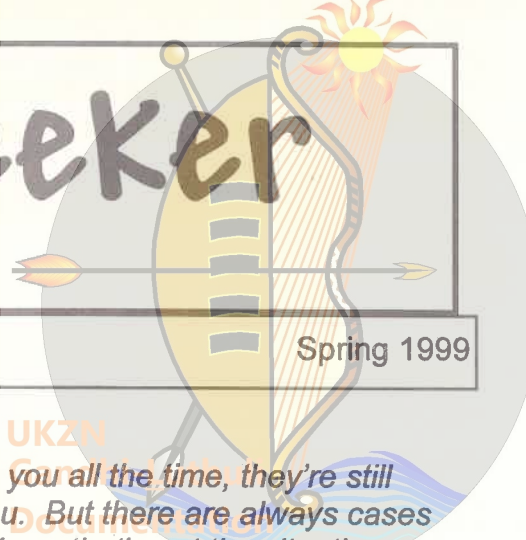


# Truthseeker



Volume 6, Issue 1

Spring 1999

## The Agony of Youth

**I**n preparation for the new millennium we dedicate the first issue of the last year of this millennium to the "voices of youth."

Adults don't give youth much of a hearing. The youth naturally respond in anger or rebellion. Unfortunately, the more angry they become the more we adults condemn them as "irresponsible". The cycle goes on and we lose many young people to violence every day.

On a recent visit to Denver, Colorado, we came across some intelligent youth living on the streets nursing their pain. They wrote some heart-wrenching essays and poems. A few are reproduced in this issue. Also reproduced are some essays written by school children and one poem that was read at the "Season for Nonviolence" function at the United Nations on January 29, 1999.

It is time we adults respond to the agonizing cries of our children and instill in them some hope.

Fourteen -year-old Sara of Lompoc, California, wrote:



*A lot of you teens out there think you have the worst family in the world and always feel sorry for yourselves just because your mom told you to clean your room or something. Well guess what? You need to start realizing that even if your parents don't*

*understand you all the time, they're still there for you. But there are always cases like mine where that's not the situation.*

*My Dad decided to go back to college so we were faced with being poor. He always seemed to be gone, and I would go for days without seeing him. During this time my Mom got mixed up with alcohol and soon became an alcoholic.*

*She stayed out all night and wasn't around — I had the responsibility of taking care of my little brother.*

*My Mom was hospitalized several times for trying to kill herself. One of her attempts was right in front of me when she slashed her wrist.*

  
*Soon my mother  
began to take  
interest in other men*  


*Soon she decided to take an interest in other men. We never saw her most of the time, and it ripped my heart out not only for me but for my younger brother. All this time my Dad was pretty much clueless to her affairs and was gone as much as her. ➔*

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[From page one]

One day my Mom decided life is just too hard and bought a gun and shot herself in the woods of a nearby lake. A couple days later some hikers found her body and reported it. At the funeral I didn't even cry because I felt like I was numb to the world, and I felt dead inside.

Those couple years were the hardest in my entire life. And when I hear people say stuff like they hate their parents because they got grounded for staying out too late, I think of them as being lucky because their parents are just showing that they really care about their well being. So when you get the chance, stop and realize how really lucky you are.

Right now I'm opening up a little at a time to my Dad. It's hard for me to show love because I haven't felt love in a very long time. I still don't let my Dad hug me or I won't come right out and say I love you because it's really hard after all that's happened. At least I can say that I am trying (unlike some people).

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## Peace

[This poem was written by Chrissy Graves, a student of Denison Montessori School, Denver, Colorado, on the occasion of Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi's visit to the school.]

When do you know  
you have experienced peace?  
When do you know  
you're a peacemaker?  
How can you be a  
peace-maker if  
you haven't experienced  
peace?  
Ask yourself  
these questions  
and then  
try and  
experience  
peace.



## Nonviolence

Nonviolence is the key to life for me. I think it means no killing, no racism, no violence, period.

But, especially peace! Dr. King, Gandhi, Buddha and many more of the great people of the world believed in this. The only reason I think people should be violent is if they must. For example, if your habitat is being taken over by someone, you should fight for your freedom. Gandhi was very unpopular for doing this since he was known for his peace. When India was being invaded by Germany Gandhi told Indians to fight! I agree with him because if they did not take action Germany would have ruled India.

This concludes this essay on nonviolence. Remember, most of all the great people of the world had dreams, all relating to peace. Now ask yourself this question:

Do you?  
— Grayson S.

[Elementary class, Denison Montessori School, Denver]

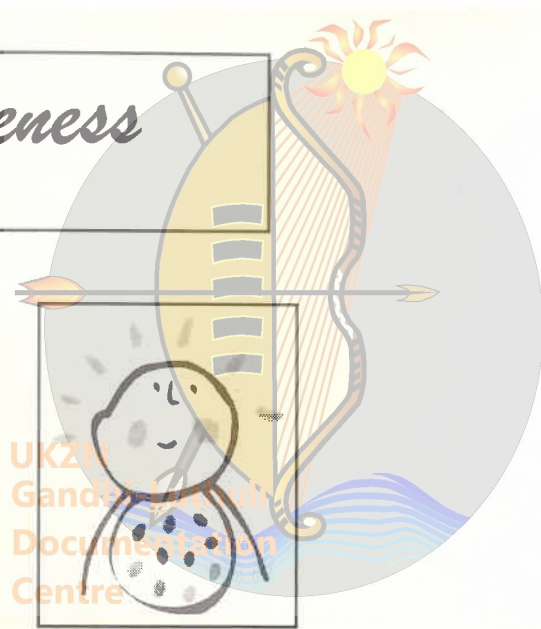
# family is about closeness

Dear Parents,

I just thought that I could say everything in a letter because I get all dehydrated when I cry. You know. Anyway, I just wanted to tell you how much the both of you mean to me. I know that I wasn't as helpful as I could have been. I just consider myself lucky to have you guys be there, even when you disagreed with what I am doing and the choices that I am making. I don't want you to think that it is going to be like the last time, and that I will never be up to see you. I think that things are different this time around, especially with you, mom. I feel a lot better about the way we communicate now, and I think it will be easier for us to talk to each other in the future.

And I also wanted to make sure that I thanked you individually, John, for taking care of my animals. You have no idea how much that helped. And then there was the cat box, which I will be forever in your debt for, which is by far the foulest job ever known to people.

I don't know for sure, but knowing you, if this following thing is a concern, I just want to put your mind at rest about it. I don't want you guys to think that because I am staying with someone else, you will see the baby any less.



If we have our own place, then you know we would either bring the baby to see you or you could just come over. You would be probably the only people I would trust with the kid, so you could take the baby for visiting, or I could come stay the night with him/her, or else I could take the kid up here to see you. So don't worry. I want you guys to be a big part of the baby's life. I will even come up here when the baby's moving can be felt through my belly, so you can feel it too.

I love you both very much. I also appreciate and admire the both of you very much. This baby is going to be lucky to have such good people as grandparents,

Love always,

Christiana

(Eighteen year old who ran away from home and has been living at "The Spot" in Denver)

## **Transitions**

Welcome

**Mr. James Gilliland** and **Mrs. Janice Vanderhaar** as Board members.

**Dr. Jennifer Case**, as Executive Director, and **Ms. Jackie Cole** as Office Manager.

Farewell

**Laura Pietrangelo**, Executive Director, who has moved to San Diego; **Marie Saliba**, Program Director, who plans to teach, and **Mike McCune**, Office Manager, who is finishing his studies.



This poem was written by  
Carla Jeudy (15)  
and read by her at  
the inauguration of the Sea-  
son for Nonviolence at the United Nations on  
January 29, 1999. Carla is a student at Thomas  
Shallcross School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## Open Your Eyes!!

By Carla Jeudy

Ø  
Racism is growing, I find that insane,  
We're not the same color  
But we bleed the same.  
Shootings in schools,  
Killing students and teachers,  
Churches are burned,  
Now how 'bout those preachers?  
Domestic violence is growing in size,  
We don't really need this, just  
OPEN YOUR EYES.  
Children are starving, yet you have  
nine cars.  
Where is your son? Locked up behind  
bars.  
Did you know the divorce rate is at 50  
per cent?  
Where is the love?  
Do you know where it went?  
You walk out your door, you hear  
screams and hollers,  
A little boy is dead because of  
ten dollars.  
Tears streaming down, you say your  
goodbyes,  
We don't really need this, just  
OPEN YOUR EYES.  
When will you see? When we're all  
annihilated?  
Daddy grabs the gun, his little girl has  
been violated.  
You don't go to church,  
Your excuse is something popped up.  
Then have the nerve to cry to God when  
you're in a cell locked up?  
Well, its gotten too far with your 4

*deceitful lies,*  
We don't really  
need this, just  
OPEN YOUR EYES.  
You can't read a book, yet you can  
roll a blunt.

Here's a new saying, You only get  
what you want. You don't know  
your fractions, but you know the  
rap verses,  
Can't name a verb, but can recite  
all the curses.

You dropped out of school,  
You thought you were bold,  
I asked what's your age, you say  
twelve years old.

I shake my head,  
You're only a baby.

Where are your parents?  
The world has gone crazy.  
Put your knowledge to use,  
Get out of the wrong crowd,  
Do it for yourself,

I bet Mom will be proud.  
There's a job to be done and we all  
must take part.

We don't want your money, we'd  
rather have your heart.  
Accept the diversity and help the  
violence cease,

And maybe one day  
The world will find peace.  
And we will look back,  
For this choice is wise,  
And we'll thank the heavens,



WE OPENED OUR EYES!

As part of the “**Season for Nonviolence**” program launched by the M. K. Gandhi Institute and the Association of Global New Thought people in prisons were asked to write essays on nonviolence. Reproduced below is the 1st Prize winning essay:  
**“Hope for Today”**  
 by James Culbert.

When someone faces a challenge they can do one of two things. They can face the challenge or just simply walk away. When I read what this contest was about I began to think what can I possibly do or say to make a difference. It was as though I looked at this contest as a hopeless matter. But then questions began to bother me such as what if I could make a difference? So instead of walking away from this problem we all face I’ve decided to share my thoughts, opinions and feelings to all the questions asked within this contest. Also included are some of my poems I wrote to fit in with my essay. My hope is....for us to one day live in peace.

**“STOP THE VIOLENCE”**

**Did you ever ask the question why  
 Throughout our lives people must die  
 Or how a child is always beat  
 Along with shots that echo the streets  
 No one cares for the battered wife  
 When they themselves fear for their life  
 Because anger screams for one to buy it  
 If you, yourself don’t be quiet  
 So what can we do to help break the silence  
 Pull together and stop the violence.....**

When I hear the word violence I begin to think back to my childhood. It is here where I first began to face the violence in my life. I was abused as a child in different ways, but I have to admit watching my mother get hit hurt me more than my own abuse. This violence in our home had a lasting effect on me.... And more often it became an excuse for my own violent behaviors. I would often find myself confused when I exploded in rage towards one’s I loved. I could not understand how I could become part of the very thing I hated as a child. To this day I struggle with my own anger and often fight with myself to control it.

As a child I was influenced by others to accept only my own race. And, that anyone who was not my color was considered different or no good. This, in turn, became a problem in my life

and because of it I face violence in a different way.....I became involved in many racial fights and also became part of the violence in our streets. I was just one more ignorant man who added to the shameful violence of the races. I had no moral values or understanding of what I faced. I just allowed myself to be influenced by a group of people who had a hatred for something that they themselves could not understand.....

Growing up in a lower class family we at times became in want. But now that I think of it we basically had our necessities we needed, a home to live in and food to eat. But because of my own “pride” and “selfishness” I began to covet other material things in life. I felt an anger build in me because I was less fortunate than the kids around me. This in turn brought about another violence that society faces. One in which crimes are committed against those who have become successful in life or who are financially secure. And, it’s as though I gained a violent attitude that I was owed something in life, or that I had been cheated. But the truth is I also became part of the burden that our nation faces every day — crime...

There are many people in our world today who have a low self esteem, and have a difficult time dealing with their feelings. And a lot of people reach out for something that they think would comfort their hurts and pain. Instead of seeking professional help...they turn to drugs and alcohol. I am ashamed to say that I was one of those people who chose to turn to drugs. Not everyone makes this choice but it’s a problem that I am sure everyone is aware of. And its important because I believe this has become the center of most of the violence we face. Many crimes are committed because of drugs....

All of the different types of violence I faced in my life tells me a story. This is a story that lives with me every day through my pain, fears and scars. And the sad part about it is that I just continued...The influence that violence had on my life, I’m ashamed to say, I carried ⇨



over to my children. Now the very things that hurt me through violence I allowed to be brought before my own children.....As sad as it is the truth is that every-day people are being murdered, gangs are fighting and children are being abused. We live in a violent world and we ourselves .....add to the never ending violence.

### LEARN TO LOVE

**Endless pictures of a murder case  
Another human life gone to waste  
What can we do to stop this sorrow  
And prevent any more before tomorrow.  
Children are dying almost every day  
When will we learn of another way  
To break the violence's steady beat  
And stop the fighting in our streets  
Because people are hurting deep within  
For a world peace to begin  
One where we all can look above  
And together in unity learn to love....**

As a society we can make a difference....I choose to think positive and open the door for hope to begin. I think one of the most important things in our battle against violence is to start with our thinking process. We must believe we can defeat the enemy we face. (By thinking negative) more often we defeat ourselves. Like I did when I doubted that I could make a change by entering this contest. But by taking a stand and believing in ourselves and harboring positive thoughts we can fight violence....

When someone became successful in life they had to begin somewhere and take the initial steps to make this happen. So it is with all of us who choose to take a stand and care enough to help make this world a safer place. After mentally preparing ourselves for this battle by thinking positive we need then to allow this courage to help us take action. And, beginning with ourselves make sure we are being part of the solution. This can begin in our own homes by making sure we provide a safe environment for our family and children.

Children often watch their parents actions as they are growing up. If you have children remember this is where true education begins for them. How we raise our children and teach them greatly affects our society as a whole. At a young age if we convince our children that they are important we then open the door to possibly get involved. By asking our children what their thoughts on violence are we will learn what the children are dealing with in the streets.....

Now we can also take another step in our struggle against violence by inspiring our own commu-

nities, towns and cities to get involved in the struggle.....If everyone can keep this motivation we will see an increase in support in many different areas.....Perhaps just a friendly smile or a simple hello to someone can make a difference. As bizarre as it may seem or unrealistic we think this can be by practicing humility we open doors we could have never imagined.

Along with humility we must remember the violence we face is part of an evil force that is trying to ruin our society and the world.....If we all can learn to be aware of the violence in our own lives we then become aware of the violence around us. This in turn may help us prevent situations before they occur. /We then find ourselves setting good examples for our children and the people around us in our communities. People may begin to see something that is right.

### HOPE FOR TODAY

**I wonder if there will come a day  
When all children can learn to play  
Together in harmony without no fights.  
For they were taught what was right  
By a generation that chose to share  
In a fight against violence, for they cared  
About our future soon to be  
One with hope for you and me.**

When I think about what I would like our future to be like for our children.....I think of love. We need to learn to live with one another,

understand each other and make it easier to communicate without yelling, fighting and killing.....We need a love that allows us to eat our pride and care for someone else's feelings.

My favorite definition of love is: "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the Truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

Just think if everyone had this type of love what kind of world, society, community we could have.....☺

*"Prayer from the heart can achieve what nothing else can in the world." —Gandhi*

*I carried  
my feelings  
of violence  
to my  
children.*

# What Is Prayer?

by M. K. Gandhi

Prayer means asking God for something in a reverent attitude. But the word is used also to denote any devotional act.....But definition apart, what is it that millions of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews and others do every day during the time set apart for the adoration of the Maker? It seems to me that it is a yearning of the heart to be one with the Maker, an invocation for His blessings. It is in this case the attitude that matters, not words uttered or muttered.

And often the association of words that have been handed down from ancient times has an effect which in their rendering into one's mother-tongue they will lose altogether. Thus the Gayatri translated and recited in, say, Gujarati, will not have the same effect as the original. The utterance of the word Rama will instantaneously affect millions of Hindus, when the word God, although they may understand the meaning, will leave them untouched. Words after all acquire a power by long usage and sacredness associated with their use. There is much, therefore, to be said for the retention of the old Sanskrit formulae for the most prevalent *mantras* or verses. That the meaning of them should be properly understood goes without saying.

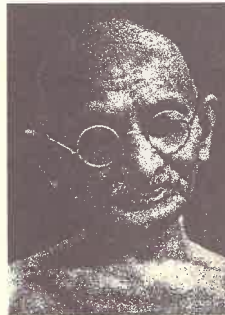
There can be no fixed rule laid down as to the time these devotional acts should take. It depends upon individual temperament. These are precious moments in one's daily life. The exercises are intended to sober and humble us and enable us to realize that nothing happens without His will and that we are but "clay in the hands of the potter." These are moments when one reviews one's immediate past, confesses one's weaknesses, asks for forgiveness and strength to be and do better.

One minute may be enough for some, twenty-four hours may be too little for others

For those who are filled with the presence of God in them, to labor is to pray. Their life is one continuous prayer or act of worship. For those others who act only to sin, to indulge themselves, and live for self, no time is too much. If they had patience and faith and the will to be pure, they would pray till they feel the definite purifying presence of God within them.

For us, ordinary mortals, there must be a middle path between these two extremes. We are not so exalted as to be able to say that all our acts are a dedication, nor perhaps are we so far gone as to be living purely for self. Hence have all religions set apart times for general devotion. Unfortunately, these have now a days become merely mechanical and formal, where they are not hypocritical. What is necessary, therefore, is the correct attitude to accompany these devotions.

For definite personal prayer in the sense of asking God for something, it should certainly be in one's own tongue. Nothing could be grander than to ask God to make us act justly towards everything that lives. (from "Young India" 1926.)

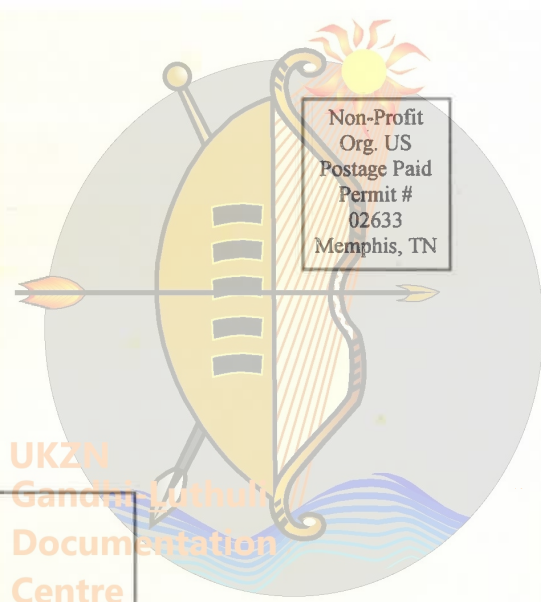




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## Young Readers Write

*Students of Denison Montessori School, Denver, Colorado, recently wrote the following letters after Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi visited their school. — Editor.*

....Denison is glad that you are here today. We have heard a lot about your grandfather. My class likes what your Grandfather did for the Indians. Your Grandfather was a really good person. I wish he was still alive..... **Everett Velasquez**

....When the peacemaker walks by the bad, the bad just go "puff" like smoke. The Peacemaker will still like you when you're bad. Peacemakers are the best. I love Peacemakers.....**Philip Jones**

....To me nonviolence means honoring the earth, other people, and yourself. I think nonviolence includes very simple acts of kindness such as helping an old or disabled person or spending time with someone in need.

I think nonviolence is a large part of peace. It takes up a lot of space in our lives. It is very much

needed by people. We shouldn't take advantage of those smaller or weaker than us, but help and protect them. We should teach nonviolence to everyone.

Nonviolence is very important to us all. Elderly people depend on it to get through their days. Too bad they still have to worry about getting hurt by a careless someone. They shouldn't have to worry about that.

Most of all, we need to care, love, and give to people we love. All you need is a big heart and a few simple acts of kindness toward others. Every little bit helps.....**Nathaniel B. Elsas**

### SPECIAL NOTE OF APPRECIATION

Many thanks to **Jennifer Joe** of San Diego. She is to be commended for her unstinting services in designing our website. We appreciate your work, Jennifer. Thank!

Our warm love and good wishes to all our **work study students and volunteers** who will soon be immersed in their exams and later go on to achieve greater distinctions.





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