

**KUSH'S EXPERIENCE:
ASPIRING TOWARD NONVIOLENCE IN MY COMMUNITY
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As members of the community, we have a duty to educate ourselves about why violence occurs. In addition to education, we need a plan for action. Even if we know all about non-violence, if we do not take action and teach others, nothing can be accomplished.

My experiences with nonviolence in my community have involved both enlightening education and revolutionary actions.

In Rocky Mountain Region, we have been using an article in the April issue of the *SGI Quarterly* entitled "Nonviolence for the 21st Century: Challenges and Choices," by Arun Gandhi. With a small group of other youth division members, I read and discussed issues presented in the article for several hours. We did this activity in preparation for a presentation given at a World Peace Prayer Meeting by our group. In the presentation we illustrated two main ideas presented in the article.

The first idea was that passive violence is the cause of physical violence. Arun Gandhi defines passive violence as oppression in all its forms: name-calling, teasing, insulting and any disrespectful behavior. He goes on to say that to stop violence we need courage. We have to have the courage to stand up for what is right, no matter what others may think of us. This is essential if we want to achieve world peace.

Through participating in that meeting I gained a higher level of understanding about nonviolence while sharing ideas with others.

Soon after that meeting, I got the chance to take action in my community. That community was my high school. As my senior year of high school was coming to an end, I was asked to vote for which senior had the best smile, was the funniest person, etc. I had a problem with one of the categories in particular, that being the vote for who was the "biggest tree-hugger." I felt that this category expressed a lack of mutual respect among students. A school community cannot exist harmoniously with this type of passively violent mind-set. I recognized this as being a potentially destructive situation because I had learned about what passive violence means by participating in the youth division discussions.

I went on to take action, correcting this wrong, despite the numbers of other students telling me that "It is only a joke," and, "You're really overreacting." These students may not have realized that such a vote could be hurtful or discriminatory toward others. I wrote a letter to the editors of the newspaper in which the votes were to be printed, letting them know about my concerns. I made sure to do this in a polite and unassuming manner. When the newspaper came out, the title of "biggest tree-hugger" was changed to "most environmentally aware." When I read the title, I realized that my efforts had helped turn something potentially hurtful and destructive into something positive and constructive.

This type of action against violence in our daily lives is where creating nonviolence begins. In the youth division group I mentioned earlier, we created another action plan. Our determination was to get the article by Arun Gandhi into our schools.

I brought the article to the peer counseling advisor at my school, and talked with her about the ideas it presented on nonviolence. This was not hard because I had talked about it so much by this time! She gladly accepted the article and told me that it would serve as a guideline for discussion as soon as school started again.

Through these efforts I was able to promote the creation of nonviolence. To create non-

violence we must learn from the violent experiences we see. We need the wisdom to recognize violence in all its passive forms and the courage to stop it when we see it. I hope my experience can serve as an example for how to win a victory over violence in the future.

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