

# MEREDITH HERALD

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## Hull lecturer brings message of peace to Meredith

by Christina Peoples  
photos by Jetson

The auditorium was crowded with students, staff, faculty and friends of the Meredith community for a message of peace and hope for the world's future. Conversation and greetings filled the room as the crowd waited for the speaker to arrive.

Social activist and author, Dr. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, brought his message of non-violence and solutions for the future to Meredith College on March 29 in a crowded Jones Auditorium. His lecture entitled "Non-Violence or Non-Existence: Options for the 21st Century" was a part of the Jo Welch Hull Lecture Series On Faith and Life In a Changing World and in cooperation with the Convocation Committee.

The lecture series is sponsored in honor of Jo Welch Hull, a prestigious Meredith alumnae and religion major, who has devoted her life to the promotion of education. She is currently an education consultant in Greensboro and works with the Piedmont Interfaith Council of which she was the co-founder. Hull, her husband and one of her three sons were present at the lecture.

The auditorium quickly grew silent as Dr. Eloise Grathwohl introduced Gandhi, and Rev. Sam Corothers led the audience in the invocation. Corothers called on the audience members to reflect on their roles as peace-makers and to focus on justice, mercy and tolerance.

Gandhi began his lecture with an audience-participation game. He asked members of the audience to find partners and have one person make a fist and the other to open the partner's fist. Everyone immediately began tugging at the closed fingers of his or her partner.

Gandhi taught the audience the

first lesson in non-violence. He had only asked the partner to try to open the fist, but no members ever asked their partners if they would open the fist themselves. Instead, they resorted to violence.

Communication is the key to stopping violence, said Gandhi. When he was ten years old,

Gandhi was beaten because of the color of his skin when he lived in South Africa. His parents sent him to live with his grandfather in 1946 at age 12 to fight the rage that had filled him.

"The 18 months I spent with him laid the foundation for my understanding of his philosophy and way of life," said Gandhi.

He expressed that although society thinks that it helps to build more prisons and lock the criminals up, we need to understand how to deal with the problems. People have an inability to build solid relationships because they have forgotten how to communicate and understand each other.

"Anger is like electricity because if we abuse electricity, everything around us will be destroyed and burned down," said Gandhi. "But this same powerful, deadly energy is in our homes and work places and is used for the good of humanity because we use it with intelligence, respect and understanding. Anger is the same thing."

Gandhi suggested that people keep an anger journal because they can "let the anger flow onto the paper" and "have a written record of their emo-

tions."

People need to understand the violence they practice themselves through hate, discrimination and oppression. However, instead they are focused on the physical violence between nations, communities and criminals, said Gandhi.

Gandhi also suggested that people build a tree of violence. Violence is written at the top of a big sheet of paper and branched into its two forms: physical and passive. Every day of a person's experience he or she can add examples of each of these kinds of violence that they encounter.

"It is a tremendous eye opener to learn the extent of violence we practice all the time," he said. "Only when we learn the extent of violence can we understand how to prevent it."

When Gandhi lived with his grandfather, he did not attend residential school and was taught at home instead. He was given a note-

book and pencil for his lessons, and when the pencil was about three inches long, he threw it in the bushes and went to his grandfather for a new one. He thought like most grandfathers that he would open the drawer and give him a new pencil.

"Not my grandfather," said Gandhi. "He subjected me to a line of questions and told me to go out and look for the pencil. I thought he must be joking, but he was serious and got a flashlight for me."

Gandhi found the pencil and brought it happily back to his grandfa-

ther, thinking that it was so small, his grandfather would have to agree with him and give him a new pencil, he said.

He did not get the new pencil, but he did learn two important lessons about the world. Making the pencil used some of the world's resources, and when he threw it away, he committed violence against nature. Because people waste things that are readily available, they over-consume, and someone somewhere else is denied these things, which is violent aggression against human beings.

"The gap between rich nations and poor nations is so great that it is almost unbridgeable," he said.

Gandhi laughed as he recalled that after he taught this lesson to some university students, every time they found a pencil or pen they would bring it to him.

He also told a story about a time when he lied to his father. Instead of getting mad at him, his father decided to punish himself to figure out where he had gone wrong raising his son. Gandhi never lied again after that day, he said, and he learned the lesson of how non-violence can work.

The last story he told was about trying to see if his grandfather had learned the lesson of anger. While his grandfather was in important meetings, Gandhi continually bothered him to give him his autograph, which his grandfather

always charged money for to fund his programs.

His grandfather never gave him the autograph, even at the insistence of the men with whom he was

meeting. Instead, he put his hand over Gandhi's mouth, pulled Gandhi's head

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