The Olive Branch

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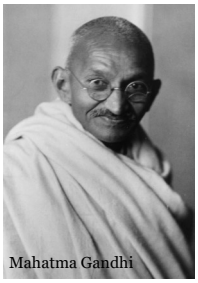
CENTER FOR PEACE & CONFLICT STUDIES
www.bsu.edu/peacecenter

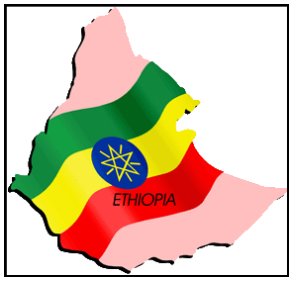
The Olive Branch is a publication of the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies at Ball State University. Every issue, we shine a spotlight on people, events, campus groups, conferences, and organizations who are working towards a more peaceful world.

Menaka Guruswamy

INDY FESTIVAL OF FAITHS

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
EST. 1918


Mahatma Gandhi



A HISTORIC WIN FOR THE LGBT+ COMMUNITY!

In today's society, there have been numerous legal movements for the inclusion of diverse people into the mainstream. However, there are still countries that rely on draconian laws to influence their current policies. It has become vital for activist groups to push for change that repeal such laws and make way for a more just way of life for marginalized groups. Dr. Menaka Guruswamy is one such lawyer and activist who has been working diligently to create positive change for the LGBT+ community in India.

Dr. Guruswamy was born in 1974 in Hyderabad, India. She is a lawyer, an academician, and an activist who specializes in human and constitutional rights. More importantly, she believes that every person has certain constitutional and social rights, and she has made it her mission to help protect them. Recently, she was a part of a team of lawyers who worked to abolish Section 377 of the Indian Constitution.

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was introduced in 1861. This section criminalized sexual behaviors that were deemed unnatural; homosexual acts under this law were a punishable offense. Interestingly, this law had been challenged previously in India's history. In July 2009, the Delhi High Court ruled that prohibiting same sex interactions was unconstitutional. Unfortunately, in December 2013 the Delhi High Court overturned this decision, criminalizing homosexual acts once again. Nevertheless, in early 2018, the Indian Supreme Court agreed to reconsider the constitutional validity of Section 377 of the IPC. On September 6th, 2018, The Indian Supreme Court ruled that a ban on consensual homosexual acts was unconstitutional and unjust. One of the key lawyers who played a role in this historical judgement was Dr. Guruswamy.

> "With the Constitution in our hearts, we go to our Court, to seek to remove a colonial stain on our collective national conscience. Section 377 your time has come… How strongly must we love knowing we are unconvicted felons under Section 377? My Lords, this is love that must be constitutionally recognized, and not just sexual acts," asserted Menaka Guruswamy (Gupta, 2018).

Dr. Guruswamy powerfully argued that the goal of the constitution was to protect Indian citizens from injustice in their lives, and Section 377 was doing the exact opposite. She brought up LGBT+ leaders by name, spoke of their stories, the struggles, and the horror it can be to not identify with heterosexuality in India. Her awareness of violent societal conditions, continuous persecution, discrimination, and treatment of the LGBT+ community strengthened her team's stance for the abolishment of Section 377. Her fellow lawyers and spectators of the court noted that her contribution to the case was pivotal to the historic judgment, which led to the reading down of Section 377. Her role in this judgement is especially notable given that she is a woman fighting in a judicial system that is heavily male dominated.

There is no doubt that Dr. Menaka Guruswamy has helped change the laws of India, and other South Asian countries are using this momentum to revisit their own outdated laws that take away the rights of LGBT+ communities. Further, this landmark India case is the first step in reducing India's structural violence and discrimination against the community. Cumulatively, these efforts will lead to positive cultural change in India and other countries; hopefully leading to the development of a more peaceful global community.

References

Gupta, P. (2018, July 12). Meet the woman fighting section 377: Menaka Guruswamy. Retrieved from https://www.shethepeople.tv/news/meet-woman-fighting-section-377-menaka-guruswamy

ETHIOPIA: MODEL FOR FOGIVENESS

Since Ethiopia's new Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, was elected into office in April 2018, the African country has faced a whirlwind of reforms. Not only is he acknowledging and seeking forgiveness from his own citizens for the governments' past actions, he is working to reconcile with his neighboring nations. The Ethiopian government is owning up to their mistakes and actively trying to right their past wrongs. These efforts are a big step to stabilize this region and bring peace. It has brought hope not only to those directly affected by the conflict but resonates with those who know the significant labors that come with seeking reconciliation.

The biggest progress towards external reconciliation in Ethiopia resulted from the signing of a peace agreement this past July between Ethiopia's longtime rival and neighbor Eritrea. Once a province of Ethiopia that gained independence in 1991, the two nations have been in constant conflict since 1998. Surprisingly, the border between the two country's is now open for the first time in two decades. Since April 2018, lines of communication have been opened, travel between countries is permitted, families who were separated have been reunited, and war has ended. Progress is still to be made but for the first time in a long time, there is hope for a more peaceful future between these nations.

"We have only one option and that is to be united, not only cooperating and helping each other but uniting in order to live together. The other option is to kill each other. However, no sane person will opt for this. So, our option should be to trust one another, heal our wounds together and work together to develop our country." (BBC, 2018).

As with any acknowledgment of past misdeeds, admitting that you have hurt the ones closest to you may be the hardest. It leads to a sense of vulnerability in accepting and acknowledging that you were the source of pain and injustice. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed knows this well and has admitted to his people that the state had engaged in serious human rights abuses. He went as far as calling the government's past conduct a form of terrorism. In attempting to make amends, a tremendous amount of progress has been made: Ethiopia has freed journalists from jail; lifted internet restrictions, political prisoners have been released, and there is the promise of free, fair, and open elections in 2020. If these reconciliatory efforts succeed, it will be a major victory not only for the people of Ethiopia, but for other countries in the region as well. Rife with their own challenges of instability, Ethiopia has the power to lead the development of peace and stability in a region that has faced insufferable violence.

There is no guarantee that this will be the end of conflict in the country and the future is unclear. Nevertheless, it appears the Ethiopian government is doing everything in its power to make up for the suffering they caused and is taking steps to prevent it from happening again. In seeking forgiveness and striving for reconciliation at a national level, they are laying building blocks for a more just and peaceful society. After being conflict ridden for decades, Ethiopia is now a symbol of hope and peace in the region.

References

BBC. (2018, September 14). Abiy Ahmed: Ethiopia's prime minister. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43567007

MAHATMA GANDHI, NONVIOLENCE, AND PEACE

Mahatma Gandhi is an icon for communities that fight for peace and nonviolence. Through his efforts to lead India into independence, we can say with certainty that peaceful and nonviolent practices can be used to effect a change at a national and international level. He was an astute political campaigner who fought for Indian independence from British rule and for the rights of all Indians, including the marginalized.

Throughout his life, Gandhi organized several nonviolent movements that advocated for the rights and freedom for the voiceless in India. His efforts to positively impact marginalized communities in India were reflected in his transformation of the Indian National Congress, the major political party in India. His goal was to represent and accept all faiths and peoples in the discussion for the future of India; and Indians of all classes and religions embraced his call for nonviolent protests. Eventually, as his popularity began to rise, Gandhi became the main voice of the Indian National Congress when the political party was fighting for independence from British rule.

Gandhi organized and led multiple nonviolent movements to expel the British from India including the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Quit India Movement. As part of these movements, he asked his fellow citizens to engage in nonviolent and peaceful acts that would force the British to reconsider their colonization and grant India independence. For instance, he asked Indians to stop reliance on British goods by purchasing only Indian, or swadeshi goods; engage in civil disobedience, or peacefully but firmly disobey rules and regulations put in place by the British; and satyagraha, or truth force, which emphasized fighting for truth and being nonviolent in acts of civil resistance. These movements led by Mahatma Gandhi united the Indian people to peacefully resist against the British government—resulting in Indian independence on August 15th, 1947.

Gandhi's efficient use of nonviolent protests demonstrated his dedication to who and what he stood for. His consistent use of ahimsa, or nonviolence, is now used across the globe as an approach to resolve conflicts. Gandhi has proven to the world that reconciliation and forgiveness between the oppressed and their oppressors is possible. Today, October 2nd, we celebrate Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birthday anniversary. In India, he is known as Gandhi Jayanti—Jayanti meaning victory—while the world recognizes today as the International Day of Nonviolence. There is a noteworthy celebration at Raj Ghat, the memorial dedicated to Gandhi in Delhi, India. On this day, his hard work is recognized and we are reminded that we can promote peaceful resolutions to violence across the world.

CONFERENCES

- Association for Conflict Resolution: 2018 Annual Conference. Pittsburgh, PA. October 3rd-6th, 2018.
- PeaceCon 2018. Washington DC. October 24th-26th, 2018.
- 2018 Annual International Conference on Ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding. Queens, NY. October 30th-Nov 1st, 2018.

INDY FESTIVAL OF FAITHS 2018

The Center of Peace and Conflict Studies will participate in the Indy Festival of Faiths 2018. This event is the Midwest's largest one-day celebration of cultural and religious diversity. The theme of 2018's Festival of Faiths is "Compassion though Action" and its goal is to promote equality, understanding, and diversity through education and fun.

When?
Sunday, October 14, 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

Where?
American Legion Mall, North Pennsylvania Street, Indianapolis, IN, 46204

What's happening?

- Diverse high school students will lead a discussion on important issues and educate youth on how they can inspire change in their own lives.
- Over three dozen religious groups who are inspired to serve their communities will be present, with over half a dozen religious leaders in attendance.
- Meditation workshops will discuss how practicing mindfulness is an important part of Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths.
- Spoken word poetry, art exhibits, and cultural education opportunities.
- Group conversations about critical issues such as Islamophobia, immigrants and refugees, and religious freedom.
- Opportunity to share messages of peace on a Peace Pole.
- Activities for children including dancing, arts and crafts, and games from different cultures.
- Music and dance from numerous faith and culture groups.
- Drumming circle with over 100 drums.
- Mini Film Fest which will feature short movies created by local filmmakers.
- Tours of the Indiana War Memorial.
- Food trucks featuring food from around the world!

Come…be a part of this celebration of culture and diversity!

BSU PRESIDENT MEARNS VISITS THE CENTER!

For the first time in the history of the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, the President of Ball State University visited us! President Geoffrey Mearns and his wife, Jennifer Mearns visited the Center on September 25th, as a part of their campus walks. We were very excited to host them!

Pictured from left to right: Gerald Waite, Jennifer Mearns, Lawrence Gerstein, Olivia Haskett, Aashna Banerjee, Xiaoyu "Caroline" Zhou, President Geoffrey Mearns.

#WORDSMATTERBSU!

With the recent events that have been highlighted in the news, including the use of offensive rhetoric by public figures, we wanted to promote respectful dialogue about difficult topics amongst the BSU community. Our first monthly event of the 2018-19 academic year, #WordsMatterBSU, aimed to do just that by asking students, faculty, staff, and others how we should move forward towards a more peaceful future. We asked them to write down their thoughts on colorful hand cut-outs and were thrilled by their insight! Kindness, empathy, openness, and better communication were among the most popular answers. Additionally, these responses were written with great ease, which begs the question: where would the world be if we started communicating with each other with values of kindness, openness, and empathy? Perhaps, by truly listening to what other people say, peace and nonviolence can be achieved each day.

By hosting the event at the university Scramble Light, we were able to reach all kinds of individuals ranging from middle school students, visiting students from Holland, France, Norway, China, and Germany, as well as BSU students, staff, and faculty. Further, we collected over 300 responses on our hand cut-outs! These responses will be compiled into an art piece that will be displayed on campus in the future. Moreover, the installation will continue to highlight that Words Matter, BSU!

OFF CAMPUS GROUPS

- A Better Way: provides shelter and services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.
- Edible Muncie of Delaware County: works to eliminate hunger in Muncie and Delaware County by gathering, organizing and advocating for the wise use of resources to assist those in need.
- Islamic Center: fosters and facilitates religious, cultural, and community activities of Muslims in Muncie and the surrounding area.
- Muncie Action Plan: a strategic guide that expresses the values and aspirations of the Muncie community and creates a compelling agenda for our future.
- Muncie Human Rights Commission: ensures that equal rights and opportunities of Muncie citizens are protected.
- Muncie OUTreach: provides an accepting environment to enhance the personal growth of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth in the Delaware County area.
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: betters lives of Americans who are affected by mental illness.

ON AND OFF CAMPUS EVENTS

October 2nd **Lifelong Learners: Human Trafficking—3:00 PM**

The Association of Lifelong Learners (ALL) is a group of retirees and community members interested in continuing to learn and engage with each other on a variety of educational topics. This event looks at how traffickers recruit and exploit vulnerable youngsters and what the state of Indiana is doing to stop it. Presented by the honor able Kimberly Dowling, Judge, Delaware Circuit Court #2.

October 7th **4th Annual Hot Rods for Hunger—1:00 PM**

Hot Rods for Hunger takes place at the Muncie Mall. You can look at some cool cars and chat with community car-fans. All the proceeds raised support the work of Second Harvest Food Bank. Free entry, and activities include raffle prizes, music, food, and Beer & Wine Garden (21+). Kids can also enjoy the Touch-A-Truck experience and pumpkin giveaway.

October 19th **Fun Home—7:30 PM**

The Department of Theater and Dance presents an original musical about seeing your parents through grown-up eyes. Graphic Novelist Allison dives deep into her past to talk about her sexuality, her father, and her unique childhood growing up at the family's funeral home. Fun Home is a refreshingly honest, wholly original musical about seeing your parents through grown-up eyes.

October 26th **Do Good with a Twist—5:30 PM**

Come to The Second Harvest Food Bank to participate in an event where you can have a unique date night while also volunteering! The Do Good Date Night is an event that gives couples access to fun and rewarding service experiences in their community. Couples pitch in to help a local non-profit and then kick back to enjoy food, drinks, good times and great company. It's a win-win for everyone.

October 28th **Marine Band National Concert Tour—3:00 PM**

The Marine Band is America's oldest continuously active profession al musical organization. Founded in 1798, the band has performed for every U.S. President since John Adams. The President's Own" United States Marine Band tours each year during September. The tour lasts approximately 31 days, during which the band performs in roughly 29 cities. This event will be at Emens Auditorium.

Fridays in October **Meditation in the BSU Museum—3:00 PM**

ORGANIZATIONS

International Justice Mission

International Justice Mission is a global organization that protects the poor from violence in the developing world. IJM fights by rescuing victims, bringing criminals to justice, restoring survivors, and strengthening justice systems. The group meets Tuesdays at 6:00 PM in the Student Center, Room 301.

OXFAM America

Oxfam America is a global organization working to right the wrongs of poverty, hunger, and injustice. Oxfam saves lives, develops long-term solutions to poverty, and campaigns for social change.

Cardinal Kitchen

Cardinal Kitchen is Ball State University's campus food pantry. The pantry is located on the second floor of the Multicultural Center and is available for use to all undergraduate and graduate students. The pantry is open the last three Tuesdays of every month from 5:00-8:00 PM. Its mission is to ensure that no Ball State student goes hungry on our campus.

MOSAIC

MOSAIC is a social justice peer education program whose mission is to engage undergraduate students in open dialogues focused on diversity and social justice topics to promote awareness, change, and inter-group understanding.

Global Brigades

Global Brigades is an international non-profit organization that empowers communities to meet their health and economic goals through university volunteers and local teams.

Feminists for Action

Feminists for Action is a group dedicated to the empowerment of women, men, and children through advocacy and education. They strive to educate others about issues in the global, national, and community level. They encourage thought-provoking discussions and work to organize events to benefit feminist causes. FA meets Tuesdays at 6:00 PM in Burkhardt Building Room 220.

Ethnic Theatre Alliance

The purpose of Ethnic Theatre Alliance is to explore worldviews of cultures, diversity, and social justice in order to educate members through Fine Arts. They do this in accordance with the Ball State University mission to create a community for the members to learn and develop worldview cultures so they may become better artists and people.

ORGANIZATIONS CONTINUED

Ball State University Social Justice League

The Ball State University Social Justice League (SJL) is an organization of students and faculty members united by their commitment to social justice. The SJL seeks to change social institutions, political and economic systems, and governmental structures that perpetuate unfair practices, structures, and policies in terms of accessibility, resource distribution, and human rights.

Student Action Team

Student Action Team (SAT) is an organization made up of general members and housing and residence life representatives. This organization is dedicated to volunteering and supporting Ball State University. SAT meets 4 PM on Mondays in the Kinghorn multipurpose room.

Spectrum

Spectrum's goal is to provide an anonymous, healthy and safe place for Ball State University students and surrounding communities who are discovering their sexual orientation to help find an understanding network of support. Spectrum meets Thursdays at 8:00 PM in Room 310 at the Student Center. Prior to meetings, they meet to have informal family dinner in the Tally at 6:30 PM.

Students for Life

Ball State Students for Life (BSSFL) is committed to the protection of all human life; from conception until natural death. They strive to educate members and the Ball State University community about why they value life in all its forms. They strive to respond with love, compassion, and support to those who suffer from restrictions of life. BSSFL meets every Wednesday from 6:30-8 PM in the Whitinger Business Building Room 142.

Call to Action

Call to Action (CTA) is a student organization at Ball State looking to educate and create awareness of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) political issues at the local, state, and federal levels in order to empower students to take positive action towards equality for LGBT individuals and to influence others to take positive action. CTA has meetings on Mondays at 7:30 PM in Teacher's College Room 108.

BSU COUNSELING CENTER SUPPORT GROUPS

Every year, hundreds of students, faculty, and staff members use the services of the Counseling Center at BSU. This comprehensive services office provides free and confidential psychological and career resources to students. Call (765) 285-1736 or stop by Lucina Hall, Room 320 to schedule an appointment and gather more information.

Understanding Self and Others

Group members explore patterns of relating to self and others by discovering understanding and acceptance of themselves and their environments. Discussions vary greatly from depression, anxiety, relationships, family concerns, eating issues, alcohol abuse and/or personal growth. The groups thrive on diversity as members discover their common bonds through emotional experiences. This group has sessions multiple times a week: Monday from 1:00-2:30 PM and Wednesday from 1:00-2:30 PM and 3:00-4:30 PM.

Weight Not, Want Not

Weight Not, Want Not is a support group for women with eating disorders or body image struggles who want to explore effective ways of coping. Its time is to be determined by availability of group members.

Safe Haven

This therapy group provides a safe place for LGBT students to explore and discuss patterns of relating to self and others by discovering understanding and acceptance of themselves and others. Topics of discussion vary greatly from coming out, finding support, relationships, family concerns, depression, anxiety, and/or personal growth. Safe Haven meets every Tuesday from 2:00-3:30 PM.

Surviving and Thriving

Surviving and Thriving aims to help sexual assault survivors. In this group, students share their experiences, find ways to cope, and gain perspective. The time for this group is to be determined by availability of group members.

Life ProTips

This four week workshop is meant to help better understand participants' thoughts and feelings to overcome the daily challenges of life. This group meets on Monday from 4:00-5:00 PM.

Building Resilience

This four week workshop helps participants learn useful skills to empower them to build resiliency when things feel out of control. This group meets on Monday from 3:00-4:00 PM.

ABOUT US

The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies is an interdisciplinary center whose mission is to pursue research on structural and direct forms of violence and conflict; to implement nonviolent strategies to resolve conflict; to offer mediation services to individuals, groups, and organizations; and to train people in conflict resolution, mediation, peacebuilding, leadership, meditation, and sportspersonship skills. The center also pursues public diplomacy, sports diplomacy, and cultural exchange as part of local, regional, national, and international projects designed to promote mutual understanding, appreciation, cooperation, and respect. Our services include monthly events, newsletters, the Social Justice League, the Muncie Interfaith Fellowship, meditation classes, mediation training and services.

Staff Members

- Director: Lawrence Gerstein, Ph.D.
- Research Fellow: Gerald Waite, M.A.
- Curriculum Coordinator: Steven Hall, Ph.D.
- Outreach Coordinator: Beth Messner, Ph.D.
- Graduate Assistant: Aashna Banerjee, B.A.

To include your events in the newsletter, please write to abanerjee@bsu.edu

Come visit us!

310 McKinley Avenue, Muncie, 47306
White house located across the street from the campus shuttle bus stop at the BSU Student Center!

9 AM-4 PM: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays
9 AM-5 PM: Tuesdays and Thursdays

Do drop by!

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