



**The Gandhi Youth Forum**

*As I sat cross-legged on the floor of the modest 19th century house overlooking 270° of ponds and ocean, I sit near the back of this small room filled with 40 other high school and college students. Arun Gandhi the grandson of beloved Mahatma Gandhi sat calmly in a chair where he could be seen and heard by everyone in the room. I'd been waiting impatiently for this opportunity ever since I saw the flyers around the High School.*

*Throughout Arun's wonderful speech he impressed upon all of us the importance of being aware of any violence that you create or observe, whether this violence is passive and physical. Both are important to be noted so then you can reduce your violence as a person. Physical violence is the most obvious violence this can be exhibited as teasing, hitting, murder, or any other conscious move you make to harm someone or something else. Arun spoke to us about how he kept a journal while he lived with his grandfather Mahatma after days of writing and classifying the personal violences he'd committed into passive and physical violence he began to notice he was committing less acts of physical violence.*

*Passive violence is an indirect violence that you don't consciously commit like littering or not recycling and wasting resources like water or gas. Most actions in the world could be classified into these groups and knowing these groups can help you cut down on violence and become an altogether much more peaceful person. What I took away from this amazing talk with one of the most influential people in the world today is to think of your actions and how even the most trivial of movements or decisions may harm the world as a whole.*

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**Arun Gandhi at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development: June 28, 2015**

***Mel-io-rism: the belief that the world can be made better by human effort.***

As I sat amongst a collection of young "meliorists" I couldn't help but smile at the recognition that each and every one of these individuals will change the world. And in that moment, our moment, my heart clutched and I realized I was a part of something so grand it evoked my deepest feelings of desiring rectitude. I experienced the powerful, personal feeling of being overwhelmed and inspired. Fearful yet fascinated that I could make a difference, but only if I was truly committed to believing that the world will get better. And so I did.



The arrival of Arun Gandhi brought upon hushed whispers of anticipation. As we crowded around his feet and set our eyes upon his, we were soon submerged in his humble, quiet strength. Arun began curious as we, playfully saying "now what do I say?" We laughed in harmony with him, grateful to have his company, grateful to share this moment.



Arun reminisced upon stories of his childhood. Telling us tales of his grandfather and the lessons he induced. He explained, when he was 12 years old, his grandfather decided to start selling his autograph to raise money to fund his field projects: education of children; emancipation of women and the untouchable people and the independence of India. After his grandfather's prayer services, Arun would go into the audience - hundreds, sometimes thousands of people, and collect the books and donation of 5 rupees from people who were seeking his autograph. One day, Arun decided he wanted an autograph too, but figured he didn't have to pay because he was his grandson. So he slipped his autograph book in the pile and hoped his grandfather would overlook the lack of money. When he reached Arun's book, his grandfather called upon him, and asked about the unaccounted book. Arun explained it was his, and his grandfather simply told him there were no exceptions, not even for grandsons. He would sign his book once given five rupees. Five rupees of which Arun had to not only pay forth, but earn as well. Arun argued with that and proclaimed he was going to make his grandfather give him an autograph for free. His grandfather simply laughed and said, "All right, let's see who wins." Arun, being as rowdy as any young boy took this as a challenge, and hence continued to bother his grandfather in hopes that he would succumb to the annoyance. Arun would barge into high level political meetings his grandfather held with rather important people and run up to him with the book, demanding an autograph. His grandfather would simply stop the meeting for a second and bring Arun close. He would hold his head to his chest and continue the meeting. Arun ended the story explaining how his grandfather never gave him the autograph, but simultaneously he never once got angry and told Arun to get out of the room. This story resonated within me because of the admirable patience that grandfather Gandhi exhibited, never once becoming mad but rather keeping his composure. It was also Arun's youthful persistence, reassuring us of the raw innocence that children view the world through.



Arun notably calls himself a Peace Farmer. When we asked him what that meant, he explained he was a farmer in the sense that he was planting seeds of peace into the minds of youth people. He spoke of how children often act upon impressions -- they see then they copy. Planting seeds in today's youth, he believes, will produce a generation who advocate for equanimity, their children will follow, and their children's children -- for a more peaceful future.

Sitting with Arun Gandhi for only a short time, a seed of peace was successfully planted in my mind. Likewise, though the Youth Leadership Summit was a mere week it was a time that deeply impacted me. I now recognize the purpose behind my actions, words, and thoughts. I strive to encompass the thought that the world will get better. I hold the proposal of *meliorism* in my heart, allowing it to pulse through my body and find itself in tandem with my intentions. Arun, through his action of peace farming, helped me in recognizing I had the ability to "be the change I wished to see in the world" and the 2015 Stone Soup for the World Summit gave me this experience.

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