

---

**RESEARCH**

# #MassProtests: The Abjuring of the *Other* and Lessons from Gandhi

Anish Dave

Georgia Southwestern State University, US  
anish.dave@gsw.edu

---

In recent years, organizers of mass protests have used social and digital media to form large physical gatherings. These media allow protesters to exchange texts and visuals quickly across vast distances, providing means to organize protests widely and efficiently. Although social media and digital communication have played a constructive and positive role in citizen protests (Gerbaudo, 2012), lately these media have witnessed polarized political discourses. This article examines the 2017 Women’s March, the largest protest in the U.S. history (Fisher, 2019), as a case study of an effective but a polarized protest. I analyze the discourse related to the march based on its mission statement, media reports posted on the march website, and two authoritative books about the march, including a volume published by the march organizers. In my analysis, I use insights of South Korean Philosopher Byung-Chul Han in ways that may help illuminate the problem of polarized online political discourses. My analysis shows that the march succeeded in unifying diverse allies, but it did not engage the other side of the political spectrum. Polarized political discourses weaken governance and encourage a climate in which intolerance and hate find sustenance. A protest is not just an exercise in declamation but also an appeal to a disagreeable *other*. To support this point, I discuss practices by a master protester, Mahatma Gandhi, who unflinchingly reached out to a disagreeable *other*. I briefly describe his philosophy of nonviolent protests, his three exemplary protests, and discuss Gandhi’s relevance for present-day protesters.

---

A relationship between media and social movements is not new (Shirky, 2011). Political scientist Sidney G. Tarrow (2011) has written about a symbiotic relationship between the print media and social movements in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In recent years, digital platforms, especially social media, have come to be associated with citizen protests, often with positive results (Gerbaudo, 2012; Karatzogianni, Schandorf, & Ferra, 2021; Dencik & Leistert, 2015; Shirky, 2011). Paolo Gerbaudo (2012), a digital culture and communication scholar, has drawn attention to the emotion-building capacity of social media, which fosters a “symbolic construction of public space” (p. 13). He credits social media with “complementing existing forms of face-to-face gatherings.” In their study of the 2014 Occupy Central protests in Hong Kong, journalism scholars Lee and Chan (2018) found that social media contributed to increased knowledge about civil disobedience among residents of Hong Kong. Kang (2017), a communication scholar, wrote about the 2008 protests in South Korea against beef imports from the U.S. over fears of the Mad Cow disease. The young protesters used digital platforms to thwart government officials.

However, in recent years, political polarization and hateful discourse have emerged as a darker side to social media and their use among citizens and activists. Violence by citizen protesters seems to be a growing problem in the U.S. and appears to be related to online political discourses involving political opponents (Swenson, 2017). In their study of right-wing social media users in Sweden, sociology scholars Wahlstrom and Tornberg (2019) found that “much evidence suggests a strong connection between social media discourses and political violence” (p. 6). Similarly, communication scholar Barnett (2019) examined online discourses of “racist right groups” in support of the candidacy of Donald Trump (p. 91).

Polarized political discourses and their harmful effects on democracies have been widely studied. Communication researchers Harel, Jameson, and Maoz (2020) found evidence of polarization and “dehumanization” directed at Israelis of the “left-wing” political orientation (p. 1, p. 5). McCoy, Rahman, and Somer (2018), political science scholars, have stated that a [polarized] individual “come[s] to perceive the ‘Other’ in such negative terms that a normal political adversary with whom to engage in a competition for power is transformed into an enemy to be vanquished” (p. 19). The authors explain that “the psychology of polarization becomes fundamental as mechanisms of dehumanization, depersonalization, and stereotyping all contribute to the emotional loathing, fear, and distrust of the out-partisans” (p. 23). In a recent article in *Science*, Finkel

et al (2020), social scientists and management scholars, drew attention to the problem of “othering” of political opponents, a problem the authors stated contributes to “political sectarianism” (p. 533). They defined “othering” as “the tendency to view opposing partisans as essentially different or alien to oneself.” Connecting this problem to digital media, the authors stated that “in recent years, social media companies like Facebook and Twitter have played an influential role in political discourse, intensifying political sectarianism” (p. 534). The authors argued that this “out-party hate” or “holding [of] opposing partisans in contempt on the basis of their identity alone precludes innovative cross party solutions and mutually beneficial compromises” (p. 533). Giving an example of the ongoing pandemic, the authors stated that the “political sectarianism” turned “mask-wearing [into] a partisan symbol” (p. 535). The authors urged “interventions” to counter political sectarianism because it “poses a threat to democracy” (pp. 533–535).

South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han’s admonitions about the dangers of digital networking merit review in this case. Admittedly, Han’s views are one-sided, for digital media have been and are used for a number of positive things (Gerbaudo, 2012; Karatzogianni, Schandorf, & Ferra, 2021; Dencik & Leistert, 2015; Shirky, 2011). However, on the issue of polarized political discourses, Han’s bleak views on digital communication and connectivity provide insights worth pondering. In his works *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects* (2013/2017) and *The Expulsion of the Other* (2016/2018), Han (2016/2018) has stated that digital interactions seek “sameness” (pursuing “likes”) and avoid the other or the different (pp. 4–8). Han (2016/2018) has asserted that growth and progress result from engaging with an opponent or an “other” (p. 5), not from a constant hearkening to “like-minded” allies (p. 3). In a review of two of Han’s works, Jeremy Bell (2017) has written that Han believes that “we are losing ... the skills of contemplation and listening” (p. 130). What Han has described as an inability or unwillingness to engage with the other, Wahlstrom and Tornberg (2019) have referred to as “echo chambers” (p. 7), a known phenomenon in online interactions. Describing this behavior, the authors stated that “it is well known that individuals tend to select information that is consistent with their own beliefs, and form polarized groups” (Wahlstrom & Tornberg, 2019, p. 7).

To explore the problem of polarized political discourses in a digitally-mediated-or-enabled protests, I use as a case study the 2017 Women’s March, the largest protest event in the U.S. The march had its beginnings on social media and its organizers used several digital platforms to organize and communicate. My analysis shows that the march effectively mobilized a variety of groups and perspectives in a common cause. However, the march did not connect with the other side or its political adversaries, mainly the new administration led by President Donald Trump (which, conversely, did not connect with the marchers either). Following the analysis of the march, I consider Mahatma Gandhi as a master protester. I describe him as such because he used protests to achieve his political and social goals but did so while actively engaging his political opponents or those on the other side. I briefly discuss three of his exemplary protests and the relevance of Gandhian practices for protesters in the digital era. Of course, Gandhi did not have these media, but he used the print media deliberately to cultivate an informed and reflective body of readers (Hofmeyr, 2013).

## Methodology

I closely read the mission statement of the Women’s March found on the official website of the Women’s March and reviewed 44 news reports and articles (including a press release from a US Congressman) posted on the website. The news reports and articles were published in national dailies such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *USA Today*. Local and online publications were also represented, such as *The Providence Journal*, *Bustle*, *Popsugar*, and *Slate*. Finally, there were also articles from magazines such as *Time*, *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *Playbill*, *Elle*, *Vogue*, and *Latina*. Additionally, I closely read two authoritative books about the march: *Together We Rise: Behind the Scenes at the Protest Heard around the World* by “The Women’s March Organizers” and Condé Nast (2018) and *American Resistance: From the Women’s March to the Blue Wave* by sociologist Dana R. Fisher (2019). While the first book is an insider narrative about the making of the march, the march itself, and the post-march events, Fisher’s book is an account of her ethnographic research involving the 2017 Women’s March, other marches during 2017–18, and the effects of the marches on the 2018 midterm elections.

## Case Study: The 2017 Women’s March

The first Women’s March, which comprised hundreds of marches all over the world, took place on January 21, 2017, a day after President Trump’s inauguration (Felsenthal, 2017). This event was outstanding, the largest protest in the U.S. (Fisher, 2019) and one that remained peaceful despite millions of marchers. The march also brought together a wide array of participants, cutting across race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, to name a few categories. The march was organized and led based on the concept of intersectional feminism, an idea that women draw from multiple identities and experiences based on their social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. The official march book authored by its organizers, *Together We Rise: Behind the Scenes at the Protest Heard around the World* (“The Women’s March Organizers,” 2018), states the following about the march:

- It was “the single largest protest in world history” (p. 11).
- In Washington, D.C. alone, an estimated 800, 000 to 1.2 million people marched (p. 215).

- There were 653 events in the U.S. and an estimated 3.3 million marchers.
- Worldwide an estimated 5 million people marched (p. 216).

As to the history of the march, in brief, after Donald Trump's unexpected victory in the 2016 presidential election, a retired grandmother in Hawaii, Teresa Shook (named as the "founder" of 2017 Women's March in *Together We Rise: Behind the Scenes at the Protest Heard around the World*), thought of a march on Washington D.C (Felsenthal, 2017; Wilson, 2017). After she shared the idea on her Facebook, the idea received support from her friends and was posted on a pro-Hillary Clinton Facebook page (Wilson, 2017). On this page, the idea received wider support (Wilson, 2017). Around the same time, Bob Bland (named as the Women's March Cochair and National Organizer in *Together We Rise: Behind the Scenes at the Protest Heard around the World*) had a similar thought (Felsenthal, 2017). Eventually the two women joined their efforts. However, soon, it was pointed out that the proposed march lacked a diverse representation (Felsenthal, 2017). A friend suggested a few names of well-known minority activists with experience working on socio-political issues. Three such women activists—An African American, a Latina, and a Palestinian American—joined the march (Felsenthal, 2017).

The march was conceived and took shape with the help of digital media. Jamia Wilson, a marcher, wrote the following in the introduction to *Together We Rise: Behind the Scenes at the Protest Heard around the World*:

Over the weeks it was being planned, its social media and digital organizing, led by Alyssa Klein and Sophie Ellman-Golan, gave all of us a front-row seat to the step-by-step formation of a mass demonstration. I watched, listened, and participated ... celebrating triumphs with the Women's March community through Instagram, Facebook Live, and Twitter chats. ("The Women's March Organizers," 2018, p. 15)

Mrinalini Chakraborty, a march organizer in Illinois, also noted that "digital tools such as websites, social media and survey forms propelled the event to grow so large in just 12 weeks" (Elahi, 2017). In her book *American Resistance: From the Women's March to the Blue Wave*, Dana R. Fisher (2019) described the use of digital media by the marchers as "distributed organizing" (p. 33)—a term that is applicable to most, if not all, present-day mass protests—which "makes it possible for resistance groups to harness the power of interested individuals from all over the country" (p. 82). Because of the massive crowd that gathered in Washington D.C. the actual march was a carefully thought-out, short affair: a "walk toward Pennsylvania Avenue and down to the Ellipse" ("The Women's March Organizers," 2018, p. 180).

The 285-word mission statement of the march, posted on its website, began by expressing solidarity with organizations supporting the march and emphasizing diversity. In the second paragraph, the statement pointed to the divisive rhetoric in the 2016 presidential election and asserted support for communities that were attacked by then candidate Trump: women, immigrants, Muslims, among others. However, the paragraph did not name Donald Trump. The third paragraph mentioned "the spirit of democracy," referred to the marchers' "numbers too great to ignore," and vowed to defend "the most marginalized." The paragraph also referred in a sentence to the incoming administration. The statement ended with support for kindred "advocacy and resistance movements" and a pledge to continue working peacefully to achieve "justice and equity for all."

A review of news reports and articles posted on the march website suggests three main motives behind the march, which likely combined in many marchers' minds. The marchers were angry or unhappy at candidate Trump's campaign rhetoric and wanted to express their disapproval publicly; they marched for aspirational and personal reasons; and they saw the march as an opportunity to build a political movement. These three motives can be seen reflected in the second, third, and fourth paragraphs of the mission statement.

Despite its worthy assertions and aims, the mission statement of the march almost entirely shunned the opposing side: the new administration and its allies. The only sentence in the statement referring to the new administration read: "The Women's March on Washington will send a bold message to our new administration on their first day in office." In contrast, the mission statement made several self-affirming and self-referential assertions (the words "we," "our," and "us" occur a total of 26 times in the statement). As I will show, many marchers did not think or act as if the new president or the administration were relevant to the march. While the sentence referring to the new administration acknowledges the new leaders of the country, the sentence sounds partisan and like a challenge. It does not seem to be a conversation starter or do much to interest or attract the opposing side. A counterargument could be made that the new president had troubled the marchers with his offensive comments during the just-concluded election campaign and therefore the marchers did not have an obligation—much less motivation or desire—to ingratiate themselves with the incoming administration. Also, as is seen in its mission statement, the march sought to bring "progressive people together" (Berry & Chenoweth, 2018, p. 81) and develop a movement against the new administration "and its policies" (Fisher, 2019, p. 14). However, as Finkel et al (2020) have cautioned, "sectarianism stimulates activism ... but also a willingness to inflict collateral damage in pursuit of political goals" (p. 535). They have warned that "political sectarianism cripples a nation's ability to confront challenges" and suggested emphasizing "political ideas rather than political adversaries" (p. 536). At the time of the 2017 Women's March, a presidential election had just concluded and, arguably, there was a case for a dialogue—or a brief exchange—between the

protesters and the new administration, an attempt to put the protesters' concerns directly in front of the new decision makers and an opportunity for the Trump administration to better understand an important group of citizens that did not support its election. But neither side sought an opportunity to have an exchange.

In a democracy, one needs to converse, engage with one's opponents, even if there are differences. Without a meaningful and often direct engagement, it is difficult to understand opponents' ideas, much less to find mutually agreeable solutions. Rhetoric scholar Krista Ratcliffe (1999) has suggested "rhetorical listening" (p. 195)—described as a type of listening "not *for* intent but *with* intent" (the author's emphasis) (p. 205)—to avoid a "stalemate" or a "status quo" with one's opponents (p. 208). She has suggested having a "genuine conversation" with them to improve our understanding of their position (and reflect on our own). The notion of invitational rhetoric (Foss & Griffin, 1995; Bone, Griffin, & Linda Scholz, 2008; Ryan & Natalie, 2001) similarly advocates a better understanding of one's adversaries. Specifically, invitational rhetoric "assumes that we listen to and communicate with those whom we would rather not listen to or communicate at all" (Bone, Griffin, & Linda Scholz, 2008, p. 448). In the one-sentence reference to the other side in the marchers' mission statement, the focus is on speaking (what Ratcliffe calls an "authorial intent," p. 208)—not on listening. As I will discuss in the next section, Gandhi communicated with his adversaries even as he protested against them.

Many marchers were angry about candidate Trump's offensive remarks about women and marginalized groups. Marchers were also concerned about implications of Trump's victory for issues such as women's reproductive rights, healthcare, immigration, LGBTQ rights, "climate justice," "police accountability," and the like (Grant, 2017; Wilson, 2017). One of the marchers said, "I don't see a way in to speak to Trump about my issues. I don't see a way in to create a round table to discuss what's important to me and my community" (Hartnett, 2017). Another marcher opined, "I don't think Trump will get anything from this, and that's OK because it's not for him, conservatives or people who are racist" (Reichard, 2017). Tamika Mallory, one of the national co-chairs of the march, was asked whether she had heard anything from the incoming administration (Wilson, 2017). She said that she had not and did not expect to (Wilson, 2017). Activist and writer Angela Davis declared, "The next 1459 days of the Trump administration will be 1459 days of resistance" ("The Women's March Organizers," 2018, p. 28).

Researcher Dana Fisher (2019) has described the march as a "countermovement to the Trump regime" (p. 5). She has further stated that the march attracted disparate constituencies ("diverse streams of progressive activism") because "it is a countermovement with a common enemy" (pp. 5–6). In fairness, she has noted that "President Trump himself has fanned the flames of Resistance with his policies [declared or anticipated at the time of the inauguration] and his public attacks" (p. 125). In a similar vein, another resisting group—digitally-enabled—Indivisible "would not exist had Trump lost the election" (Brooker, 2018, p. 173). When asked what motivated them to work for the group, two activists "quickly and unequivocally answered 'Trump'" (p. 173). It deserves noting here that the group Indivisible "mimick[ed] the [2009] Tea Party's strategy ... defensive organizing" (p. 171). In other words, Indivisible tried to be a polarized equivalent of the Tea Party during President Obama's tenure.

One of the marchers in Washington D. C. described the march as "a big experiment within our own echo chamber" ("The Women's March Organizers," 2018, p. 205). She added, "What I didn't account for was how much we all needed to feel connected as allies" (p. 206). Her words in the last quotation mirror Han's (2016/2018) contention of digital media protesters seeking likeminded allies.

Another participant in the march recalled "favorite chants from the march": "Hands too small/Can't build a wall, referring to 45's tiny, weak hands" ("The Women's March Organizers," 2018, p. 263). Another chant was graphic: "F\_\_\_ Mike Pence; F\_\_\_ Mike Pence" (p. 263). Veteran activist Gloria Steinem, who was made an honorary cochair of the march, seemed to sense the polarization many marchers may have felt and displayed: "The danger is symbolized by Trump in the White House ... plus a fear that a newly emerging majority power of diverse women plus men of color will treat the Trumps of the world as they have treated others" (p. 280). Steinem's words are noteworthy, not just because they show the depth of polarization she sensed among her compatriots—people with whom she otherwise agreed in spirit and principle—but also because her words were far from common in their reflectiveness—an aid to rhetorical listening (Ratcliffe, 1999)—involving both sides of the protest.

However, in the permit application with the National Park Service, the march organizers stated that the purpose of the march was "to come together in solidarity to express to the new administration & congress that women's rights are human rights and our power cannot be ignored" (Strauss, 2017). Here, again, one finds a mention of the words "new administration" besides their mention in the mission statement. Also mentioned in the purpose statement is a famous quote by Hillary Clinton, who lost the 2016 election to Donald Trump: "Women's rights are human rights." This quote was a deliberate choice, the march organizers explained in a Facebook post: "We have used this simple and powerful statement because it reflects the sentiment of women in our country and around the world" (Women's March, 2017). The two one-sentence references to the new administration—in the mission statement of the march ("will send a bold message to our new administration") and in the purpose statement ("to express to the new administration ... that") mirror each other, projecting what Ratcliffe (1999) has called an "authorial intent" (p. 208), that is, a speaking mindset as opposed to a listening mindset (or words that meaningfully engage a disagreeable *other*).

Writing about digital communication, Han (2016/2018) has argued that “it serves to pass over those who are unfamiliar and other, and instead find those who are the same or like-minded, ensuring that our horizon of experience becomes ever narrower” (p. 3). He has warned that this tendency often leads to “an autopropaganda, indoctrinating us with our own ideas.” Han (2016/2018) has stated that “political space is a space in which I encounter Others, speak to Others and listen to them” (p. 75). While “sending a bold message” to the other side may not be improper, listening is also important to political discourse (Han, 2016/2018). “Simply listening can heal” (Han, 2016/2018, p. 72). Listening is an effective strategy to promote “reconciliation” (Prutzman, 1994, p. 75). Listening is “generative” of good thinking and allows the other to do their better thinking (Kline, 2009, p. 31). Janusik (2007) has advised that “the conversational partner is not expected to know everything but is expected to respond” (p. 149). Terry O’Neill, an executive with an organization supporting the march, said that the march was not about Donald Trump, but that it was “about women’s rights that are very much imperiled by the policies President-elect Trump appears headed for” (Frazee, 2017). However, it is important to engage the new administration if there are fears over its policies. Doing so may not prevent the administration from enacting unwanted policies but does create a moral pressure on the other side to be receptive to protesters’ demands. Even if protesters needed to mobilize in opposition later, they will likely have a stronger case, one that would probably also arouse the sympathy of their opponents. An implicit benefit in this approach is some goodwill among political opponents and less polarization. What I have briefly suggested above is a Gandhian approach to protesting, the topic of the next section.

Han (2016/2018) has written that “thinking must surrender to the negativity of the Other and proceed into the unknown” (p. 57). It may not have been out of place for the march leaders to seek a meeting with members of the incoming administration. Such a meeting may have allowed the march representatives to present to the new administration their policy concerns. However, this approach would have required the representatives to ensure that strong and extreme rhetoric directed at the person of the new President-elect and his administration aides—however justified it may appear at first—was kept out of the march as much as possible. In Fisher’s (2019) survey at the march in Washington D. C., 29% respondents (530 surveys) named President Trump as their motivation for the march (pp. 49–50). Hollywood actress Ashley Judd recited a poem titled “Nasty Woman” that included personal insults directed at the new president at the Washington D. C. march (“The Women’s March Organizers,” 2018, p. 159).

Although the march organizer’s book contains an essay by Valerie Kaur, a lawyer and filmmaker, that mentions Gandhi (apart from Jesus, Muhammad, and others) and “love for ...[one’s] opponents” (“The Women’s March Organizers,” 2018, p. 292), it is the only instance I found in the discourse about the march in which an opponent (in this case President Trump and perhaps members of his administration) is addressed in this way. Just and Muhr (2019) write that “the rise of the Women’s March resembles that of the alt-right (and other populist movements) ... first, the collectivity is primarily defined by its common opposition to an exterior force” (p. 260). Conversely, the Trump administration may also have reached out to the march.

Additionally, the 2017 Women’s March experienced some tensions around issues of race and women’s reproductive rights. A South Carolina wedding minister, who is white, felt offended by an online post by a New York blogger, an African American woman (Stockman, 2017). The blogger wrote, “Now is the time for you to be listening more, talking less.... You should be reading our books and understanding the roots of racism and white supremacy.... You should be drowning yourselves in our poetry” (Stockman, 2017). The wedding minister responded in an interview with a reporter, “How do you know that I’m not reading black poetry?” (Stockman, 2017). The blogger clarified that “the intention of the post was not to weed people out but rather to make them understand that they had a lot of learning to do” (Stockman, 2017). The march organizers did not feel unnerved about such instances because they related to a core value defining the march, “intersectionality,” a belief that women have life experiences formed through multiple identities or factors, all of which are important (race, social class, and so on) (Stockman, 2017; Editors, 2017).

Although the march organizers’ embrace of intersectionality and openness to discuss difficult topics was praiseworthy (Stockman, 2017), the episode involving the blogger and the wedding minister might have been more constructive for both women if the blogger had chosen to communicate using invitational rhetoric, which emphasizes listening to, understanding, and building a relationship with others over efforts to persuade or change them (Foss & Griffin, 1995; Bone, Griffin, & Linda Scholz, 2008; Ryan & Natalie, 2001). A person using invitational rhetoric provides “safety” (“others have a right to their own views”) and “freedom” (“people have the right to make choices that work for them”) to others (Bone, Griffin, & Linda Scholz, 2008, p. 445) while presenting her (or his) perspective to those others. The desired change may come, but it comes as a result of aiming at deeper understanding of and better connection with others (Ryan & Natalie, 2001; Bone, Griffin, & Linda Scholz, 2008). While the blogger wanted to highlight injustices of racial prejudice, she missed an opportunity to converse with a friendly *other* (both women supported the march), who might have been more sympathetic to the blogger’s views had there been an engagement between the two women. As we will see, Gandhi offered to talk with the viceroy while being prepared to protest against his government.

The conflict due to the blogger’s post also reminds one of Han’s (2016/2018) counsel to listen in online communication. Bennett (2012) has described effective “listening through social media” in her article about concert attendees who connect

virtually with non-attendees (p. 545). Specifically, when online fans express disappointment over a certain song being performed (judging from the song's title that they saw on social media), those attending the event and communicating about it on social media reply with a measured comment, focusing on the strength of the actual performance they are witnessing physically. As the article by Stockman (2017) itself noted, "But the tone of the discussion, particularly online, can become so raw that some would-be marchers feel they are no longer welcome." Gloria Steinem, an "honorary co-chairwoman of the march," put Han's (2016/2018) point in an even better way: "It's about knowing each other ... which is what movements and marches are for" (Stockman, 2017). Steinem's comment reflects the crux of invitational rhetoric.

There was also some controversy related to the issue of women's reproductive rights. Some pro-life women were excluded from the march, which had the support of pro-choice organizations (Stolberg, 2017). Welcoming (or at least not shunning) pro-life women to the march would have introduced some conflict among the marchers and perhaps created some incoherence in the goals of the march. Here, again, however, invitational rhetoric provides a welcome alternative to an outright shunning of a disagreeable *other*. In their article about invitational rhetoric, Bone, Griffin, and Linda Scholz (2008) discuss a case study of a 1994 dialogue between pro-life and pro-choice advocates in Massachusetts after a deadly attack on Planned Parenthood clinics. Here is a quote from the article that shows how the dialogue, which seems to have been closely modeled after invitational rhetoric, promoted a better understanding between the two sides and in members of the news media:

Reflecting on the process [the dialogue between two factions begun at the urging of state officials and other community leaders], participants shared that 'as our mutual understanding increased, our respect and affection for one another grew.' They saw that the 'increased understanding affected how we spoke as leaders of our respective movements' and that the news media, without knowledge of the meetings, 'began noting differences in our public statements' (p. 453).

In Han's (2016/2018) words, "What is necessary is once more to consider life from the perspective of the Other ... to listen to the Other and respond" (p. 69), a point Janusik (2007) has made, as we saw.

The Women's March has continued its work. In January 2018, on the march's first anniversary, march organizers launched a more overtly political program called "Power to the Polls" (Agrawal, 2018). Fisher (2019) has written about the march participants' successful involvement with work related to the 2018 midterm elections. However, although movements such as the Women's March may succeed in political mobilization of allies, it is important to keep in mind the concerns expressed by Finkel et al (2020). Shunning political opponents and embracing only allies strengthens political polarization, making governing difficult. Such a climate also contributes to fear and hatred of one's political opponents (or the *other*). Reflecting on the work of members of the "Resistance" (of which the march discussed here was one event), Hacker (2018) has noted that "in a hyperpolarized world, [they are] pulled toward strategies that unify both [their] natural allies and [their] committed opponents" (p. 276). He has further stated that "the Resistance will be faced with the hard choices all such movements do: whether to retain an outside orientation or focus on the difficult work of improving government effectiveness ... and whether to move from opposition to cooperation" (p. 277). Next, I discuss what present-day protesters and resisters can learn from Mahatma Gandhi, a master protester. Although Gandhi belongs to a different time and operated in a different world and situations, I contend that his values as a protester are worth emulating by a present-day counterpart. Doing so may help alleviate the vexing problem of polarized political discourses and help democracy.

### Three Exemplary Protests by Mahatma Gandhi

The Women's March committed to following Dr. King's path of nonviolent protests ("The Women's March Organizers," 2018, p. 95). Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. acknowledged his debt to Gandhi in these memorable words: "Christ furnished the spirit and motivation, while Gandhi furnished the method" (Dalton, 2012, pp. 181–182). Before I turn to the three protests, I discuss some aspects of Gandhi's philosophy that informed his practice of nonviolent protests. Gandhi practiced nonviolent protests all his life, starting in South Africa where he fought for immigrant Indians' rights to his native India where he led the freedom struggle against the British rule.

Judith Brown, a "historian of Gandhi, whose three volumes on him constitute perhaps the most scrupulous and fair study of his life and leadership" (Dalton, 2012), has stated that Gandhi's marriage of "vision" and "action" has earned him "enduring significance" ... [making him] "a person for all times and places" (p. 196). Thus, Gandhi is relevant to the Women's March and indeed to citizen protests anywhere.

Gandhi believed that "a wrong situation wrongs both sides.... Only a solution for everyone can actually resolve the problem and move the situation forward" (Easwaran, 2011, p. 21). Such an outlook is antithetical to polarization. Gandhi also believed that "deep in everyone, however hidden, is embedded an awareness of our common humanity." Distinguishing between "evil and the evil-doer," Gandhi stated that "there is none so fallen in this world but can be converted by love" (Gandhi, 1961/2001, p. 77). Describing satyagraha—or an insistence on truth (Gandhi's chosen term for his nonviolent protests), Gandhi stated that "it is

never the intention of a satyagrahi (a practitioner of satyagraha) to embarrass the wrongdoer. The appeal is never to his fear; it is, must be, always to his heart. The satyagrahi's object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrongdoer" (Easwaran, 2011, p. 74). Describing civil disobedience, Gandhi (1961/2001) cautioned that "we must ... give ... full and therefore greater value to the adjective 'civil' than to 'disobedience'" (p. 173). Dennis Dalton (2012) has written how Gandhi wanted practitioners of satyagraha to "trust in the adversary," because "an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of [their] creed" (p. 199).

For example, in 1931, Gandhi signed a pact with then British viceroy of India, Lord Irwin. After signing the pact, Gandhi and his allies looked forward to the second Round Table Conference in London. The first conference (which Gandhi or his party did not attend) had not yielded notable results, so Gandhi was circumspect at the prospect of the second conference (Nanda, 1968). However, in a speech Gandhi delivered at the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress, he said: "I have often wondered myself what we are going to do when we know that there is such a gulf between what we want, and what has been as yet offered at the conference. But considerations of a satyagrahi decided me. There comes a stage when he may no longer refuse to negotiate with his opponent. His object is always to convert his opponent by love" (Nanda, 1968, pp. 307–308).

Similarly, Gandhi had no difficulty in meeting with those who had reasons to disagree with him—the so-called *other*. After the second Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi met with "cotton operatives from Lancashire, which had been hit the hardest by the Indian National Congress's boycott of British goods. He listened with obvious attention and sympathy to the tale of woe of those who were jobless" (Nanda, 1968, p. 317). It should be kept in mind that Gandhi was not meeting his fellow Indians—subjects of the British empire like him—but Britons, whose nation ruled over India (not to mention that these people had something to complain about to India's leader). Han (2016/2018) laments our increasing inclination to avoid the "*other's* negativity," as it were (p. 60), "listening" to the *other* (p. 62); "in the absence of the other, true communication is no longer possible" (Lankala, 2018, p. 118). Han writes in the context of digital communication, but as Gerbaudo (2012) informs us, digital interactions also shape or influence "face-to-face interaction" (p. 13). I now turn to the three exemplary protests by Gandhi.

Gandhi used marches as a sometimes expedient but creative and moral method to offer peaceful resistance against unjust laws or behavior. Notably, Gandhi used marches in this way on three occasions. In 1913, he led hundreds of Indian immigrant men, women, and children in South Africa on a long march to protest discriminatory laws (Gandhi, 1954). In 1930, he led his famous Salt March against the British government in India (Weber, 2009). Finally, in 1947, he walked from village to village in Noakhali, a district in former East Bengal (now Bangladesh), to urge religious harmony between Hindus and Muslims (Kasturi, 2001).

Arriving in South Africa in 1893, Gandhi experienced racial discrimination (Gandhi, 1954). Around the time of his intended departure, he was shown a press report about a proposed discriminatory law against Indians in the country (Gandhi, 1954). Gandhi lived in South Africa for 20 more years and engaged in civil disobedience on behalf of local Indians against the South African government (Gandhi, 1954). On November 6, 1913, Gandhi led "2037 men, 127 women, and 57 children" on a march from Natal to the Transvaal (Gandhi, 1954, p. 300). Crossing into the Transvaal "without permits" was illegal, and Gandhi hoped that he and his fellow marchers would be arrested, thereby putting moral and practical pressure on the government (Gandhi, 1954, p. 282; Hancock, 1962). He was arrested near Greylingstad (Gandhi, 1954). The marchers, subsequently led by Gandhi's friend Henry Polak, were arrested at Balfour and dispatched to Natal (Gandhi, 1954).

Before the march, Gandhi met with and urged owners of coal mines employing the striking marchers to persuade the government on behalf of Indians (Gandhi, 1954). He also wrote a letter to the South African government and telephoned General Smuts (Gandhi, 1954). Failing to receive a favorable response from either the miners or the government, Gandhi began his march (Gandhi, 1954).

On March 12, 1930, Gandhi marched from his *ashram* in Ahmedabad with a select band of 79 associates to the coastal village of Dandi, nearly 200 miles away, to break the salt laws (Weber, 2009). Before starting the march, Gandhi characteristically wrote to the Viceroy explaining the injustice of the British rule and expressing readiness to talk if he was willing to be sympathetic to the issues raised in the letter (Sharp, 1960). Han (2016/2018) has theorized that "the responsible stance of the listener towards the Other expresses itself as *patience*. The passivity of patience is the first maxim of listening. The listener undertakes the *unreserved exposure* of the self to the Other" (p. 72) (emphasis mine). The march culminated on April 5 (Sheean, 1954). Merriam (1975) has stated that the march was "exemplary for the disciplined behavior and highly organized actions of its participants" (p. 300).

Gandhi laid down detailed instructions for the way in which the marchers were to conduct themselves (Weber, 2009; Sharp, 1960). Their commitment to nonviolence included controlling anger and refraining from "swearing" (Sharp, 1960, p. 68). Addressing the marchers, he asserted that "the inner spiritual rules have a greater effect than the external and material factors" (Weber, 2009, p. 208). Noting Gandhi's careful preparation for the march, Weber (2009) has remarked that "the Salt March was a dramatic educative tool" (p. 115).

Finally, in 1947, Gandhi walked to resist his erring countrymen in Noakhali (Kasturi, 2001). In October 1946, Noakhali witnessed communal violence between Hindus and Muslims (Sengupta, 2016). Gandhi reached Noakhali in early November (Sengupta, 2016) and began his walking tour early in January 1947 (Kasturi, 2001).

In his Noakhali marches, Gandhi covered “56 villages and a total of 116 miles” (Kasturi, 2001, p. 81). One of Gandhi’s associates Dr. Amiya Chakravarty stated that “the walking tour had an impelling drive of spiritual faith in the neighborly goodness of common people, which communal passion could obscure but never destroy” (Kasturi, 2001, p. 82). Han (2016/2018) has stated that “without neighborliness, without listening, no community can form” (p. 74). Next, in the conclusion, I briefly summarize my analysis of the Women’s March and discuss its broader implications. I conclude with a discussion of Gandhi’s relevance for present-day protesters whose discourses and actions straddle virtual and real worlds.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have shown how participants in the 2017 Women’s March shunned their political opponents while rallying their allies. I examined the discourse about the march on the march’s website and two books about the march, including one published by its organizers. The march combined digital communication and groundlevel organizing all over the world. Although I did not examine social media postings by the march participants, there is little reason to believe the postings will diverge substantially from the march organizers’ and participants’ views communicated in the news media and shared on the march’s website, the mission statement of the march, and two books about the march, one offering research insights from the march participants and another an account by the main organizers of the march. Indeed, in their analysis of 2645 tweets bearing the hashtag of #WhyIMarch on the day of the march, McDuffie and Ames (2021) found that the audience for these tweets appears to have been people similar to the marchers. The authors found that the main rhetorical strategies used in the tweets were “dedications” (marching for someone), “personal narratives,” “first person plural pronouns” (used to invoke political allies, among other purposes), and humor.

Polarized political discourses online and in the non-virtual world work against reconciliation or even understanding between political opponents, continue a seemingly challenging gulf between two sides, prevent collaboration on political projects, weaken governance, and encourage or support a climate in which distrust and hate flourish.

The Women’s March helped progressives and democrats to achieve significant electoral gains in the 2018 midterm elections (Fisher, 2019). Indeed, scholars describe the march as a part of a larger “countermovement,” which considers electoral representation as a vital goal in its mission to achieve and defend its progressive aims (Fisher, 2019, p. 14). As Brooker (2018) has pointed out, parts of this countermovement have looked to a similar movement on the other side, the Tea Party, and adopted some of its tactics.

After the recent presidential election, Americans and the world saw an extreme manifestation of polarized political discourses in the infamous January 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Since then, two giants of social media, Facebook and Twitter, have banned the former president from operating his accounts. The companies believe that allowing the former president to use his accounts may result in more election-related disinformation and potentially more violence. The legality of the bans aside—some have argued that private companies may ban users for violating their company policies—this state of affairs is unusual in an advanced democracy. Indeed, a recent Pew Research poll found that Americans are “divided along partisan lines” when it comes to a permanent ban on Trump’s social media accounts (Anderson, 2021). A recent Reuters/Ipsos poll also found that 55% of Republicans agree with President Trump’s “election fraud” claims (Jackson & Duran, 2021).

In the current climate of the U.S. (and perhaps other) democracy(ies), interventions to lessen polarized political discourses, both online and off-line, are a need of the hour. Oftentimes, such problems are seen as too big or complex to involve any realistic individual intervention. However, this may not be the case. Indeed, Gandhian protesting ethic is based on a strong individual responsibility. Timothy Flinders, a Gandhian scholar, has written the following about this point: “But all the while he [Gandhi] made it clear that the practice of satyagraha had to begin with the individual, ‘at home’” (Easwaran, 2011, p. 187). Flinders goes on to say that “Gandhi tried to show through his own life that the human being who is devoid of self-interest is the instrument which reveals this energy and puts it to work to resolve conflict at any level” (p. 189). Gandhi’s insistence on abjuring hate, trusting one’s opponents, and being willing to humbly interact with them whenever a suitable opportunity arose are qualities that can help address the problem of polarized political discourses effectively. In fact, a recent poll by Pew Research Center found that 70% of social media users in the U.S. “never or rarely post or share about political, social issues” (McClain, 2021). Among the top five reasons for this stance are having nothing “to add to the conversation” (23%) and not wanting “to offend others.” These choices would probably agree with Gandhi, who was a strong proponent of virtuous self-restraint and discipline.

The 2017 Women’s March would probably have been as successful if it had refrained from abjuring the new administration, not to mention attacking the members of the administration personally or excoriating the administration for anticipated (but not yet enacted or announced) problematic policies. As Gandhi’s example shows, contacting one’s adversary in good faith without compromising on one’s principles are strategies that are good for all concerned, including a disagreeable *other*. Han would call this stance listening to the *other*. Conversely, simply unilateral declamation may gain support from likeminded allies but may alienate disagreeable *others*. Democracy strengthens when discourses do not drive a deep wedge among people. When people retire to their echo chambers, whether online or off-line, democracies struggle (see McCoy,



Rahman, and Somer, 2018) and ethics become a matter of lower priority (as seen, for example, in the recent ousting of Representative Cheney from her leadership role).

A Gandhian practice present-day protest marches may heed with benefit is Gandhi's insistence on engaging with his adversaries (his listening to the *other*, as Han would describe it). As noted, Gandhi contacted the South African government and the Viceroy of India before his marches in South Africa and Dandi in India. Even in Noakhali, Gandhi "was determined to give the [Muslim] League government another chance" (Sengupta, 2016, p. 84). American nonviolence activist Richard Gregg (1966), who spent a few years living with Gandhi, has stated that "even during the times of open struggle [Gandhi's] criticisms of the government have been impersonal. He has not imputed evil motives to any individuals in the Government" (p. 295). Writing about Gandhi, Vincent Sheean (1949) described such an approach as "communicat[ing] with an idea higher and greater than ourselves" (p. 253). Han (2013/2017) has characterized this approach as an "acknowledgement of the Other and self-knowledge in the Other—in a word ... love in the Judeo-Christian sense" (p. 47) (also found in the Hindu *The Bhagavad Gita*). Han (2016/2018) has also stated that "one must be willing to expose oneself to the otherness and foreignness of the Other. 'You-aspects' of the Other elude all safeguards" (p. 65). In brief, political engagement with an opponent is not easy, or predictable, but it is rewarding. Gandhi's signing an agreement with then viceroy Lord Irwin or his attending the Second Round Table Conference are cases in point. The agreement did not survive for long and the conference was judged by many in India as a failed gesture by the British. Yet Gandhi took both actions and probably gained his opponents' respect. Indeed, Lord Irwin had high personal respect for Gandhi, which was reciprocated. Even small victories may help weaken the grip of political sectarianism that Finkel et al (2020) have warned against. Leung and Frank (2020) have discussed an exercise in which college students sought to counter hate in their community by "a positive approach on unifying individuals, regardless of their differences" (p. 73).

In an impressive analysis of Gandhi's printing experiments in South Africa—his means of communicating with his allies, much like the present-day activists communicating through social media—Isabel Hofmeyr (2013) writes how Gandhi published ethical extracts ("summaries of writers like Thoreau, Ruskin, and Tolstoy," among others) along with news items in his newspaper *Indian Opinion* (p. 23). Hofmeyr states that Gandhi used such ideas to "deinstrumentalize time and hence slow down reading" (p. 23).

Slowing down reading may also help digital communicators avoid rushing to judge or respond to an *other's* discourse. Han has asked digital communicators to "listen to" others, instead of finding refuge with what we like and prefer. Communication scholars Strother and Huckleberry (1968) write that "unless the idea is heard and understood, there can be no communication" (p. 292). The authors advise listeners to "remain composed when the speaker's idea is fired with combustible language or contrary to his own." Social media users can heed this advice with benefit. Listening to writing on social media (we listen to our drafts when editing) can be a similar exercise in a composed taking-in, reading, or reflecting-over of the writing. Gandhi advised his readers to read slowly, taking time to reflect and digest the information (Hofmeyr, 2013). Hofmeyr (2013) explains Gandhi's insistence on repetition in reading until one has understood a point by showing an example from Gandhi's text *Hind Swaraj* (or the Indian Home Rule). The text is organized as chapters in the question-and-answer format between a reader and an editor. Hofmeyr's (2013) example relates to an objection the reader raises to a point made by the editor in an earlier chapter. However, "by chapter 4 the Reader proves he has been listening carefully by rehearsing a summary of the debate thus far" (p. 149).

If a protesting organization or movement embraces Gandhian ideas, they can help improve the intractable situation of heightened polarization in political discourses. Perhaps the improvement will take time, but it will likely happen if Gandhi's life is any guide. It must be remembered, as Judith Brown said (Dalton, 2012), that Gandhi applied his ideas. Flinders has stated, "All of Gandhi's ideas bear this imprint, that they achieve their potential only in their application, 'only by living them'" (Easwaran, 2011, p. 187). Not only did Gandhi earn respect of many of his opponents, including viceroys of India, but he counted many westerners among his friends throughout his life.

What may be a Gandhian way for a protest organization to share information with its audiences on social and digital media? As we have seen, Gandhi published ethical extracts along with regular news items in his popular newspaper—*Indian Opinion*—in South Africa (Hofmeyr, 2013). Hofmeyr (2013) states that "the juxtaposition of the two genres insistently required readers to think about what constituted ethical news reporting" (pp. 91–92). Adding to this deliberate formatting of the newspaper, as previously stated, Gandhi asked his newspaper readers to read slowly so as to understand and reflect on everything. He even asked the readers to orally "share" the newspaper with those who may not afford it. Organizations supporting or leading social movements or protests may follow such practices in their own online postings, whether on their websites or on social media. Providing good information consistently and on a systematic basis builds trust in the audience.

A final point about a Gandhian view of communication involving social or digital media is found in the following observation by Hofmeyr (2013): "to those living in the swirl and confetti of social media, he [Gandhi] would no doubt quote Thoreau, namely, that 'they have not heard from [themselves] in a long time' (p. 161). Such "breaks" from social media are fairly common among their users, but they may have concrete benefits of allowing users of reflecting on their communication and discourse through social and digital media.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

## References

- Agrawal, N.** (2018, January 19). Women's March redux: What you need to know. *Los Angeles Times*. <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-womens-march-20180119-story.html>
- Anderson, M.** (2021). *Americans divided on whether Trump should be permanently banned from social media*. Pew Research Center. Americans are split on banning Trump from social media permanently | Pew Research Center. <https://pewrsr.ch/3upBmMq>
- Barnett, B. A.** (2019). The Trump Effect: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Racist Right's Internet Rhetoric. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 14(1), 77–96. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.125>
- Bell, J.** (2017). Against surfing: On lingering with Byung-Chul Han. *Cultural Politics*, 13(1), 129–131. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1215/17432197-3755310>
- Bennett, L.** (2012). Patterns of listening through social media: online fan engagement with the live music experience. *Social Semiotics*, 22(5), 545–557. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2012.731897>
- Berry, M., & Chenoweth, E.** (2018). Who made the Women's March? In D. S. Meyer and S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The Resistance: The Dawn of the Anti-Trump Opposition Movement* (pp. 75–89). Oxford UP. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190886172.003.0004>
- Bone, J. E., Griffin, C. L., & Linda Scholz, T. M.** (2008). Beyond traditional conceptualizations of rhetoric: Invitational rhetoric and a move toward civility. *Western Journal of Communication*, 72(4), 434–462. [rwjc344777 434.462 \(researchgate.net\)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344777434462). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570310802446098>
- Brooker, M. E.** (2018). Indivisible. In D. S. Meyer and S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The Resistance: The Dawn of the Anti-Trump Opposition Movement* (pp. 162–184). Oxford UP. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190886172.003.0009>
- Dalton, D.** (2012). *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*. Columbia UP.
- Dencik, L., & Leistert, O.** (Eds.). (2015). *Critical perspectives on social media and protest: Between control and emancipation*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Easwaran, E.** (2011). *Gandhi the Man: How One Man Changed Himself to Change the World*. Nilgiri Press.
- Editors.** (2017, January 18). Women's March on Washington FAQ: What you need to know. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2017/01/17/womens-march-washington-where-when-logistics/96156298/>
- Elahi, A.** (2017, January 10). Women business leaders use tech to take on Trump. *Chicago Tribune*. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/bluesky/originals/ct-women-post-trump-groups-chicago-bsi-20170110-story.html>
- Felsenthal, J.** (2017, January 10). These are the women organizing the Women's March on Washington. *Vogue*. <https://www.vogue.com/article/meet-the-women-of-the-womens-march-on-washington>
- Finkel, E. J., Bail, C. A., Cikara, M., Ditto, P. H., Iyengar, S., Klar, S., Mason, L., McGrath, M. C., Nyhan, B., Rand, D. G., Skitka, L. J., Tucke, J. A., Van Bavel, J. J., Wang, C. S., & Druckman, J. N.** (2020, October 30). Political sectarianism in America. *Science*, 370(6516), 533–536. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abe1715>
- Fisher, D. R.** (2019). *American Resistance: From the Women's March to the Blue Wave*. Columbia UP. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7312/fish18764>
- Foss, S. K., & Griffin, C. L.** (1995). Beyond persuasion: A proposal for an invitational rhetoric. *Communication Monographs*, 62, 2–18.
- Frazer, G.** (2017, January 18). *What the Women's March wants*. PBS News Hour. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/womens-march-wants>
- Gandhi, M. K.** (1954). *Satyagraha in South Africa*. Trans. Valji Govindji Desai. Stanford, CA: Academic Reprints. Print.
- Gandhi, M. K.** (2001). *Non-violent resistance (satyagraha)*. Dover Publications. (Original work published 1961).
- Gerbaudo, P.** (2012). *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. Pluto Press.
- Grant, M.** (2017, January 3). Is the Women's March safe? *Bustle*. <https://www.bustle.com/p/is-the-womens-march-safe-organizers-are-taking-your-safety-seriously-27523>
- Gregg, R.** (1966). Pacifist program in time of war, threatened war or Fascism. In S. Lynd (Ed.), *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History* (pp. 271–296). Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. Print.
- Hacker, J. S.** (2018). Afterword: What the Resistance means for American democracy. In D. S. Meyer and S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The Resistance: The Dawn of the Anti-Trump Opposition Movement* (pp. 265–277). Oxford UP. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190886172.003.0014>
- Han, B.** (2017). *In the swarm: Digital prospects* (E. Butler, Trans.). The MIT Press. (Original work published 2013). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11055.001.0001>
- Han, B.** (2018). *The expulsion of the other* (W. Hoban, Trans.). Polity Press. (Original work published 2016).
- Hancock, W. K.** (1962). *Smuts: The Sanguine Years 1870–1919*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP. Print.

- Harel, T. O., Jameson, J. K., & Maoz, I.** (2020). The normalization of hatred: Identity, affective polarization, and dehumanization on Facebook in the context of intractable political conflict. *Social Media + Society*, 1–10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120913983>
- Hartnett, A. H.** (2017, January 2). *Ebony*. Medium. <https://medium.com/whyareyoumarching/ebony-4556304af06a>
- Hofmeyr, I.** (2013). *Gandhi's Printing Press: Experiments in Slow Reading*. Harvard UP. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674074743>
- Jackson, C., & Duran, J.** (2021). *Majority of Republicans still believe the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump*. Ipsos. Majority of Republicans still believe the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump | Ipsos topline\_write\_up\_reuters\_ipsos\_trump\_coattails\_poll\_-\_april\_02\_2021.pdf
- Janusik, L. A.** (2007). Building listening theory: The validation of the conversational listening span. *Communication Studies*, 58(2), 139–156. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510970701341089>
- Just, S. N., & Muhr, S. L.** (2019). "Together We Rise": Collaboration and contestation as narrative drivers of the Women's March. *Leadership*, 15(2), 245–267. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715018809497>
- Kang, J.** (2017). Internet activism transforming street politics: South Korea's 2008 'Mad Cow' protests and new democratic sensibilities. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(5), 750–761. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717709444>
- Karatzogianni, A., Schandorf, M., & Ferra, I.** (Eds.). (2021). *Protest technologies and media revolutions: The longue durée*. Emerald Publishing. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/9781839826467>
- Kasturi, B.** (2001). *Walking Alone: Gandhi and India's Partition*. New Delhi, India: Vision Books. Print.
- Kline, N.** (2009). *More time to think: A way of being in the world*. Fisher King Publishing.
- Lankala, S.** (2018). The emptiness of the one-dimensional self: Byung-Chul Han's *Expulsion of the Other*. *Moment Journal*, 5(1), 116–120. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17572/mj2018.1.116120>
- Lee, F. L. F., & Chan, J. M.** (2018). *Media and protest logics in the digital era: The umbrella movement in Hongkong*. Oxford UP. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190856779.001.0001>
- Leung, C., & Frank, R.** (2020). Unity Starts with U: A Case Study of a Counter-Hate Campaign Through the Use of Social Media Platforms. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 16(1), pp.69–83. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.146>
- McCoy, J., Rahman, T., & Somer, M.** (2018). Polarization and the global crisis of democracy: Common patterns, dynamics, and pernicious consequences for democratic polities. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 62(1), 16–42. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218759576>
- McClain, C.** (2021). *70% of U.S. social media users never or rarely post or share about political, social issues*. Pew Research Center. Most U.S. social media users rarely or never post about politics, social issues | Pew Research Center. <https://pewrsr.ch/3h03bH6>
- McDuffie, K., & Ames, M.** (2021). Archiving affect and activism: Hashtag feminism and structures of feeling in Women's March tweets. *First Monday*, 26(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i2.10317>
- Merriam, A. H.** (1975). "Symbolic Action in India: Gandhi's Nonverbal Persuasion." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 61(3), 290–306. Web. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335637509383294>
- Nanda, B. R.** (1968). *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography*. Allied Publishers.
- Prutzman, P.** (1994). Bias-related incidents, hate crimes, and conflict resolution. *Education and Urban Society*, 27(1), 71–81. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124594027001008>
- Ratcliffe, K.** (1999). Rhetorical listening: A trope for interpretive invention and a 'code of cross-cultural conduct.' *College Composition and Communication*, 51(2), 195–224. Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a "Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct" (marquette.edu). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/359039>
- Reichard, R.** (2017, January 18). Latinas are playing a major role in the Women's March on Washington. *Latina*. <http://www.latina.com/lifestyle/our-issues/latinas-major-role-womens-march-washington?page=13,0>
- Ryan, K., & Natalie, E. J.** (2001). Fusing horizons: Standpoint hermeneutics and invitational rhetoric. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 31(2), 69–90. e\_natalie\_fusing\_2001.pdf (uncg.edu). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02773940109391200>
- Sengupta, D.** (2016). *The Partition of Bengal: Fragile Borders and New Identities*. Delhi, India: Cambridge UP. Print. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107448155>
- Sharp, G.** (1960). *Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power (Three Case Histories)*. Ahmedabad, India: Navjivan Publishing House, 1960. Web. 15 July 2018. file:///C:/Users/anish.dave/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge\_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/19097.pdf
- Sheean, V.** (1949). *Lead, Kindly Light: Gandhi and the Way to Peace*. New York: Random House. Print.
- Sheean, V.** (1954). *Mahatma Gandhi: A Great Life in Brief*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Print.
- Shirky, C.** (2011). The political power of social media: Technology, the public sphere, and political change. *Foreign Affairs*, 90(1), 28–41.
- Stockman, F.** (2017, January 9). Women's March on Washington Opens Contentious Dialogues about Race. *The New York Times*. Women's March on Washington Opens Contentious Dialogues About Race – The New York Times (nytimes.com)

- Stolberg, S. G.** (2017, January 18). Views on abortion strain calls for unity at Women's March on Washington. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/us/womens-march-abortion.html>
- Strauss, D.** (2017, January 3). Women's March organizers predict 200,000 will attend anti-Trump protest. *Politico*. Women's March organizers predict 200,000 will attend anti-Trump protest – POLITICO
- Strother, E. S., & Huckleberry, A. W.** (1968). *The Effective Speaker*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Swenson, K.** (2017, August 28). Black-clad Antifa members attack peaceful right-wing demonstrators in Berkeley. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/08/28/black-clad-antifa-attack-right-wing-demonstrators-in-berkeley/>
- Tarrow, S. G.** (2011). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge UP. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511973529>
- The Women's March Organizers and Condé Nast.** (2018). *Together We Rise: Behind the Scenes at the Protest Heard around the World*. HarperCollins.
- Wahlstrom, M., & Tornberg, A.** (2019). Social media mechanisms for right-wing political violence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Discursive opportunities, group dynamics, and co-ordination. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1–22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2019.1586676>
- Weber, T.** (2009). *On the Salt March: The Historiography of Mahatma Gandhi's March to Dandi*. New Delhi, India: Rupa Publications. Print.
- Wilson, W. L.** (2017, January 20). Women marching for justice in a new era: A chat with activist Tamika Mallory. *Ebony*. <https://www.ebony.com/news-views/tamika-mallory-womens-march-interview>
- Women's March.** (2017, January 19). *In our Unity Principles, we are proud to include Hillary Clinton's phrase said during her historic Beijing speech in* [Status update]. Facebook.

**How to cite this article:** Dave, A. (2021). #MassProtests: The Abjuring of the *Other* and Lessons from Gandhi. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 17(1), 52–63. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.202>

**Published:** 05 October 2021

**Copyright:** © 2021 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



*Journal of Hate Studies* is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Gonzaga Library Publishing.

**OPEN ACCESS**