

UTM Lecture on Nonviolence

Presented by the UTM Department of Political Science

Why Gandhi Rejected Violence in Mass Protest



Monday, March 2, 2026



The Collaborative Digital Research Space (CDRS)



4:30 PM – 6:00 PM
Reception to follow



Maanjiwe nendamowinan (MN) | Room 3230



Speaker

Karuna Mantena

Professor of Political Science
Columbia University

Karuna Mantena is Professor of Political Science at Columbia University and co-director of the International Conference for the Study of Political Thought (CSPT). Karuna is the author of *Alibis of Empire* (2010) and has published articles on Gandhi's political realism, Martin Luther King's nonviolence, and the theory and practice of nonviolence in the 20th century. She is currently finishing a book on Gandhi and the politics of nonviolence.

Abstract

This talk explores what Gandhi believed nonviolent action could accomplish that violence could not. Gandhi's goal was to find a way that the oppressed could realize their power and transform entrenched views more effectively than either traditional liberal politics or armed rebellion. Violence undermined the persuasive power of mass protest by hardening identities, escalating conflict, and reproducing the logic of domination. Nonviolent action, by contrast, dramatizes discipline, sacrifice, and restraint, to demonstrate a different kind of power. The power of nonviolent protest works not through overpowering or outnumbering opponents but by creatively disrupting attitudes and alignments to make political transformation possible. Understanding this logic helps clarify both the promise and the limits of nonviolent movements today.

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