

What would Gandhi do?

By Dave Hampton

Where is the calm inner voice of wisdom that will guide our world leaders to a new safer place?

I'd like to propose the analogy of a playground - quite a big one - one shared by a lot of school-children - some from the very richest homes in the world, and many from the very poorest. The playground is almost knee high full with litter, after 100 or so years of no-one picking it up.

For the Western reader to get into this piece, they need first to imagine that they are one of the very rich kids - the USA/UK 'spoilt brats'. If you can get into this part - the rest is child's play!

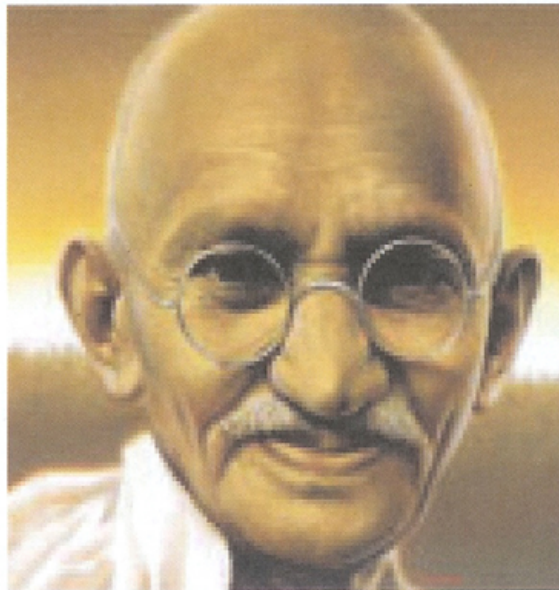
What is needed - in playground politics terms - to break the stalemate, and to clear up the mess (which is growing faster than it is being cleared up) is for all the rich kids to STOP dropping litter - entirely - and to START to pick up all their historical litter. It is important they do this UNILATERALLY. They need to stop whinnying about the large and growing numbers of poor kids - who can only afford to drop one small item of rubbish per year - when they are each dropping 100 times that amount.

What is needed is one or two brave rich kids to inspire others around them saying: "I will start this clear up - even if no-one else will" (Because the "I will if you will" game clearly ends in a mutually assisted drowning in our own litter.) Others may witness the powerful futility of the tiny gesture - laugh at one or two mad people - in a billion - trying to pick up all their own litter - and laugh - or - sometimes perhaps - cry? This is one of the ways that the pupils might discover a way out of their mess. ONE or two of them start to save the world by irrational acts of love and compassion (the 'I will even if you won't' attitude) that turn out to be contagious such that the tiny few - cutting their own INDIVIDUAL rubbish footprint (vanishingly insignificant unless they inspire others all around them to follow) will lead from nothingness to a huge revolution. (I am not sure the playground has time for this to happen but it HAS started - there is voluntary carbon detox everywhere in individual states and federal govt. and in the transition towns movement in UK.)

Option TWO - is that all in the playground agree some sort of overall optimum deal - some framework - with the wisdom of Solomon (remember the one about two mums arguing about who was the real mum of a 1 yr old baby - neither would give up their claim - Solomon thought about and said - I know - since we cannot agree we will have to cut the baby exactly in half and you can have half each - at which point the true

mum gave up her claim on her baby!) I think that C&C represents this best possible reconciliation of all factors. But it is very tough for both rich and poor to accept it still.

It is tough for US/UK to 'buy it' because it asks us to rapidly shrink our emissions now: The rich kid in us says hey we can't stop dropping all our litter that fast! Poor little darlings! AND it is tougher still for the WRONGED nations to accept it be-



cause it is STILL unfair - in as much as it does not wipe the slate clean - for historical litter - it let's the spoilt rich kids off the hook - for past crimes of EMISSION - and courageously says we will forgive you for past littering - as long as you start to clear up your own future mess properly - from now on.

Which is the bigger ask - which is the bigger act of generosity - it is obvious! We ask a lot of the poor nations when we ask them to accept this framework. It is the poor kids in playground - as ever was - it is they who are being asked to be the bigger person and to be the bigger hero.. and to stay with the pain of the injustice a while longer. NOT FAIR. I almost hate myself suggesting this? It is a justice without restitution thing.

But crucially I don't see a better global framework anywhere near the negotiating table. Do you?

C&C says every person on planet has same right to drop litter - and that we can only all drop a small amount each - within the capacity of the planet to deal with small amounts of litter. It says that the West/North/US (rich kids) have blown their fair share - massively - already. But it tries to embrace these fat spoilt brats in a global compact

by treating them with kid gloves - forgetting about past injustice as long as they commit to rapidly shrink their bubble here on in. It creates the basis for BIG wealth flow - from rich to poor - during the detox period as the rich kids learn to cope dropping the same litter as poor kids - and borrow some of their "litter rights" temporarily - as they come clean.

AND it even generates a little HEAD-ROOM for poor kids to UP their litter - a little bit - as they grow richer.

It is reconciliatory.

It is healing.

It is workable and - as far as I can see - it's the best offer likely to make the negotiating table? It is rooted in future fairness - and it is a plan for mutual survival.

The alternative is that the rich kids can cling onto current injustice - for grim death - watching the poor die as they cling on - in an increasingly turbulent tidal wave - ending with them getting swept away too. The poor kids can cling onto the fact they are 'right' - and have been 'wronged' - and are by far the biggest victim - and they can cling on their fight for total justice - also for early grim death.

BOTH have to let go... and join the swirling current of a global movement - focusing on what is right and not what is wrong - and on HOPE - that we can fix this - if we can unify and agree something somehow.

C&C is pure solution to sore pollution.

It is not fair to ask poor kids to accept such a future framework because they shouldn't be in the mess that we created. ..AND... it's not likely that US etc will ever accept that they have to pick up all PAST litter as well as almost entirely stopping dropping litter now - over the decade ahead.

C&C STARTS to reverse the process of growth of EXPANSION AND DIVERGENCE (the whole rich get richer dream/nightmare) and it starts to heal and reconcile and unify and take us forward, not in fairness - but towards fairness. It's unreasonable for rich to ask poor to back it - but I sure hope they do.

Aubrey Meyer points to MANDELA words - it being about JUSTICE without VENGEANCE? I love C&C and I hope that all our leaders learn to love it and lead with it and soon.

The Carbon Coach—for Dave's contact details see back page