Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a Dalit* and a contemporary of Gandhi, said: "If a man with God's name on his tongue and sword under his armpit deserved the appellation of a Mahatma, then Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a Mahatma."

Mayawati, a Dalit leader in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, blames Gandhi for India's caste problems, saying, "He divided Indian society into two categories - the weaker sections and upper castes."

*Dalits are also known as the "black people of India." Composing nearly 15% of India's population, they are the largest but also the most oppressed minority group in that country.

For additional education, we recommend the following resources:

"Gandhi: Behind the Mask of Divinity" (Prometheus, 2004) by G.B. Singh

"Gandhi Under Cross-Examination" (Sovereign Star, 2008) by G.B. Singh and Tim Watson


Gandhi is considered a catalyst of the American Civil Rights Movement. Black leaders from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Barack Obama credit Gandhi as their inspiration. Statues of him dot the United States. A Gandhi statue even stands at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

What did Gandhi believe?
In 1893, Gandhi was hired to serve as legal adviser to wealthy Indian traders in Colonial South Africa. He arrived there prior to Apartheid, but during a time when the nation still suffered severe political unrest and racial segregation. That same year he was allegedly the victim of racial hatred when he was thrown off a train at Pietermaritzburg for refusing to give up his seat to a white man.

In 1895, just two years later, Gandhi began actively promoting racial segregation in Durban. The Durban post office had two doors: one for whites and the other shared by Indians and black Africans. Being Indian, Gandhi was required to share a door with black South Africans, which deeply offended him.

In his Collected Works (CWMG), Vol. I, pp. 367-368, Gandhi wrote: "In the Durban Post and telegraph offices there were separate entrances for natives and Asiatics and Europeans. We felt the indignity too much and many respectable Indians were insulted and called all sorts of names by the clerks at the counter. We petitioned the authorities to do away with the invidious distinction and they have now provided three separate entrances for natives, Asiatics, and Europeans."

What transpired between 1893 and 1895 that turned the alleged victim of racism into a perpetrator of racism?

---

**Gandhi on Segregation**

Sept. 24, 1903: “We believe as much in the purity of race as we think they do... We believe also that the white race of South Africa should be the predominating race.” ~ CWMG, Vol. III, p. 256

Dec. 24, 1903: “The petition dwells upon ‘the comingling of the Coloured and white races.’ May we inform the members of the conference that, so far as the British Indians are concerned, such a thing is practically unknown? If there is one thing which the Indian cherishes more than any other, it is the purity of type.” ~ CWMG, Vol. III, p. 379

Note: All quotes are excerpted verbatim from the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG).

Sept. 5, 1905: "The decision to open the school for all Coloured children is unjust to the Indian community, and is a departure from the assurance given... that the school will be reserved for Indian children only." ~ CWMG, Vol. IV, p. 402

Feb. 15, 1904: “Under my suggestion, the Town Council must withdraw the Kaffirs from the Location. About this mixing of the Kaffirs with the Indians, I must confess I feel most strongly. I think it is very unfair to the Indian population.” ~ CWMG, Vol. III, p. 429

Feb. 29, 1908: “The British rulers take us to be so lowly and ignorant that they assume that, like the Kaffirs who can be pleased with toys and pins, we can also be fobbed off with trinkets.” ~ CWMG, Vol. VIII, p. 167

July 3, 1908: "Kaffirs are as a rule uncivilised.” ~ CWMG, Vol. VIII, p. 199

Dec. 2, 1910: “Some Indians do have contacts with Kaffir women. I think such contacts are fraught with grave danger. Indians would do well to avoid them altogether.” ~ CWMG, Vol. X, p. 414

Mar. 10, 1911: “I do not think that there need be any worry about police officer. If the Regulations provide for Kaffir Police, we can fight the Regulations.” ~ CWMG, Vol. XI, p. 266

*Kaffir* is a pejorative South African term for blacks which is equivalent to the “n” word. Use of this term has been an actionable offense in South Africa since 1975. Gandhi was well aware of the offensiveness of this word but always used it to describe the black Africans.

---

**Gandhi on Blacks and Race Relations**

Sept. 26, 1896: “Ours is one continual struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir* whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness.” ~ CWMG, Vol. I, p. 410

Mar. 10, 1911: “I do not think that there need be any worry about police officer. If the Regulations provide for Kaffir Police, we can fight the Regulations.” ~ CWMG, Vol. XI, p. 266

*“Kaffir” is a pejorative South African term for blacks which is equivalent to the “n” word. Use of this term has been an actionable offense in South Africa since 1975. Gandhi was well aware of the offensiveness of this word but always used it to describe the black Africans.*