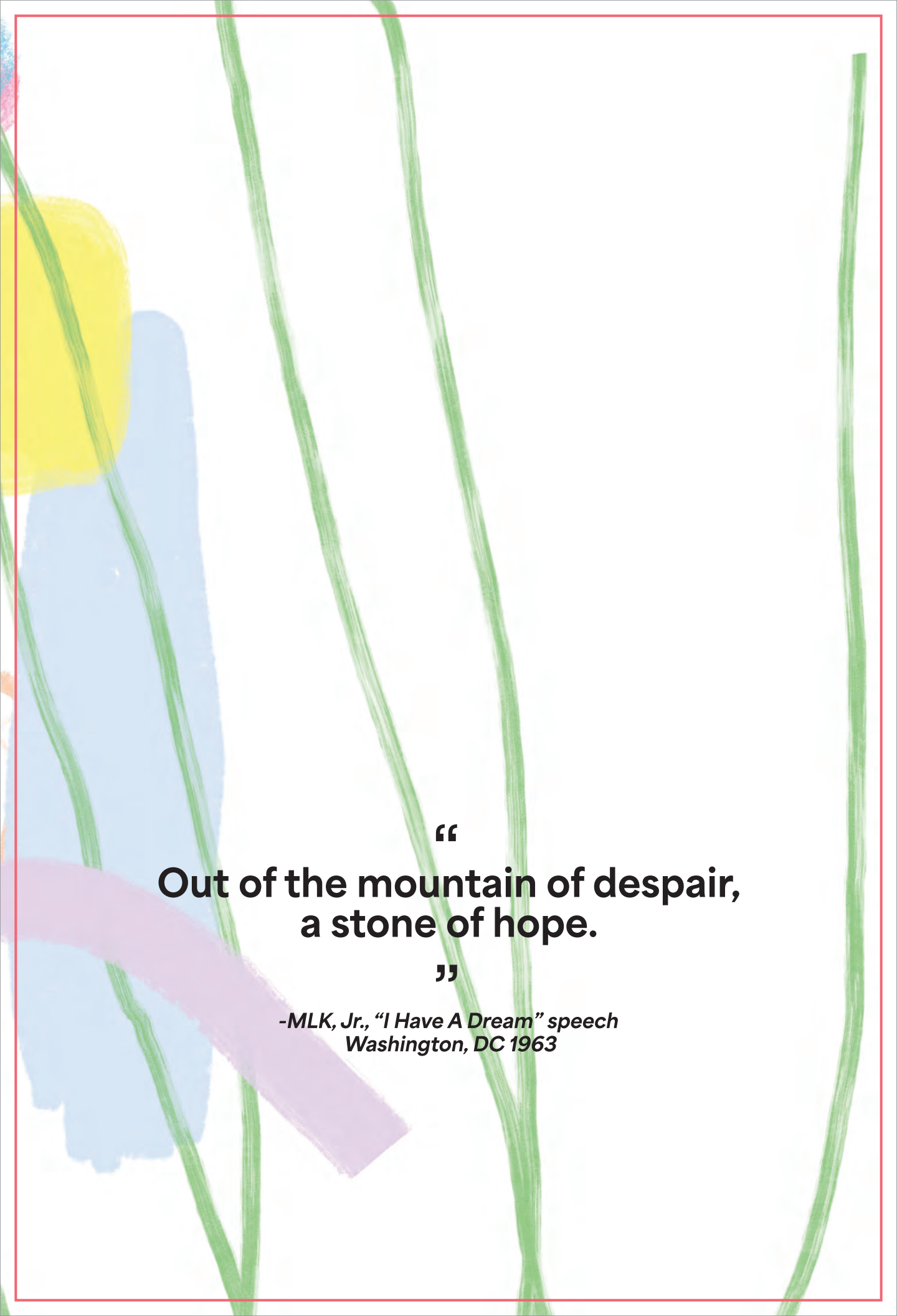




2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT



M.K. GANDHI INSTITUTE FOR NONVIOLENCE



“
**Out of the mountain of despair,
a stone of hope.**

”

*-MLK, Jr., “I Have A Dream” speech
Washington, DC 1963*



Dear Friends, Partners and Supporters:

As we reflect on the past year, it is with both a deep sense of gratitude for your contributions and a sober recognition of the challenges we've faced that we present our 2023-2024 annual report. In it, we provide an overview of how the Gandhi Institute has built trust among neighbors, has encouraged and leveraged the genius of our youth, and has de-centered violence as a strategy for conflict resolution. Our mission—to equip individuals to use nonviolence in the creation of a sustainable and just world—remains urgently important.

It could be said that the Gandhi Institute survived this last fiscal year. Despite significantly reduced financial and human resources, the Institute has remained unflinchingly committed to offering meaningful workshops and programming to all of our Community members, including those without the means to help defray the costs involved. In many ways, the Gandhi Institute's recent hardships have been a microcosm of the pain, turmoil and uncertainty that our neighborhood, city, nation and world at large have been experiencing. "Sitting in the fire" together can indeed have a galvanizing effect. What this all points to is an ongoing, critical need to come together and construct the reality we seek. The sense of solidarity we continue to share with our core network of partners, volunteers, donors and friends along with the individuals and organizations we have served, is what has sustained us over the past year.

Please consider this report as an invitation to find your own way to connect with the beautiful, vital work of the Gandhi Institute. Together, we are stronger!

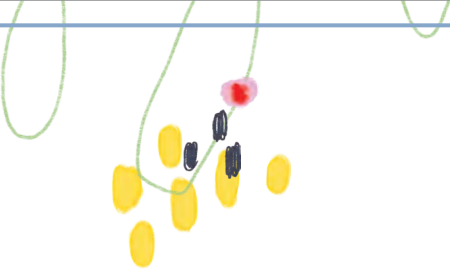
This comes with love from all of us,

Erin Thompson
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erin Thompson", located below the printed name and title.



CELEBRATIONS



NONVIOLENT BEGINNINGS

At the end of February, the Institute welcomed the first staff baby into our community!

So far, Rory has brought lots of laughter, tears, and meaning into Matt and his partner, Jess's lives. Rory's birth added a new dimension to our workshops with youth and really energized our staff. It has been heart-warming to witness the thought, care, and love that Rory has inspired.

BOARD SUPPORT

You probably noticed a couple of new faces in our community supporting us in gigantic and small ways. This past year, our board has accepted some exceptional people to amplify our efforts and mission to create a sustainable and just world for all.

We have seen positive changes in marketing, development, and project management. We have widened our community of changemakers. And we have really cherished the addition of great people who choose to lend their resources, time, and unique gifts.

A big shout-out to our incredible board! Your unwavering support has strengthened our community and made a significant impact. (Remember the energy at Soulforce? That was thanks to so much of their work!)

If you are interested in joining the board, ask us in person or at mkgi@gandhiinstitute.org

COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLES

Our community must exercise agency and self-determination by identifying, prioritizing and addressing the obstacles that stand between the status quo and our collective notion of Beloved Community.

To that end, the Gandhi Institute held a "Community Roundtables" series between 2023 and 2024. An experimental collaborative effort, the gatherings were open to anyone identifying as a Rochester Community Member. Roundtables emphasized a non-hierarchical format and intentionally brought together a spectrum of identities (age, race, gender, geography, education, economic status, etc.), believing that a plurality of perspectives is powerful raw material for those prepared to locate common ground.

By highlighting the throughlines of differing perspectives and steadfastly focusing on actionable steps within our abilities to execute, the community empowers itself to transmute what can seem like intractable systems of injustice and oppression.

The Community Roundtable series will resume in 2025. Will you join?



COMMITTING TO SUSTAINABILITY

Our commitment to sustainability continues to be a core value.

Working with Climate Solutions Accelerator, our team joined the Color Your Organization Green initiative, a program designed to integrate sustainability practices and reduce environmental impact within organizations.

We also continued to host Seed to Supper workshops at the Gandhi Institute to kick off the growing season. These workshops provided community members with beginner gardening tips, seeds, starters, and access to garden equipment at our community garden. Community garden beds flourished this year, with neighbors signing up to host, maintain, and harvest garden beds throughout the summer.

We renewed our partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension's 4H Cultivating Community workforce readiness program, where youth employees engaged with our garden and workshopping through a six-week program.

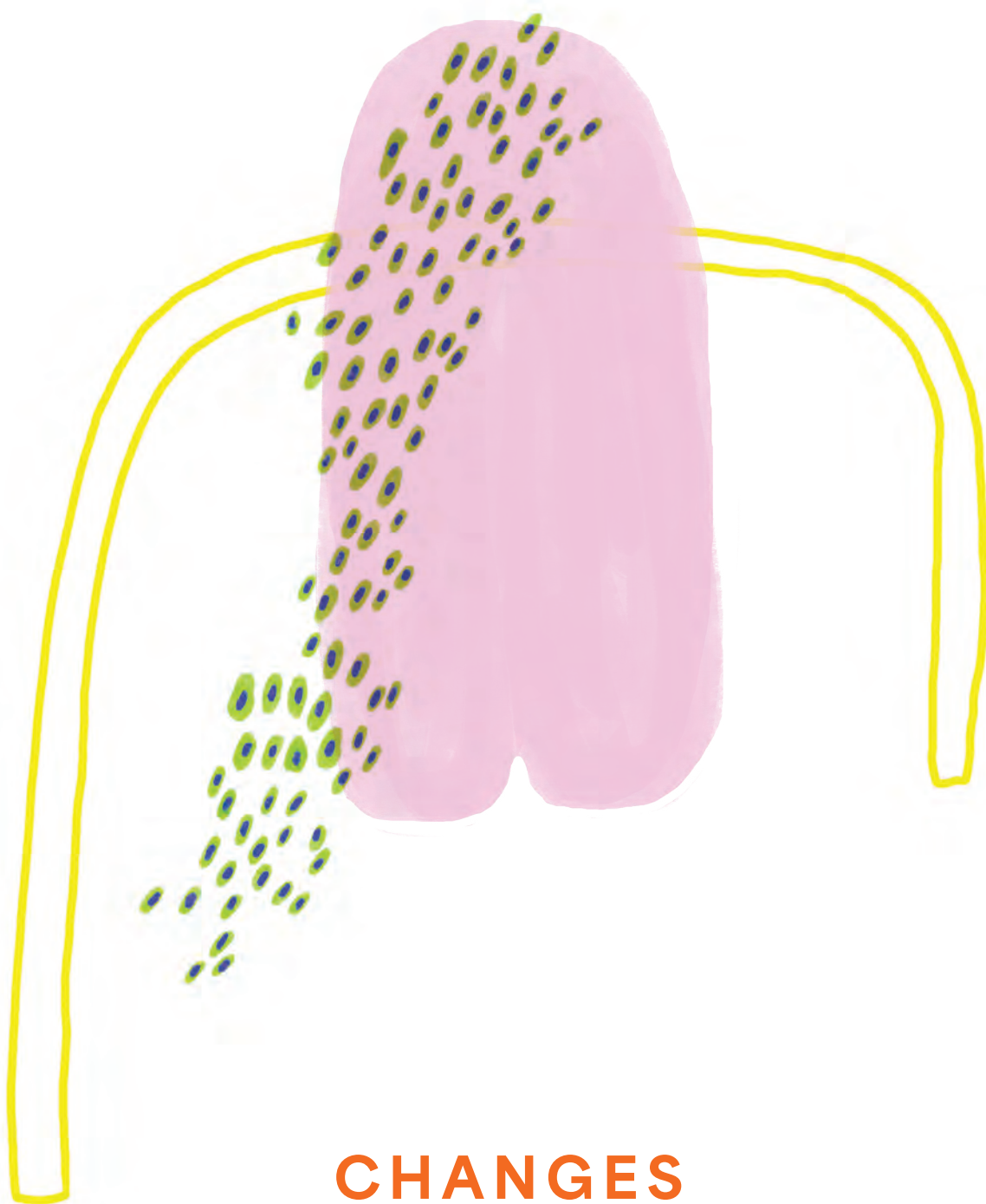
CONTINUING GRIEF HYGIENE

As we've deepened our self-care practice and facilitated grief circles, we've heard a need for spaces for folks to grieve in community.

At the Institute, we make space to honor our pain and create spaces inviting a collective witnessing and holding of what is heavy on our hearts. This past year, we expanded our grief programming by offering weekly online grief circles where people worldwide have come to grieve together. Grief Circles went beyond the recurring online spaces, as we partnered with community groups such as the Leading Ladies Empowerment Circle of Excellence and the Rochester City School District's Trauma, Illness, and Grief team of educators, to hold in-person grief circles and discussions around grief hygiene.

This year we grieved with over 200 people, many of them joining us regularly, challenging stigmas around grief and reminding us that we are not alone. This inspiring experience has reinforced our goal to empower more communities to grieve together.





CHANGES



LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

In February 2024, the Gandhi Institute underwent a structural change, moving from a co-directorship between Gwen Olton and Erin Thompson to Erin directing in a solo capacity.

Gwen provided poignant insight into her decision to step down in the newsletter and blog post we published at the time. The beauty of the mutually respectful and caring relationships between the Gandhi Institute directors of the past 15 years (Kit Miller, Gwen, and Erin) is that their commitment to peace work and to the Institute itself keeps them in each other's orbits, irrespective of their formal titles.

Gwen and Kit remain important thought partners to Erin and regularly serve as facilitators of Gandhi Institute events.

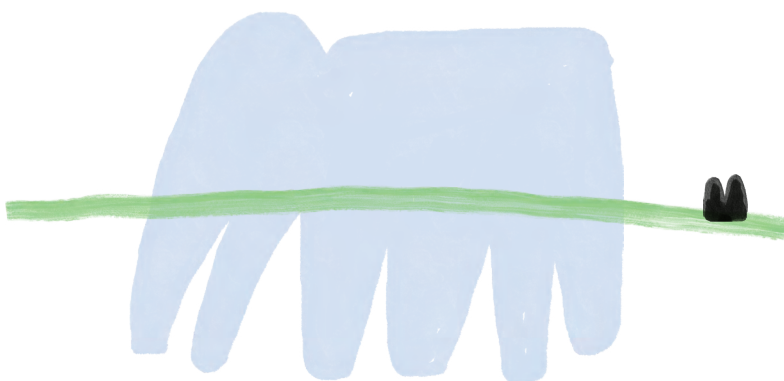


EXPANDING THE SEASON

This year, we expanded our Season for Nonviolence efforts beyond the traditional 64-day Season and beyond prison facilities.

In January, the Acting Commissioner for New York's Department of Corrections encouraged all NYS prison superintendents to participate in Season for Nonviolence activities, leading to increased requests for support across the state. Our team visited various facilities, including Groveland Correctional Facility, Attica Prison, and Wende Prison, to engage incarcerated men around the Season. This year, we engaged with 292 incarcerated people who participated in the Season for Nonviolence festivities by signing a pledge of nonviolence for 64 days, attending opening and closing ceremonies, and submitting artwork, writing, and even songs about nonviolence.

These efforts also extended to individuals transitioning from incarceration to the community, collaborating with our local parole office to provide resources and support in the reintegration process. We hope to continue our work during and after the Season for Nonviolence, to continue to build community with folks in facilities and beyond.





COLLABORATIONS

EXPANDING CONNECTIONS

This year, we embraced new partnerships and strengthened existing collaborations, with partners in Rochester and across the region.

Collaborating with fellow nonprofits, local healthcare providers, schools, and community groups, we continue to foster nonviolence and understanding across diverse settings.

We facilitated workshops with local and regional organizations, including Taproot, The Center for Youth, ROC the Future Alliance, Youth Services Quality Control (YSQC), and the Girl Scouts of Western New York. We partnered with Forward Leading IPA (FLIPA) and Trillium Healthcare, two community-based healthcare provider networks in the Finger Lakes region, for several recurring workshops on Conflict De-escalation and Conversations on Race and poverty. At the University of Rochester Medical School, we held workshops on conflict and nonviolent communication with folks at the Cardiac Care Unit and facilitated discussions around feedback and community-building with the Pediatric Asthma Research Group.

Building relationships with these groups and facilitating the development of skills, systems, and community to support their work has been energizing and encouraging. We want to continue to cultivate these relationships and invite future collaboration!

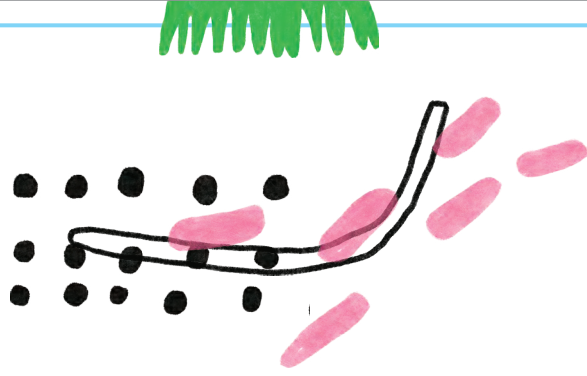
WORK IN SCHOOLS

Our youth hold the keys to the future. If we foster a culture of community-oriented critical thinking, nonviolence, and empowerment through education, then as our young people grow and expand their spheres of influence, the seeds of change we are sowing will fully bloom into revolutionary expression. This past year, Gandhi Institute staff members were embedded full-time in two Rochester City Schools: Dr. Charles T. Lunsford School #19 and Enrico Fermi School #17.

At School #19, we supported students' social and emotional needs through various activities, including individual conversations, group discussions, restorative circles, and mediations. Our commitment was evident in 540 classroom-based discussions and mentoring interactions with students. Beyond the classroom, the Institute's staff engaged in 3,000 interactions with students, including individual conversations, field trips, lunchtime activities, and music/art programming.

At school #17 during the 2023-24 school year, we recorded 589 admittances to their Peace Room. Additionally, staff facilitated 346 mediations, led 42 community building circles in classrooms, and organized 69 lunch groups.

Throughout all of these activities, Gandhi Institute staff collaborated with other adults in the school to shift their response to behavior challenges from one that focuses on punishment and shame to one that prioritizes relationships and repairing harm.

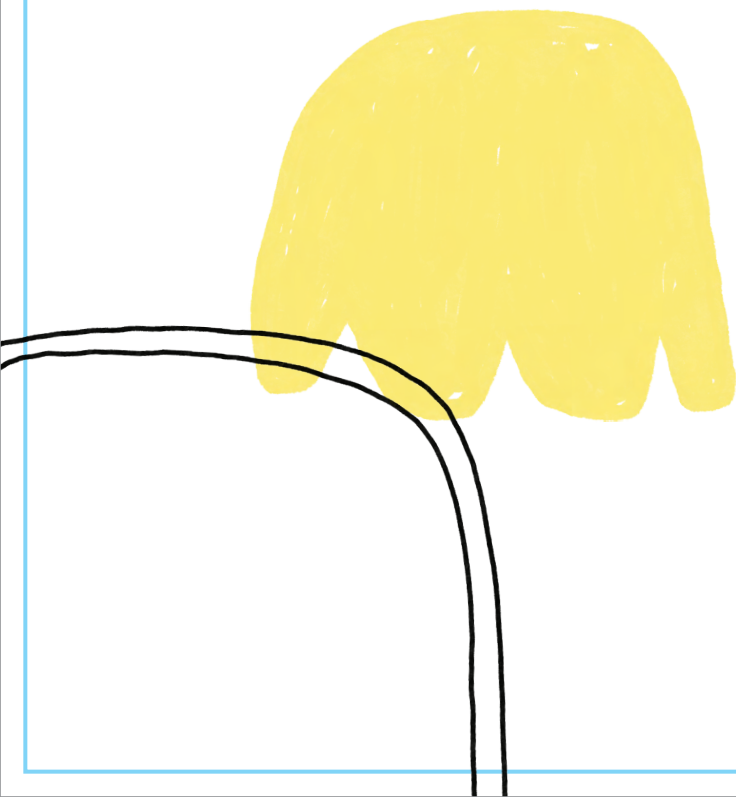


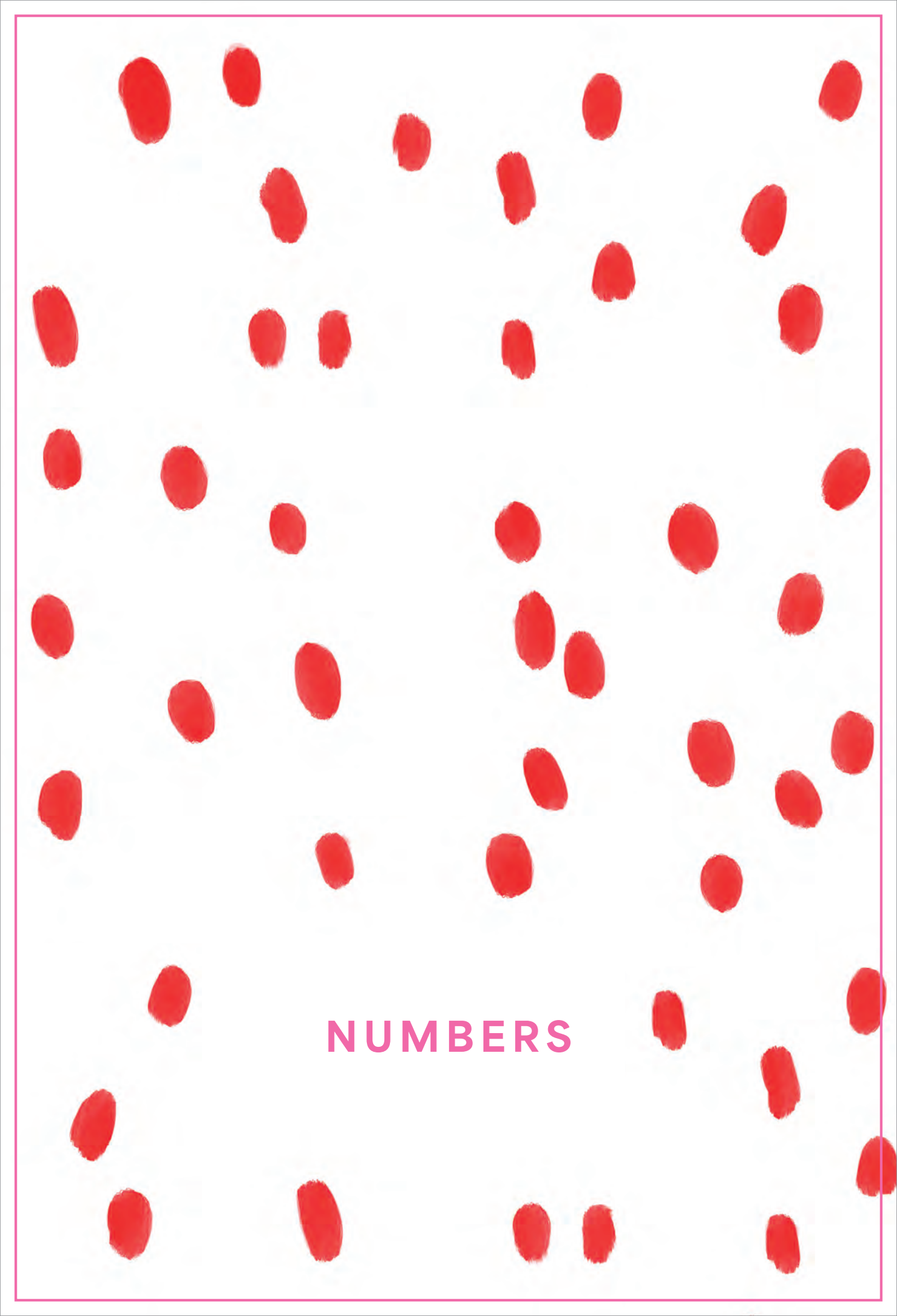
PARTNERING WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

This year, we worked to cultivate and renew partnerships with colleges and universities. At RIT's National Technical Institute of the Deaf (NTID), we collaborated with interpreters and administration with workshops on talking circles and feedback systems. We engaged with Keuka College, Allendale Columbia's LEAP program, St. John Fisher University, and Nazareth University through multiple workshops throughout the year, where we facilitated community-building circles with incoming college students, worked with students to create Zines to talk about hate and conflict, and encouraged volunteer opportunities in the garden.

Our partnerships with schools also expanded into New York City, where we did workshops at Barnard College, at Columbia University. Our team worked with students and staff at the school online and in person to hold talking and processing circles in the wake of the University's response to student protests.

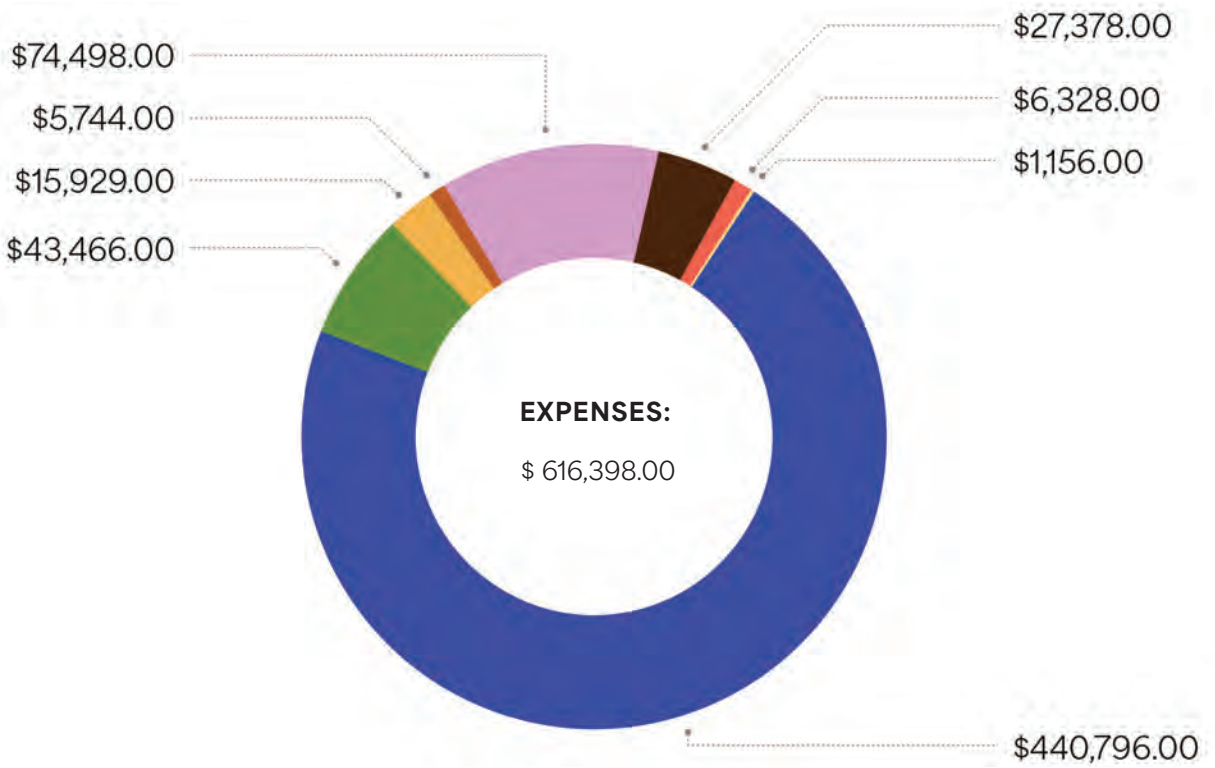
We look forward to continuing and expanding these partnerships, to build community with students and educators at all levels around our 4 Pillars and nonviolent mission.



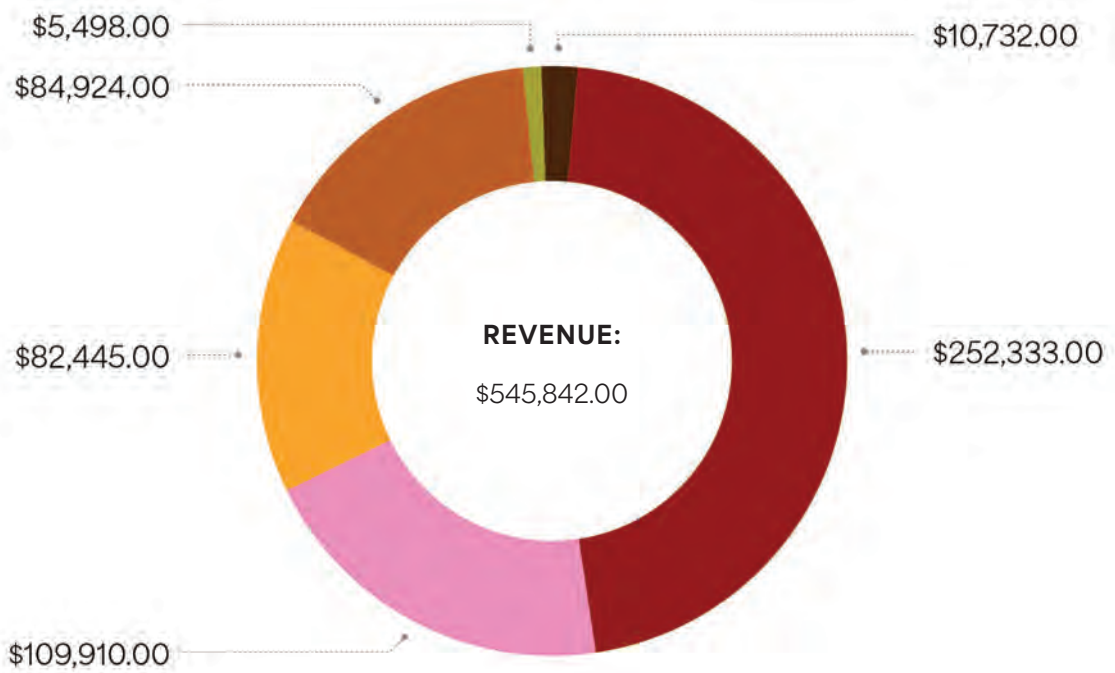
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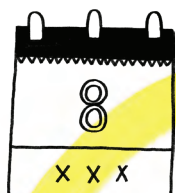
NUMBERS

- Payroll
- Office Expenses
- Rent, Facilities, Equipment
- Staff Training & Travel
- Fringe Benefits
- Youth Healing Hate Grants
- Professional Services
- Fundraising Expenses

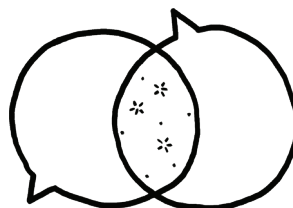


- Grants
- Community Training
- RCSD Programming
- Monthly Donations
- Contributions
- Fundraiser Events





NUMBER OF EVENTS:
164



STUDENT CONVERSATIONS:
5,586



YOUTH & ADULTS TRAINED:
3,199



ANNUAL BUDGET:
\$ 616,398.00



STAFF:
10





DEEP GRATITUDE

Grateful for support from over 270 donors and from the following grantors:

Bank of America, Education for Success Foundation, ESL Charitable Foundation, Greater Rochester Health Foundation, Hallowell Foundation, LGBT+ Giving Circle, NextGen Rochester, NYS Division of Criminal Justice, Rochester Area Community Foundation, & Woven Foundation.

Want to Get Involved?
Check out our site at gandhiinstitute.org to:

Volunteer
Participate in events
Donate and support the work!



**M.K. Gandhi Institute
for Nonviolence**