2024-2025
Annual Report

M.K. Gandhi Institute

for Nonviolence

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Mission Statement

The M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence is a nonprofit that equips people to use nonviolence to create a sustainable and just world for all.

Dear Friends and Allies:

It is with great pride and gratitude that we present our 2024-2025 annual report. This document highlights a fiscal year that tested our resilience amidst political upheaval and polarization.

Looking back, "where the rubber meets the road" aptly describes our work. The Gandhi Institute provides a brave space for those enacting the Beloved Community, standing with and supporting those who face inequity and persecution. We facilitate collective sense-making, grieving, healing, and renewed hope, recognizing that there are many of us committed to peace and justice. Never in my tenure has our work felt more timely and prescribed.

May we learn from our past to create a better future! This report offers qualitative and quantitative feedback on your investment in this vital effort.

On behalf of the Gandhi Institute, I offer sincere thanks for your support.

Truly,

Erin Thompson
Executive Director

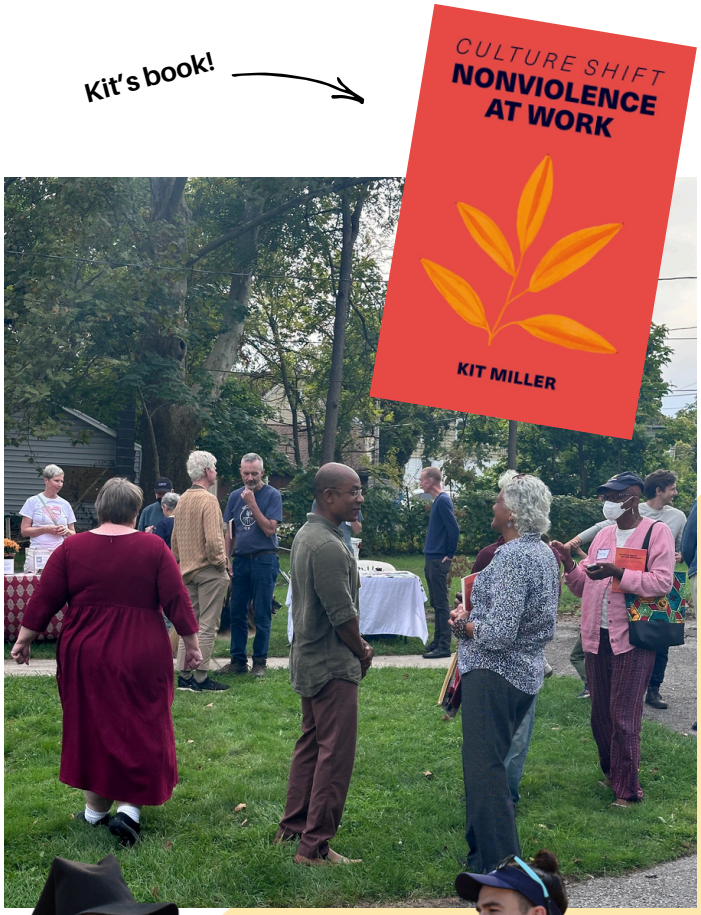
Nonviolence Education

In the past year, nonviolence remained at the heart of our work, guided by the teachings of Gandhi, Arun Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Marshall Rosenberg.

You helped us invite participants to engage deeply with Dr. King's life, philosophy, and activism through our five-week Kingian Nonviolence workshop series. Moving beyond the familiar "I Have a Dream" narrative, this series emphasized the "Will" and the "Skill" required for nonviolent movements, offering tools for applying these principles today.

Through your support, participants experienced immersive learning, engaging with nonviolence as a living practice that fosters connection, nurtures courage, and inspires collective action.

Kit's book!



Here are some of our workshops and offers around Nonviolence Education:

- Nonviolent Communication
- Kingian Nonviolence
- Listening as an Act of Love
- De-escalation
- Community Roundtables
- Facilitated mediations
- Youth Healing Hate grants

Restorative Practices

Thanks to your support, the Gandhi Institute continued our important, restorative work with Rochester youth last year, while also forging ahead in new and exciting directions! We said heartfelt and bittersweet goodbyes to School #'s 17 and 19, and because of you, we began relationships with students at two new schools in the Rochester City School District: 9th graders at Padilla (formerly Franklin) High School and 7th and 8th graders at Loretta Johnson Middle School.

Your contributions helped Gandhi staff operate Help Zones, supporting scholars in deescalation, reflection, conflict resolution, and skillfully navigating challenges. Our Youth Educators built trusting relationships with students and staff, collaborating with administrators and teachers to foster a restorative and nonviolent school culture.

Jordan Campbell
Youth Educator

We logged 8,656 student interactions and facilitated 553 formal mediations to peacefully resolve conflicts.

Additionally, Loretta Johnson teachers participated in bimonthly Restorative Circles after school, expanding their minds and hearts, in order to impact school culture.

We are thrilled to continue and deepen these school relationships for the 2025-26 school year, all thanks to your generosity.

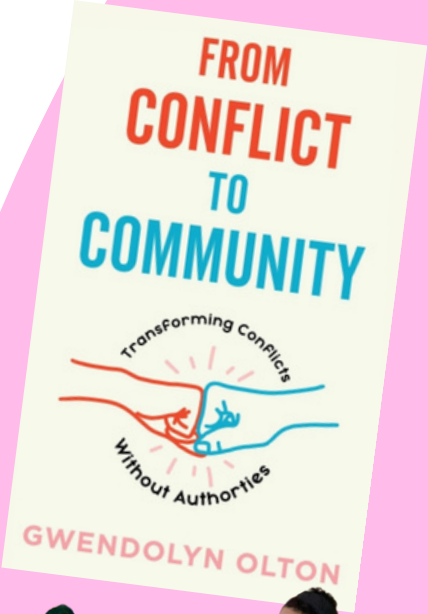
Spero Michailidis
Youth Educator

Restorative Practices

Here are some of our workshops and offers around Restorative Practices:

- Helpzones
- Talking Circles
  - Community Based
  - RCSD Based
    - Student circles
    - Staff circles
- Grief Circles
- Mediations
- Community Roundtables
- Strategies for Tough Times
- Facilitated mediations
- Community Dinner

Gwen's book!



Racial Justice

Your unwavering support helps us empower groups to bend the arc of justice toward a more equitable world for everyone. This past year, your contributions fueled our vital work in racial justice, navigating challenges and celebrating moments of joy as we dismantled harmful structures of oppression.

Because of you, we connected with organizations across Rochester, including librarians, nurses, doctors, teachers, spiritual leaders, and mental health workers. Your belief in our mission fosters a collective effort, demonstrating that this crucial work is not done in isolation. It's all hands on deck, and it all began with you.

Here are some of our workshops and offers around Racial Justice.

- Helpzones
- Conversations on Race & Poverty
- Support for Cugini di Roc (fiscal sponsor)
- Support for Indigenous People's Day
- Support for Elders & Allies
- Cultural Humility
- "Let's Talk About Hate" Zines Workshop
- Facilitated mediations

Sustainability

At the Gandhi Institute, we believe in cultivating a sustainable future, and our Gandhi Community Garden is a testament to that commitment. When you support us, you're helping to create a vibrant space that fosters community and deepens connections to nature. We practice sustainable methods like reusing cardboard for weed control, restoring soil with cover crops from Cornell Cooperative Extension, and planting companion crops like the indigenous Three Sisters, ensuring your donation goes toward environmentally responsible practices.

Your contribution also enables us to partner with local academic institutions, providing invaluable service-learning opportunities. Students from various universities assist with planting, weeding, watering, and food distribution, and we extend a special thank you to the University of Rochester Eco Reps for presenting on sustainable food at a community dinner and securing free mushroom compost, thanks to the kind of community spirit your generosity helps cultivate.

Alejandra Washington
Garden Manager

This year, we've evaluated our sustainability efforts. While we've faced challenges with food output due to critters, your support will empower us to increase production and protect garden beds in the new fiscal year. We are strengthening our ties with the local urban agriculture community to gain practical management skills and contribute to Rochester's grower network. Gandhi staff attended the Rochester Urban Agriculture Conference, Resilient Gardens Conference, and workshops at Taproot Collective and Cornell Cooperative Extension to learn about pest management and soil health, all with the goal of installing critter-deterring infrastructure that your gifts can help make a reality.

Christina Krewson
Community Trainer

Sustainability

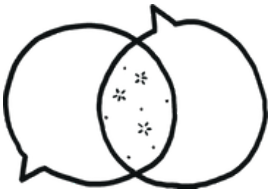
Here are some of our workshops and offers around Sustainability:

- Community garden
  - Garden work parties
- Support for Sweet Ida Mae (fiscal sponsor)
- Carpool
- Offering community meeting space to local groups
- Compost
- Solar charging table
- Food delivery to neighbors
- Vegetarian meals
- Collaborations with other orgs/sharing resources
- Student volunteerism (80 in three days)
- Internships

The Numbers

annual budget

$ 455,107.13



8,026

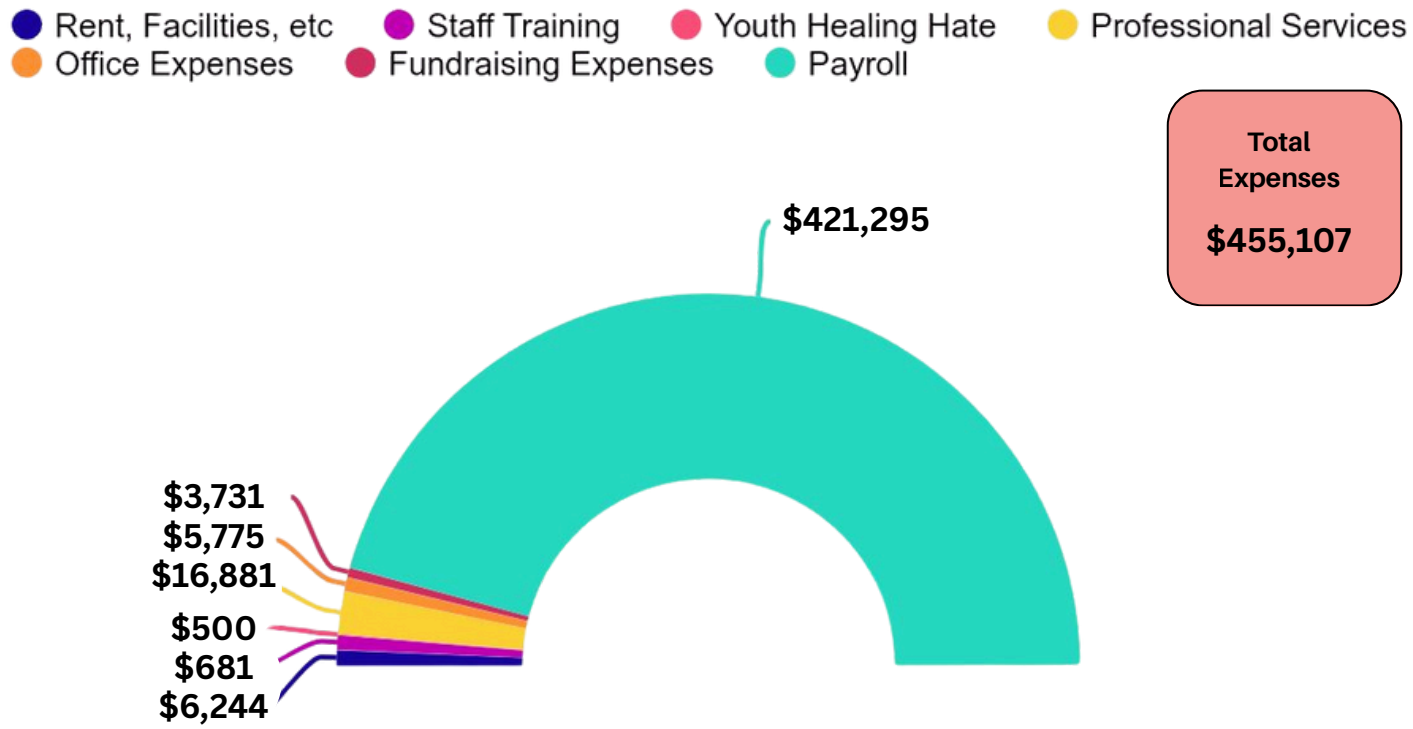
student conversations

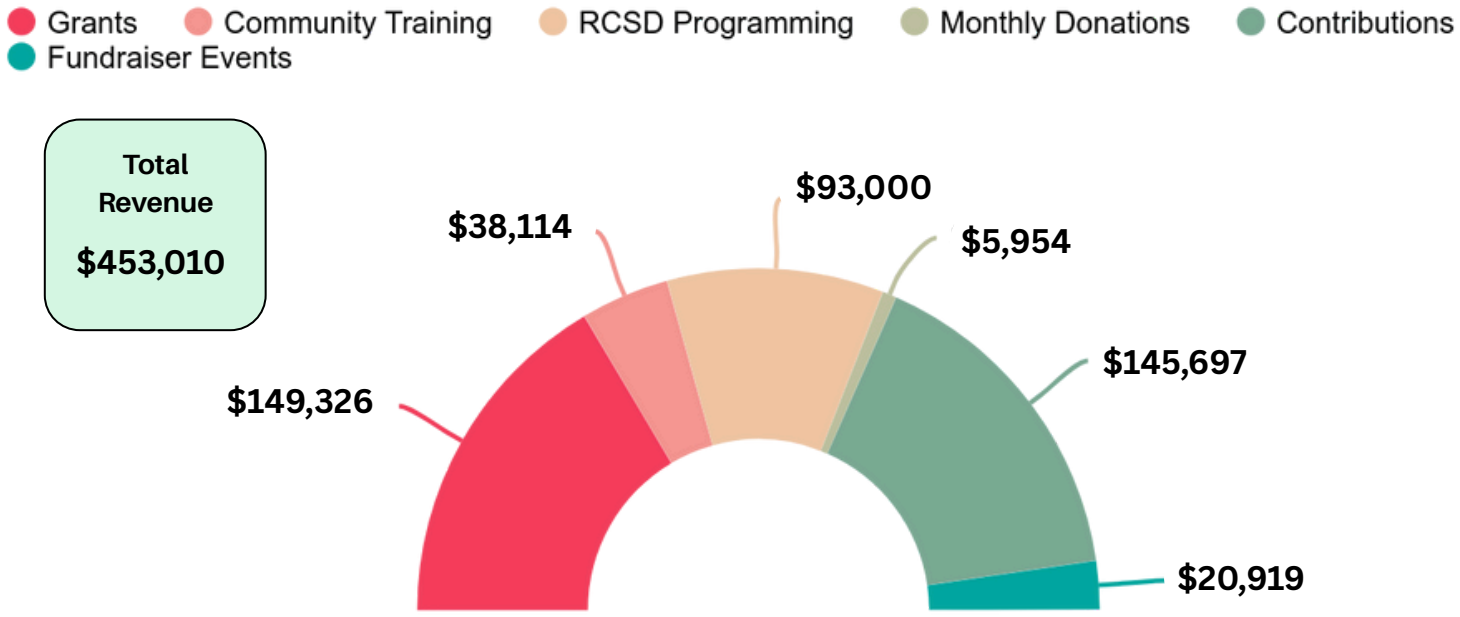
youths & adults trained **2,306**

93 events

11 staff

The Numbers


Rent, Facilities, etc
Staff Training
Youth Healing Hate
Professional Services
Office Expenses
Fundraising Expenses
Payroll
Total Expenses
$455,107
$421,295
$3,731
$5,775
$16,881
$500
$681
$6,244


Grants
Community Training
RCSD Programming
Monthly Donations
Contributions
Fundraiser Events
Total Revenue
$453,010
$93,000
$38,114
$5,954
$145,697
$149,326
$20,919

Staff & Volunteer Voices

What I remember most about this past year is the powerful impact people have.

Picture this... An Innovation Advisor, students studying virtual reality, musicians from RPO, & graduate students studying organizational transformation... all employing their expertise for a nonviolent Rochester. Increasingly more people are pitching in, however they can.

I witnessed people hold fundraisers as direct action. People used concerts, birthdays, book releases, and celebrations to support making Rochester more nonviolent. This is in addition to our own fund and friend-raising* efforts! We are super thankful for their support and it was a pleasure to connect with all the talented people who care.

The friendraiser where we said "TTFN, (ta ta for now)," to longtime staff members Bianca Pointner and Matt Liston was a beautiful night filled with well-wishes and rekindled connections. I'm glad we got to celebrate Matt & Bianca for blessing us with their gifts. I learned so much from them both and I still miss them. I deeply appreciate Bianca's courage and care, as well as Matt's playfulness and reliability. Their departure allowed me to take on more responsibilities at the Gandhi Institute, including joining the grief circle facilitation team.

Joining the grief team enabled me to grow in self-care and empathy. Working at the Gandhi Institute requires a lot of self-work, and grief is one of my growth edges.** Through the regular practices and rituals that employ vulnerability and empathy, I continue to grow in connection with myself and others. This listening and learning shapes how I facilitate, and I'm glad to grow by working with students, librarians, health care workers, advisors, and people seeking to make a difference.

The great thing about leading experiential workshops, building community, and mediating conflicts is that these actions create a ripple effect, reaching beyond the people involved. This year, I noticed many impactful efforts to spread nonviolence, creating many ripples for a sea of needed change.

Michael Jones
Advancement

*A friend-raiser is a fun event where the focus is to build and strengthen relational connections for a cause. We differentiate friendraising from fundraising to name the difference in purpose.

**There's a blog on this!

Staff & Volunteer Voices

I facilitate many workshops throughout the year. I've learned and grown in the process. One lesson I taught was needs and strategies. The difference between the two is not conflating a strategy with an underlying need.

I chose a strategy to fulfill my need to be heard and supported that didn't satisfy me. Reflecting on the lessons I've facilitated, I didn't focus on the strategy; I concentrated on the needs I was trying to meet, and what I experienced was an Aha moment. I was believed (heard) and supported by the community I was a part of from the beginning.

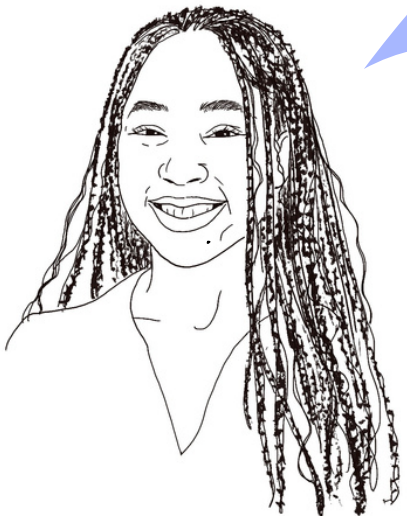
Jonathon Jones
Community Trainer

I have spent a lot of quality time at the Gandhi Institute this year, starting with a Breakfast Chat with Executive Director Erin Thompson in February to check in on how the Institute has been weathering the current political climate. Learning of the ripple effects on the Institute's revenue stream motivated me to participate in the annual fundraiser, SoulForce, this summer, and to deepen my time commitment as a volunteer.

I attended the Changemaker retreat as well as the Nonviolent Communication Intensive (one-day workshop) to refresh my connection to the concepts and practices that the Institute teaches. I find myself using the Nonviolent Communication frameworks all the time now, spotting the unmet needs provoking the intense feelings that lead to disconnection in important relationships. I look forward to more in 2026!

Michelle Burack
Volunteer Extraordinare

Staff & Volunteer Voices



Our Beloved Community includes anyone interested in increasing peace, but one of the highlights of our work has been the work done with youth, from ages 12–24. In the past year, we provided spaces for students—from middle school through college—to explore the curiosity, creativity, and insight within them. We guided participants in using nonviolent strategies to connect with themselves, their peers, and their communities.

From "Let's Talk About Hate" Zine workshops blending art, social justice, and nonviolence, to practicing nonviolent communication and discussing power, privilege, and cultural humility, these experiences were deeply meaningful. Collaborating with 4-H's garden workforce development program, hosting student volunteers, and welcoming high school and college interns brought fresh perspectives to our work and reminded us that the next generation carries forward nonviolence with care and imagination.

Katie Thomas
Director of Community Connections

One of the highlights this year for me was returning to the Institute. I worked here for 5 years as a Youth Educator, guiding schools through conflict, and now I'm back as the Director of Learning & Education. Learning is one of my greatest passions and this new position gives me the opportunity to promote lifelong learning to people of all ages.

To facilitate is to "make things easier." Whether it's processes for grief, connection, or deescalation, being able to facilitate with other Gandhi staff this year has helped me grow as a learner and educator.

I am so happy to be back!

Alexandria Hoang
Director of Learning & Education

Testimonials

[T]he training...with the Gandhi Institute was one of the most impactful sessions I've attended this year. I'm already thinking of ways to integrate it into my own programming.

The facilitators and staff created a space where all voices were welcomed and respected. They encouraged honest, open conversation and made sure that every opinion and experience was validated.

One moment that really stood out to me was the reflective exercise of writing a letter to yourself. That was, without a doubt, one of my favorite parts of the day. The way it was framed—with intention, affirmation, and forward-thinking—was powerful and beautifully executed.

Their approach helps me grow as a facilitator and, more importantly, supports the work I'm doing to uplift and impact my community in meaningful ways.

Robert Darrisaw

I have been involved with the Gandhi Garden for over 5 years. It has been a very pleasant and peaceful experience.

I find it very calming just to be outside in a natural environment away from loud music and the intensity of the news around us.

I find it satisfying to track a planting I've done from seed to fruition. Like raising any living thing, there is some hard work involved but oh so rewarding after all the weeding and hoeing; to reap the benefits of a job that one takes pride in and sharing this with the community.

Anyone who wants to participate can do so. I am an autumn leaf in the garden. Bring new seeds to the garden. I appreciate any support because I cannot do it alone. Spend time in the Gandhi Garden and grow!

Mark Banford

With gratitude to over 300 donors, grantors, corporate sponsors, for supporting our mission.

100+ Women Who Care Rochester,
Hallowell Fund,
LGBT+ Giving Circle,
NYS Division of Criminal Justice,
Schulze Foundation, &
Woven Foundation

Soulforce Sponsors

Canandaigua National Bank & Trust,
Harter Secrest & Emery LLP,
The Rochester Area Community Foundation, &
Wegmans

Thank you!

Want to Get Involved?

Check out our site at gandhiinstitute.org to:

Volunteer

Participate in events

Donate and support the work!

Or check out this QR code!