



35 YEARS OF THE GANDHI WALK



FAKIR HASSEN

35 YEARS OF THE GANDHI WALK

e-book ISBN 978-1-7764319-1-5

Published by Fakir Hassen **March 2025**
in partnership with the Apple Group of Companies

Email: fakir@vodamail.co.za
Mobile: 27 (82) 457 3737

This book is dedicated to the Gandhi Walk Committee members past, present and deceased; and the tens of thousands of participants who have made the Gandhi Walk the success that it is today as a social cohesion catalyst.

The contents of this book are licensed to Fakir Hassen under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License. All written material and/or photographs may be copied or redistributed in print or electronically in their original unedited form, with appropriate citation and acknowledgement, for bona fide personal, cultural, religious or educational purposes only.

Contents

Preface 1

Message From Sammy Naidoo
Chairman, Apple Group 3

Chapter 1
Origins of the Gandhi Hall 5

Chapter 2
The Early Years 11

Chapter 3
Madiba's Connection to the Gandhi Hall 27

Chapter 4
Revamping a Walk of Relevance 32

The Covid-19 Conclusion
Glimpses from the Recent Past 39

“The Gandhian philosophy of peace, tolerance and non-violence began in South Africa as a powerful instrument of social change.... A united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa will become the jewel of this planet. We face a bright future notwithstanding the horrors of apartheid and its violence.”

GRATEFUL THANKS TO

Sammy Naidoo and Shumarlan Naidoo, of the Apple Group of Companies, who have graciously printed this book in their continuing support of my community ventures for the past decade.

PREFACE

I was, indirectly, party to the concept of the Gandhi Walk that has become arguably Lenasia's largest annual community event 35 years later.

Lifelong friend Mohan Hira, then one of the most popular sportsmen and karate teachers in Lenasia, was a frequent visitor to our family home in Flamingo Street.

During one such visit, he shared with me the idea of doing a Walk to raise funds for the completion of the Gandhi Hall, about which there will be more in a later chapter. I was as excited as Mohan was about the concept, albeit my slight scepticism, which I must confess to, about the ambitiousness of it being a venture of the scale envisaged by Mohan.

This was on the eve of my departure from Lenasia to take up the position of Station Manager at the then fledgling Radio Lotus, so I did not get to pursue the discussion any further.

But as the first Gandhi Walk took place, with participants much fewer than the thousands today, I followed its progress, sometimes getting to join the event during the decade that I was away in Durban when I was visiting Johannesburg. I was also privileged to arrange coverage on the station of the Walk during my tenure there.

When I returned to Johannesburg in 1995, one of the first community events I participated in as I resumed my relationship with my long-time friend and founding Editor of the Lenasia Times, Waheed Camroodeen, was the Gandhi Walk.

Since then, I have been at every Gandhi Walk except a few when I was travelling abroad.

It has been a very gratifying experience watching the Gandhi Walk grow from that initial seed planted in my humble lounge, nurtured by a dynamic team that has remained so faithful to the task and is joined now by members of a generation who were very young children then.

It is therefore a special privilege to have been assigned the task by my close associate Sammy Naidoo of the Apple Group of Print Companies, and his son Shumarlan Naidoo, who have partnered in over 25 projects with me over the last decade, to compile this history of the 35 years of the Gandhi Walk in Lenasia.

This attempt of compiling its history could never be a complete record of the Gandhi Walk, which would require much greater research than that done in the time that was available, but with the intention of placing it in school and public libraries, it will hopefully preserve for posterity at least some of the valiant efforts of volunteers over two generations.

Most of the photographs in this book are those that I have taken over the years, but especially in the first chapter, there are works of others. Thank you to all the unknown photographers whose contributions have been included from material supplied by the Gandhi Walk Committee.

- FAKIR HASSEN
AUTHOR

MESSAGE FROM SAMMY NAIDOO

I recall the first years of the Gandhi Walk more than three decades ago, when my then young family and I still lived in Lenasia South.

A few hundred people would gather to assist the Transvaal Hindu Seva Samaj to raise funds to complete the Gandhi Hall, which has become almost a monument commemorating the cultural, social and religious activities of the Lenasia community.

What a pleasant surprise it was therefore, when in 2019, I had the privilege of seeing not only how the event had grown to accommodate over 3,000 participants in such a well-coordinated way, but also to have such a large crowd spontaneously sing a birthday song for me because it coincided on the day!

It was also very impressive to find the diverse range of community activities reflected at the stalls on the periphery of the top-class entertainment organised by the hosts.

Highly laudable is the fact that after having met the original targets of settling the loans for the construction of the Gandhi Hall, funds raised are now also shared among deserving community organisations in the region.

That they have found support to continue to do this for over 35 years is a testament to the determination of the founding fathers of the Gandhi Walk.

Their legacy continues in a new generation of officials and volunteers, who must also be commended for their adaptation of fund-raising initiatives and continued high levels of service to the participants in the Gandhi Walk.

Beyond just commendation, their efforts need to be recorded for posterity.

It is therefore a special privilege for my son Shumarlan and I, as we attempt to do this with Fakir by co-publishing this book as a tribute to not just all those who started and continue to provide the service, but also those well-wishers and participants in the Gandhi Walk who help sustain it.

I am praying as hard as you all probably are for the prestigious Gandhi Walk to be resumed as soon as the circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic allows it.

No doubt the streets of Lenasia will then once again reverberate with the joyful sounds of children, parents and grandparents once again uniting in the unique spirit of family togetherness and humanitarianism that is the hallmark of the Gandhi Walk.

**- SAMMY NAIDOO,
CHAIRMAN, APPLE GROUP**

CHAPTER 1

ORIGINS OF GANDHI HALL

The Gandhi Hall and the Gandhi Walk are both inextricably linked to the history of the then Transvaal Hindu Seva Samaj (THSS); now known as the Johannesburg Hindu Seva Samaj (JHSS).

It was the foresight of the early leaders of the JHSS that led to the building of the Gandhi Hall in Fox Street, Johannesburg in 1940. In a message from former Chairman of the Samaj, Shantilalbhai Mistry, he recalled the original reasoning behind the Gandhi Walk.



“Through the determination, courage and tremendous sacrifice by the members of the Gandhi Walk Committee this event has become a reality. The THSS is greatly indebted to the Officials and the participants of the Gandhi Walk for the generous donations which have been utilised towards the building of the Gandhi Hall. By the end of 1989 you have generously contributed R105,000 which went towards liquidating the Hall’s debt. We sincerely hope that God gives your Committee inspiration and courage in striving to make the 1990 event perfect and excellent in all respect so they can give substantial amounts to our final debts,” Mistry said.

The planning and the erection of the Mahatma Gandhi Hall in Lenasia was a major and hallmark event in the history of the THSS.

This gigantic task was fraught with many pitfalls, frustrations and problems which had to be solved from time to time.

Some frustrated committee members even suggested that the building project be deferred to a later date to avoid the THSS going into a serious debt situation. There was a view that a fund-raising effort first had to be undertaken within the community before construction commenced.

Fortunately for the community of Lenasia, which today uses the Gandhi Hall as a focal point of community activities, a compromise was reached to undertake the project in phases.

But the reasoning for the project lay in the destruction of the original Gandhi Hall at 50 Fox Street, in Ferreirastown in Johannesburg, around which there was a thriving community, many of them Gujarati businessmen and professional persons.

All these people were forced out of their homes and moved to Lenasia under the notorious Group Areas Act from the 1950's onwards.

The Gandhi Hall, which had been built by the THSS in 1940, was sold for about R1.2 million. The proceeds were used to buy the building which is now the Mayfair Cultural Centre and the balance to kick-start the new Gandhi Hall in Lenasia.

The limited funds for the new project, which some considered very ambitious, ran out rapidly. Various fund-raising efforts brought some results, but far from enough to complete the building.

There were two choices before the THSS – stop building or secure loans and continue. Despite the reluctance of banks at the time to advance loans for projects of this nature, the then chairman, Shantilal Jairam Mistry and treasurer Ramjee Vithal managed to



convince a bank to grant the THSS overdraft facilities of half a million rands, without any tangible security, for a short period.

The community also rallied round not only to sign personal sureties for the loan, but also to help liquidate the debts by waiving the interest-free loans that they had provided to THSS by converting these to outright donations.

Among efforts which helped settle the debts and save interest was funds raised from a project where the renowned Chota Morari Bapoo delivered religious discourses.

But perhaps the biggest idea initiated to help get the THSS out of its debt and help cover the operational costs of the Gandhi Hall in future was the Gandhi Walk, a concept created by Mohan Hira and Chhagan Chiba in partnership with the Everest Walkers Club.

These two gentlemen could hardly have realised then what their idea would snowball into 35 years later as others joined them. The Gandhi Walk Committee was born three years later as the number of participants swelled beyond all expectations. Because the objective of the Walk was to raise funds to liquidate the THSS debt, the Gandhi Hall was the beneficiary of the first two walks.

But as the Walk progressed, and in line with both the winds of

change breezing over the country and also the Mahatma's views on non-racialism and benefiting fellowmen irrespective of race, colour or creed, the Gandhi Walk Committee opened its heart to other charitable organisations.

The first of the recipients were Operation Hunger, SOS Children's Village for Orphans in Ennerdale, and Lenasia organisations M. C. Kharbhai School for the Deaf, Saaberie Chishty Ambulance Society, the Gandhi Bharat Vidyalaya School, Mayfair Recreation Centre, the Robert and Claire Peter Fund, and the Ananda Marga Mission.

This kind of assistance endeared the Gandhi Walk to many people, who helped make it a social occasion where sometimes family members met after long periods, friends who had long lost contact reunited, and fathers and sons; mothers and daughters; grandparents and grandchildren, and even community organisation members teamed up for the fun Walk.

For many participants, the Gandhi Walk is an occasion to show and test their fitness, with professional athletes joining those who are there just for the fun elements.

To make it an even better social event, the Bharat Mela was added, with entertainers using the premiere platform to showcase their talents. Requiring no entry fee, the Bharat Mela is a free show designed to create cultural awareness in the community and cultivate an appreciation for the performing arts in its diversity.

Initial performances of classical dance by the Sangeeta Nataka Academy; the Jhankaar School of Dance and others; as well as the Sari Contest have evolved to more recently include competitive Bollywood dancing – dubbed Dance SENSATION and involvement by a wide range of pageant winners from all communities.

The spirit of the Bharat Mela lives on but with a new genre of show performances and entertainment items added, so at the turn of the decade in 2010 it was changed to Fusion Mela. A further element which has grown over the years is the Gandhi Walk's inclusive approach, with a platform provided to other community organisations to highlight their activities to the participants at the Gandhi Walk. As an example, the Lenmed Hospital has been partnering to provide free testing services which are well utilised by the community.

As the Walk evolved, so too did its association with the growing number of social and environmental causes over the years. Latest ventures have included greening, saving wildlife, women empowerment, recycling and alternative energy amongst other social causes. Activities of the Gandhi Walk Committee have also extended beyond just the annual Walk, with events such as the International Day of Yoga, a cycle ride (Lenasia BlockRide™) and training women and children in self-defence.

With the construction liquidated and the purpose of the walk changed, so too did the structure and core objectives of the Gandhi Walk Committee. These days funds raised are apportioned and donated to support and assist various needy charities and community projects and a percentage of funds are also donated towards the ongoing upkeep of the Gandhi Hall community complex – to help preserve this iconic structure in Johannesburg which is used by all sections of the community for multiple purposes.

Over 50 organisations have benefited from the hosting of the annual Gandhi Walk in Lenasia, with cumulative contributions totalling over R3.5 million donated to various beneficiaries by the Gandhi Walk Committee to date. A list of beneficiaries is available on the official Gandhi Walk website (www.gandhiwalk.org.za).

CHAPTER 2

THE EARLY YEARS

The first meeting for the Gandhi Walk was held in the early 1980's at the Highpoint Centre in Extension 3 in Lenasia.

Only two people attended, namely Mohan Hira and Chhagan Chiba. However, they persisted and scheduled another meeting two weeks later encouraging people to attend and this time they met with success.

The first official Gandhi Walk planning meeting was attended by the following members of the community (in alphabetical order):

Chhagan Chiba
Dr. Ranjit Laloo
Himat Rama
Jasuben Manga
Jekorben Chiba
Kanchanben Devchand
Mohan Hira
Siras Kara

Subsequently, a committee was established, and Mohan Hira was elected as its first Chairman.

Past Serving Chairpersons of the Gandhi Walk Committee have been:

- Mohan Hira 1986-1989
- Dr Amrat Patel 1990
- Dr Hemant Vallab 1991
- Ratilal G. Parbhoo 1992-1993
- Chhaggan Chiba 1994-1998
- Ramesh Baichar 1999-2002
- Jivan Ramjee 2003-2004
- Ramesh Baichar 2005-2010
- Amit Parbhucharan 2011-2020





The Gandhi Walk Magazine

1988



MESSAGE OF INSPIRATION & HOPE



The Gandhi Walk Magazine

1990



MESSAGE OF INSPIRATION & HOPE



The Gandhi Walk

Magazine

1991



MESSAGE OF INSPIRATION & HOPE

Highlights 1992

Page Sponsored By
Dr. Dilip Vallabh
in Loving Memory
of the Late
Jatantulal Vallabh





The Gandhi Walk Committee

PEACE - TOLERANCE - UNITY

1993



DANDI MARCH 1930

MESSAGE OF INSPIRATION AND HOPE



THE GANDHI WALK COMMITTEE



**"ONE NATION
MANY CULTURES"**

**10th
ANNIVERSARY**

MILLENNIUM ISSUE

Gandhi Walk

COMMITTEE



*The Gandhi Walk
Committee 2005*



20th Anniversary



SOUTH AFRICA
AIMS WITH POSSIBILITY













CHAPTER 3
MADIBA'S CONNECTION
TO THE GANDHI HALL

The Gandhi Hall served as a focal point for community activities, including cultural and political meetings. Numerous meetings were held there to rally the community as it mobilised against the oppressive laws that were increasingly introduced by the state.

Among the leaders who frequently spoke at the Gandhi Hall was the iconic Mahatma Gandhi, after whom the hall was named.

Gandhi greatly influenced the iconic Nelson Mandela, fondly known to all as Madiba, who led South Africa to a peaceful democracy after 27 years as a political prisoner, becoming the country's first democratically-elected President in 1994.

Madiba had a special affinity with the Gandhi Hall, sending special messages on two occasions which were included in commemorative brochures. Here are some of the remarks he made in those messages:

"The name of Mohandas Gandhi has for eternity been etched in the histories of two great countries - South Africa and India. Indeed. It was South Africa where the Mahatma was profoundly sensitised to injustice and oppression.

Without a doubt, Gandhi's vision influenced the nature and course of the struggle in South Africa, including the Dadoo-Xuma-Naicker Pact, the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and the Congress of the People where the Freedom Charter was adopted on 26 June 1955.

I fully identify with the idea of the Gandhi Walk, which is reminiscent of Gandhi's Great Salt March against the taxation of salt by the British in India.

The Walk is also important in another sense: It serves to enrich us physically, mentally and spiritually. Thus we are able to rededicate ourselves to the cause of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa."

Madiba also recalled the important role that the Gandhi Hall had played in the Freedom Struggle:

“The old Gandhi Hall in Fox Street was closely linked to the liberation movement through numerous historic gatherings that took place there. Its name evokes memories of milestone events in our struggle, and of the many outstanding leaders who passed through its portals.

In many ways the fates of the Gandhi Hall and the ANC are similar. Both the Gandhi Hall and the ANC became victims of the racial policies of the apartheid regime.

The re-establishment of the Gandhi Hall in Lenasia is a tribute to the resilience of the people, and to their determination not to allow the memory of Gandhiji to fade away.”

Given the reverence and respect that Madiba has had in the Indian community, it was no surprise to anyone when he was requested to undertake the official opening of the Gandhi Hall on 27 September 1992, two years after he was released from prison.

Here is part of what Madiba said at the opening as democracy dawned in South Africa.



“I regard it as a privilege and great honour to be present with you today on this historic occasion, when we, once again pay a deserving tribute to the memory of M. K. Gandhi. He served his apprenticeship in South Africa for 21 years and then as the Mahatma liberated through mass action, India from her Imperialist bondage.

Gandhiji was a South African and his memory deserves to be cherished now and in the post- apartheid era.

The Gandhian philosophy of peace, tolerance and non-violence began in South Africa as a powerful instrument of social change. In the 20th century, this weapon was effectively used by India to liberate her people. Martin Luther King used it to combat racism in the United States.

South Africa has a legacy of racism and violence perpetuated by decades of apartheid rule. If the Mahatma was here today, he would tell us that the root cause of the violence in our country is apartheid. He would have warned us not to allow the philosophy of divide and rule to sow seeds of division in our midst, but to unite and restore human freedom to all South Africans.

I think that it is absolutely necessary to spell out here today what the Mahatma has meant to South Africa and to the rest of the world. And we must never lose sight of the fact that the Gandhian philosophy may be a key to human survival in the 21st century.

Gandhiji would have acknowledged that the time we are in is difficult and dangerous and he would have pressed us to continue and to ensure that our liberation, when it is finally achieved, is not tentative but a lasting legacy to peace, democracy and unity.

The Gandhi Hall of the Seva Samaj must become a focal point for the development of a non-racial, non-sexist South Africa.

And if it does so then it will be worthy of the name of Mahatma Gandhi. It will be worthy of the name of those who followed in the footsteps of Gandhi in the 1946 passive resistance, in the 1952 Defiance campaign, the Congress of the People's Rally and the birth of the Freedom Charter in 1955.

To the officials of the Hindu Seva Samaj, I humbly say that you have a great democratic heritage, which you must uphold with the rest of South Africa. You must enter the new era of freedom not only proud of your past, but proud of the present.

I remember the Gandhi Hall of Fox Street. This was the venue where freedom was taught. The teachers included Dr A.B. Xuma, Yusuf Dadoo and Monty Naicker, who gave us the 1947 Freedom Pact.

After the historic Freedom Charter was drawn up in Kliptown it was read for the first time in the Gandhi Hall. Apartheid took away the old Gandhi Hall, and the people have given us this new symbol of Peace and with it the remembrance of a man who changed the pattern of thinking in the twenty first century about race and class.

A united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa will become the jewel of this planet. We face a bright future notwithstanding the horrors of apartheid and its violence. We are dedicated to a negotiated settlement and to lasting peace. We call on all those present and those not present to reject apartheid and its past and present supporters. Your place and mine is in the democratic camp to which the Mahatma belonged.

Attaining our liberation cannot be an easy and smooth task. We shall obtain it through our collective efforts. May the new Gandhi Hall serve all the people of South Africa and may it serve the cause of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation.

With these thoughts, I have the great pleasure in declaring this Hall named after the Mahatma formally opened.

CHAPTER 4
REVAMPING A WALK
OF RELEVANCE

A new energy was needed and a progressive approach to refreshing the purpose and relevance was needed as the Gandhi Walk entered the first decade of the new millennium.

The Gandhi Walk Committee (GWC) at the time took a bold step to invite young blood to lead the charge for modernisation and improvement of the walk. This was the birth of an updated Vision and Mission for the Gandhi Walk Committee and the introduction of different elements and much innovation which walkers experience at the Gandhi Walk today.

With an ethos of relevance, it became the vision of the Gandhi Walk Committee that this Walk grows from strength to strength and that the youth strive to further advance and continue the tradition whilst upholding the following key objectives:

- To champion unity amongst all and foster the spirit of Ubuntu amongst the community.
- To promote a healthy community.
- Youth participation and the value of selfless service to others.
- Awareness of the principles of Gandhiji.
- The upkeep of the Gandhi Hall community complex in Lenasia as a landmark.
- Distribution of funds toward community projects and other charitable organisations.

The Annual Gandhi Walk is a massive logistical undertaking by its members.

Planning usually begins eight to ten months prior to the Walk and the activity ramps as the Walk day draws closer to ensure that the heritage and standard is maintained and that every Walk is a success.

Gandhi Walk Committee members are all volunteers without remuneration and consist of a cross-section of the community and backgrounds that span age, gender and profession.

Together the members of the organising committee are responsible for the execution of all the activities and thus oversee the entire project planning and overall conduct of the events.

These activities range from scheduling the date for the events; securing sponsorships; charity nominations; hosting of dignitaries; mobilising organisations, groups and the broader community to participate as an inclusive society; sales, promotion and marketing; social engagements; cultural programmes and entertainment; food preparation and most importantly to ensure that the various medical and safety standards are met for participant safety.

At the time of compiling this history, it can be said that the Gandhi Walk Committee has become the champion for fostering a Community-in-Unity, making it a very relevant organisation for social cohesion – in a community stuck far away in the south of Johannesburg by the apartheid era authorities.



Walkers who retraced the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela were honoured by the Gandhi Walk Committee - Nitin Sonawane from India, Rev. Kanshin Ikeda - a Buddhist monk from Japan – veteran walker Mohan Hira and schoolteacher Jayant Valab.

At the Gandhi Hall in Lenasia, it was yoga with lights out in a darkened hall as participants donned clothes with glow paints and glow-in-the dark face and nail paints for the inaugural Glo-Ga Day. Ready with their paint on, including the lips of Gandhi Walk Chairman Amit Parbhucharan, were Nazia Wadee (left) and Naazneen Ismail.



Gandhi Walk Chairman Amit Parbhucharan was with Jack Manack and Keshni Yelumalay at the launch of the book at Killarney CineCentre on the occasion of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in October 2019.



The 2020 Gandhi Walk Executive Committee in fun mode – back fltr - Dipak Thakordas (Treasurer), Mohan Manga, Amit Parbhucharan (Chairperson), Mahendra Modi (PRO) Ramesh Baichar and Rakesh Jivan.



Front fltr - Jivan Ramjee (Vice-Chair), Chetna Morar, Jasu Manga, Sunita Thakordas (Secretary) and Arun Jasmal.



Scores of cyclists of all ages joined Indian diplomats at the inaugural Block Ride in Lenasia to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019.

CHAPTER 5
GLIMPSES FROM
THE RECENT PAST

2007



The seniors list included fltr back Jesse Naran, Gaya Ganas, Kishor Lala, and Chandra Ooka, with Amina Bhana, Anne Booth and Sylvie Naidoo in front.



These young dancers from the Johannesburg Yuvak Mandal added some Bollywood glamour to the Gandhi Walk fltr Tarika Patel, Niha Bahadur, Dhanishta Patel, Ruvashni Govender, Kiara Gandhi, Darshana Govender, Jayna Naik, Sristi Fakir and Bhavisha Naik.

2007



Some of the youngest winners in the Gandhi Walk were fltr Raggini Mistri, Nelisiwe Khanyile and Ameesha Daya.

2007



Members of the Gandhi Walk volunteer group were packing out the many trophies before the presentation on stage.



Ready for the return of the walkers to hand over trophies and re-energise them with a variety of vegetarian options.

2008



Behind the scenes, scores of volunteers ensured that there was enough food and refreshment available for the thousands of participants and supporters.



2008



2008



Dozens of babies in prams were pushed along by parents or well-wishers. Among them were educator Jayant Valab with his niece Kiara Dulabh; Mr and Mrs Avinash Bhervia with baby Tahir; Hemant Naran with his daughter Krupa; and baby Dharm.



Miss India South Africa Sabiha Hussein was on hand in her Porsche to lead the walkers. With her are Gandhi Walk organisers Jivan Ramjee, Jasuben Manga and Ramesh Baichar.

2008



MEC Ismail Vadi helped the custodian of the starting gun, Jivan Ramjee, to set off the runners in the shorter distance.



2008



Indian Consul-General Navdeep Suri cut the ribbon to set off the long distance walkers as Kantilal Modi looked on.



Members of the Azaadville Health and Welfare Association Cardiac Class all successfully completed the walk. Back from left-to-right Solly Akoojee, Mohamed Nana, Ebrahim Denath, Ismail Nana and Dawood Bismillah. In front ftr are Shabeer Dhabelia, Solly Daya, Ebrahim Mohamed and Ashraf Loonat.

2008



Lenasia Athletics Club members Kishor Lala, Maserame Mokoena, Nathenia Govindsamy, Krishnie Moodley and Valla Moodley were all raring to go.



Among the scores of volunteers were Neelam Baicher, Kamuben Ramjee, Vasanti Jivraj and Chetna Morar.

2009



Sponsors Afrifocus brought along family members for support.



Chandra Ooka (2nd), Gilbert Mahlanpe (1st) and Bhikue Prema (3rd) with their awards in the Grand Masters division.

2009



Winners in the category for senior women - Kobie Visagie (left) came second and Sylvie Naidoo first.

2009



The Kashvita Music and Dance Academy members young and old were on hand to entertain the crowd at the Mela.



The ladies of the Gandhi Walk Committee toiled away overnight, preparing hundreds of bags of chips for the hungry participants.

2010



Reigning Miss India SA Gauteng Ayushi Chhabra prepared to see off the eager walkers at the starting point. Also in the picture is Gandhi Look-Alike winner Thakor Ramjee of Durban.



Officially starting the walk were Indian Consul-General Vikram Doraiswami, Minister of Health Aaron Motsoaledi, Gauteng MEC for Health Qedani Mahlangu; Gandhi Walk Committee Chairman Ramesh Baichar and Vice-Chairman Jivan Ramjee.

2010

The 2010 Gandhi Walk marked its silver jubilee as well as the launch of the 1860 Legacy Foundation Gauteng.



Mahendra Modi of the Gandhi Walk Committee handed over a donation to the Ikageng Centre for the Aged, represented by R.C. Moketsi.

2011



Diversity was fully represented among the senior officials and volunteers at the 2011 Walk.



Winners in the seniors category received their prizes from special guests at the function – ftr Miss Bollywood and Miss India SA Crystal Estelle Vittee, Aboobaker Seedat (59), Balvant Vallabh (56), Ray Patterson (58) and Mrs India SA Kashrie Maharaj.

2012



The Walk was a family outing for this family who were undeterred by their late arrival to continue the Walk.



Veteran Gandhians the late Chothubhai Makan and Ela Gandhi.

2012



Joburg Mayor Parks Tau and granddaughter of the Mahatma, Ela Gandhi set off the Walkers.



Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of the Mahatma, addressed the participants with Eastwave FM presenter Riyaz Safi as Isu Laloo Chiba and Ismail Vadi looked on.

2012



Veteran activists Ahmed Kathrada and Ela Gandhi were with Ismail Vadi.



Muslim Aids Programme (MAP) provided free HIV testing at Gandhi Walk in an effort for the community to “know their status”.

2013



The talented young dancers of the Kashvita Music and Dance Academy were part of the many performers at the Fusion Mela organised by the Johannesburg Yuvak Mandal.



Bharat Kooverjee and Anita Badal of Lenz Going Green joined Gandhi Walk Committee officials Amit Parbhucharan and Mahendra Modi as three beauty queens, Miss SA (Marilyn Ramos), Miss Earth SA (Tamerin Jardine), and Miss SA International (Shajar Khan) planted trees on the Gandhi Hall grounds.

2013



A great granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, Kirti Menon, joined the Walk with her daughter and nephew.



Veteran activist Ahmed Kathrada received a huge ovation and was lauded as an example for much younger participants when he came to the finish line with Shan Balton, and Busi Nkosi from the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation.

2014



The 2014 Gandhi Walk was dedicated to the memory of the late Nelson Mandela, particularly since he was an ardent Gandhian follower. He passed on in December 2013. Mandela's prisoner number while he was on Robben Island - 4664 – was proudly displayed by some of his grandchildren who participated in the Walk. “The Gandhi Walk Committee felt that linking the Walk to the two greatest leaders of the past century and their commitment to peace, harmony and tolerance would tie in perfectly with the ideals of the walk,” said Mahendra Modi, PRO of the Gandhi Walk Committee at a reception where proceeds were handed over to four local welfare organisations - Tiba Services for the Blind, Lenasia Inter-Cultural Organisation; Ikageng Home for the Aged; and Saaberie Chishty Ambulance Society, whose members are seen here with GWC Chairman Amit Parbhucharan.



2014



Veteran activist Dr Essop Jassat with great-granddaughter of the Mahatma, Kirti Menon.



With Gandhi look-alike Harivadan Pitamber were Ndikile Mandela, granddaughter of Nelson Mandela, and body-building champion Asfak Bendwala.

2015



The Walk was led by two Gandhi look-alikes dressed in the traditional doti worn by the Indian leader. 80-year-old Thakor Ramjee travelled from Durban to join the Walk after having taken on the role at a similar Salt March in his hometown for a decade. Grandfather Harivadan Pitamber, 59, a resident of Lenasia, played the role for the first time in 2014 after constantly getting remarks about his resemblance to Gandhi. With them were Pageant winners past and present Miss Teen Commonwealth SA Nazia Wadee; Ilze Saunders, Miss Earth South Africa 2014 and Catherine Constantinides.

2015



Miss Earth 2014 Ilze Saunders; Miss India SA Shivani Govender and Miss Teen Commonwealth SA 2015 semi-finalist Nazia Wadee joined the Lenasia Toyota team to plant two trees to mark the two milestone events on the premises of the Gandhi Hall.

2015



Carolyn Steyn and Katie Mahomed were among the many women and men knitters at the Gandhi Walk who helped create the blanket which set a Guinness World record a few days later at the Union Buildings in Pretoria.



Johannesburg Mayor Parks Tau, Indian High Commissioner Ruchi Ghanashyam, and Gandhi's great-granddaughter Kirti Menon.

2016



Patriotism was the order of the day at the 2016 Walk.



2016



Young and old community members joined the walk with anti-crime placards to honour bright young student Jaishika Amtha, who was murdered in Lenasia.



2016



Veteran freedom fighter Ahmed Kathrada received a special accolade at the annual Gandhi Walk when he was given a permanent walker number created with his Robben Island prisoner number 46864 and his date of birth. “I feel quite overwhelmed in the presence of so many beauty queens,” Kathrada said to the amusement of many in the audience, as he told the organisers how humbled he was by the honour bestowed on him, adding that he felt it was unfair though not to acknowledge many others who worked very hard in the community.



2016



A group of University of Johannesburg students who assembled the solar-powered BMW Blue Hornet led the marchers as they tried to raise awareness for a fundraising campaign to enter their project in an international competition in France.

2017



Zee TV CEO Harish Goyal, joined here by Olympians Wayne Snyman and Anel Oosthuizen and Gandhi Walk Chairperson Amit Parbhucharan, said the Gandhi Walk Committee was keeping alive the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi by fostering unity among the different communities of South Africa.



The Eastwave 92.2 FM team was out in force broadcasting live from the Gandhi Walk.

2017



Some of the many senior citizens who volunteered their services.



The BAPS Swaminarayan team at the Gandhi Walk.

2017



Nishtarara ensured that there was awareness of the drug problem in Lenasia.



Ahmed Kathrada, who was given his own unique number at the previous year's Walk after participating for a number of years, was not forgotten, as many people carried posters in his memory while they walked.

2017



South Africa's youngest campaigner to save the rhino, Afeefah Patel, made her pledge at the SANParks exhibition with Yusuf Dockrat and Harivadan Pitamber.



2017



2018



President Cyril Ramaphosa was joined by High Commissioner for India, Ruchira Kamboj, Rev Jesse Jackson of the US, popular Gandhi look-alike Harivadan Pitambar, and a host of other dignitaries to kick off the 12 km walk. In front is MC Shaky Russell. The Saaberie Chishty Ambulance Service received a special award at the Walk for 30 years of community service.



2018



Mrs Grand Finalist Naazneen Ismail of Benoni with Afzal Ebrahim of OnTime Ready Mix Concrete, who graciously contributed 10 000 sanitary pads in the presence of the Consul General of India and President Cyril Ramaphosa for the sanitary pad collection drive organised in conjunction with the Gandhi Walk Committee.

GANDHI WALK



2018



2019



“Social cohesion is what we are out here to do as South Africans, and it is a great day for me to be here today to join the Gandhi Walk since I started out three years ago,” Gauteng Premier David Makhura said as he commented on the thousands of people of all races waiting at the starting line.

2019



Youth were increasingly taking to assisting in the Gandhi Walk.



There were free ice creams for all thanks to the Polar team, which the cyclists were very grateful for.

2019



The custodian of the Gandhi Walk starting gun, Jivan Ramjee, received a special citation for being the longest serving member of the Gandhi Walk Committee. The 1937 signifies his year of birth.

ABOUT THIS BOOK



The Gandhi Walk has become the premiere annual event in Lenasia, endorsed by even President Cyril Ramaphosa as one of the best social cohesion exercises in South Africa. On 5 April 2020, the iconic Gandhi Walk marked its 35th anniversary. At the 2019 Gandhi Walk, Sammy Naidoo of the Apple Group of Print

Companies had pledged to print a brochure to commemorate the occasion for release at the 2020 event, which could not happen then or in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. But as research into the project began, it developed into a fuller book rather than just a small brochure. Veteran author and photojournalist Fakir Hassen revisits some of the history of the Gandhi Walk and also features some of the many stories and pictures he has taken in covering the annual event for local and international media.

35 Years of the Gandhi Walk has been co-published with Sammy Naidoo of the AppleGroup of Print Companies, which has partnered with Fakir Hassen in over 25 books and other community projects over the past decade.

e-book ISBN 978-1-7764319

