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Hello,

Violence and discrimination in the United States are rebounding like a stretched rubber band. There was a time in the not too distant past that race relations seemed to be improving. Strides were made in the area of civil rights for people of color; the fight to be seen as equals seemed to be ending. This decades-long fight seemed to reach an apex with the election of the first African-American president in 2008. However on the heels of this triumph came the ugly, hidden truth: America is still very much a divided country. We can use the ideals and teachings of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. to combat this backslide.

Social media and tv news bombard us with reports of hateful rhetoric and violence aimed toward minority populations daily. This animosity seems to be tacitly approved by many in positions of power, which has the effect of fanning the flames of hatred. All over America there seems to be a willingness to engage in violence rather than civil discourse aimed at fostering unity. And yet both sides have something in common: they seek peace for themselves and their loved ones. The methods at which they might arrive at the peaceful society that is sought is a problem however. Angry sniping back and forth are the norm. Very seldom do we hear of those who converse in a deep and meaningful manner in order to foster understanding. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "Peace is not merely a goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal." Very simply, our actions and words must be supportive of the ends we seek. Aggression in actions and words has the effect of causing those we wish to reach to respond in kind and to close down. We must be open to peacefully listening and speaking. We must both reach out and receive with open minds and hearts.

The following three quotes are from Mohandas Gandhi. "If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children." As Kishwaukee College students venturing out into the world for the first time, "we must be the change we wish to see." These words speak to our youth and our power. We must advocate for the betterment of our future society. "We should meet abuse by forbearance. Human nature is so constituted that if we take absolutely no notice of anger or abuse, the person indulging in it will soon weary of it and stop." This is the heart of passive non-violent resistance. We must employ this method as a way to disarm those who are harming our great country. If we meet anger with love, and violence with peace, those who wish to oppress us will eventually in their exhaustion, listen. And communicate. And we will come to a place where we not only accept, but embrace each other's differences.