

[Celebrating the Night Gandhi Was Thrown Off a Train](#)

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June 7, 1893, is not a date commonly associated with a world mega-event. But in its way it was the single rimrock stone that triggered a thundering avalanche of social upheaval, crushing the British Empire and beginning the erosion of South African apartheid. That night a young Indian lawyer--dressed as an Englishman--named Mohandas Gandhi was tossed off the Durban /Johannesburg train for daring to travel in the whites-only section. He ended up on the Pietermaritzburg platform, and spent the night mentally brooding over colonial racism. The rest is history. But that single event was picked up and hammered into the Gandhi 100 centenary by Pietermaritzburg Hindus.

So June 7th, 1993, was afire with Gandhian speeches, workshops and a Gandhi-like march. Special guests of the event included Dr. Karan Singh (Indian MP and former Kashmir maharaja), Dr. Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Mewa Ramgobin, chairperson of the Gandhi 100 committee, said that it was in Phoenix, South Africa, that "Gandhi sought to introduce religious asceticism into politics." The Gandhi 100 two-mile march attracted 300 people from a mix of race groups. But that meager number disappointed some. Suren Naidoo said, "It is very sad. Every peace-loving South African should have been here today. Gandhi started the freedom movement here."

On a more enduring note, a handsome bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled in Pietermaritzburg.

Reported by Rajesh Jantilal