

Gandhi once told an associate (V. Kalyanam) he thought he'd die at the hands of an assassin. Only then, he said, would he be a true Mahatma - a great soul - provided that he died with the name of God on his lips. When he was, in fact, assassinated - on the 30th of January, 1948 - it is said (although still debated) that Gandhi died with the Hindu name for God - Ram - on his lips.

From his earliest days, he was influenced by his deeply religious mother. She remained a role model for the rest of his life, even after she died when he was a young man.

Mohandas K. Gandhi was the youngest of four children. He did childish things, like any other young lad. When he was thirteen, following Hindu tradition, Gandhi married.

At seventeen, he left his wife and family behind to study law in England. Although he initially found life in London a bit overwhelming, he successfully completed his law studies. Soon after, he accepted a job offer in South Africa.

He did not realize, before moving to his adopted country, that racial discrimination against people of color was part of daily life in South Africa. Gandhi experienced the prejudice firsthand after he booked first-class passage on a train to Pretoria.

When a white person complained that Gandhi was seated in first class, and should be removed to a third-class carriage, Gandhi refused to give up his seat. At the train's first stop, the conductor physically (and brutally) threw Gandhi off the train.

Humiliated, Gandhi sat on the train platform throughout the night, contemplating how to address - and cure - such injustice. Although the winter night was long and cold, Gandhi later said it was the most creative experience of his life.

Considering his options, he decided to stay in South Africa and resist the country's legal discrimination. Only 24 years old, he was already thinking about a greater cause.

His destiny, in fact, was to fight for the rights of others.

**See, also:**

**[Gandhi - Resisting South African Laws](#)**

**[Gandhi - Advocates Non-Violence](#)**

**[Gandhi - Assassination](#)**

**[Gandhi - Legacy of Mahatma](#)**

Credits:

Clip from the documentary, *Mahatma - Pilgrim of Peace*, [online via Archive.org](#).

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Gandhi-Early-Life-and-South-African-Discrimination>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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