

Organization for Minorities of India (OFMI)

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The Indian Association of Strasbourg plans to install a statue of Mohandas Gandhi in a prominent Strasbourg location by October 2, 2011. However, this is a very controversial proposal which has divided the Indian community. Many people of all nationalities are very strongly opposed to the idea. Here is one reason for their opposition:

The Durban Post Office: Gandhi's Victory for Segregation



Durban Post Office

In 1893, Gandhi was hired to serve as legal adviser to wealthy Indian traders in Colonial South Africa. He arrived there prior to apartheid, but during a time when the nation still suffered severe political unrest and racial segregation. That same year he was allegedly the victim of racial hatred when he was thrown off a train at Pietermaritzburg for refusing to give up his seat to a white man.

This event was reportedly a pivotal moment in Gandhi's life which inspired him to fight against discrimination in colonial South Africa and later to lead the independence movement in India.

(The full story of this incident and the context surrounding it is given in *Gandhi Under Cross-Examination*. This book is by retired U.S. Army Col. G. B. Singh and Canadian professor Tim Watson, with a foreword by renowned Martin Luther King, Jr. scholar Lewis Baldwin.)

In 1895, just two years later, Gandhi began actively promoting racial segregation in Durban, South Africa. The local post office had two doors: one for whites and the other shared by Indians and black Africans. Gandhi was required to share a door with black South Africans, which deeply offended him. So he initiated a campaign to segregate the blacks from the Indians.

In his *Collected Works (CWMG)*, Vol. I, pp. 367-368, Gandhi wrote: "In the Durban Post and telegraph offices there were separate entrances for natives and Asiatics and Europeans. We felt the indignity too much and many respectable Indians were insulted and called all sorts of names by the clerks at the counter. We petitioned the authorities to do away with the invidious distinction and they have now provided three separate entrances for natives, Asiatics, and Europeans."