

NOTABLE MINORITIES WHO CHANGED HISTORY

March 7, 2008

Featuring Indira Gandhi

“I would say our greatest achievement is to have survived as a free and democratic nation.”

- A *Indira Gandhi* Quote

Women's History Month

March is Women's History Month and we will be celebrating by featuring inspiring women in this month's newsletters. This year's theme is visionary female artists. Each year the National Women's History Project chooses women to honor during this month's celebration. Some of this year's honorees are:

Judy Chicago
Harmony Hammond
Edna Hibel
Violet Oakley
Faith Ringgold
Nancy Spero

March Dates to Remember:

- 1 - St. David's Day (Welsh)
- 2 - World Day of Prayer
- 3 - The Doll Festival (Japan)
- 4 - Purim (Jewish)
- 8 - International Women's Day
- 11 - Independence Day (Lithuania)
- 13 - Elephant Day (Thailand)
- 17 - St. Patrick's Day (Ireland, United States)
- 21 - Naw Ruz (Baha'i, Persia)
- 22 - New Year's Day (India)
- 25 - Feast of Annunciation (Christian)
- 26 - Mothering Sunday (England)
- 28 - Teacher's Day (Czech Republic)

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Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi (1917 - 1984) Prime Minister of India

Indira Gandhi was born on November 19, 1917 into the politically influential Nehru Dynasty. She grew up in a very political atmosphere because her grandfather, Motilal Nehru, was a prominent Indian nationalist leader, and her father Jawaharlal Nehru, was a major figure in the Indian Independence movement and the first Prime Minister of Independent India. She attended the University of Oxford, England. While in the United Kingdom and Europe she met and married a congress activist, Feroze Gandhi, and returned home in 1941 to become involved in the Indian Independence movement.

She was her father's unofficial personal assistant during the 1950s, and after his death in 1964, she was appointed as a member of the Rajya Sabha by the President of India and also became a member of Lal Bahadur Shastri's cabinet as Minister of Information and Broadcasting. In 1959 and 1960, Indira ran for and was elected the President of the Indian National Congress. Due to an uneventful term she did not run for re-election in 1962.

In 1965, the then Congress President, K. Kamaraj, was supportive of Indira in her run for Prime Minister against Morarji Desai. Gandhi became the fourth Prime Minister of India after defeating Desai by 186 votes. She was the first woman to hold the position of Prime Minister. Indira showed the ability to win elections and outmaneuver opponents through populism. She introduced more left-wing economic policies and promoted agricultural productivity. After the 1971 victory over Pakistan, there was a period of instability in India. This led Gandhi to encourage the declaration of a state of emergency in 1975.

On June 12, 1975, the High Court of Allahabad declared Gandhi's election invalid on the grounds of alleged malpractices in an election petition. The court ordered her to be removed from her seat in Parliament and banned from running in elections for six years. Since the Prime Minister must be part of the lower house of Parliament (Lok Sabha) or the upper house of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), this decision removed her from office. Despite her removal from office, she was allowed to run for Prime Minister in 1977, but was defeated by her long-time rival Morarji Desai of the Janata Party.

Indira's party, the Congress Party, split during the campaign of 1977. Many of her long-time supporters went over to the Janata Party. The Janata Party had serious internal problems and eventually was only united by its hatred for Indira Gandhi, or "that woman." She was able to use this situation to her advantage. She began speaking out publicly about "mistakes" made during the Emergency. Desai resigned in June 1979, and Charan Singh was appointed Prime Minister after Gandhi promised that Congress would support his government from the outside. After a short time she withdrew this support and the Congress Party was returned to power with a landslide majority. Indira Gandhi was assassinated in the garden of the Prime Minister's residence by insurgents on October 31, 1984.

(Source: www.wikipedia.com)

Did You Know?

Access and Diversity's Academic Mapping Coach hopes that you had a great Spring Break! As you return to your classes this week, remember that help is just around the corner. If you are struggling to readjust after the break or you just need some motivation, call our Academic Mapping Coach at 931-540-2854 or go by her office in Warf Building, Room 126.