



2009 CONFERENCE

IDENTIFYING THE PERSON: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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Abstract

**Fingerprinting, Progressivism and Satyagraha:
The South African Origins of Gandhi's Critique of Modernity**

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Gandhi's anti-modernist manifesto, *Hind Swaraj*, was written whilst returning to Cape Town from London in 1909 after the better part of two decades of conflict over the conditions under which Indians were identified in South Africa. His ferocious critique of modernity, and western science, was formed after his own contradictory and excruciating positions on the virtues, and dangers, of fingerprinting had alienated his entire local constituency. Key to the development of the Gandhian critique was his struggle with Lionel Curtis, the most self-consciously progressive member of the Milner Kindergarten, advocate of the fingerprinting of all Asians in South Africa and architect of the core theory of racial segregation.

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