This presentation examines the role of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) as a father and a nation-builder in colonial India. Of the many achievements and contributions of Gandhi, the one that still awaits historical attention is his involvement with children and education. Gandhi, as a biological father of four sons and as the “father” of the nation, was committed to a new kind of education involving self-help and one that renounced “modern” scientific training. By foregrounding the role of the father, this talk demonstrates that in the face of colonial subjection, fatherhood became a domain of serious reflection for nationalist leaders like Gandhi. Gandhi’s educational experiments, originating from experiences at home, defied colonial notion of masculinity and domination. As part of a larger research on fathers and children in colonial India, the focus on fatherhood disrupts the separation between the private and the public and brings out the centrality of the home and the domestic in Indian nationalist politics.

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222 Whitehead Hall
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