

Exploring Social Issues That Become Social Movements Program Transcript

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LAURA MCCORMICK: We work for justice when our hearts are stirred by specific lives and situation. In large part the motivation behind a social movement is often a personal emotional connection to a social issue. However, an emotional connection alone is not enough to sustain the perseverance necessary to achieve social change.

So, where do we start? We might feel as if a social issue is too large to tackle. We may feel powerless in the face of injustice. Have you ever felt that way? I recall feeling rather powerless when about 20 years ago a tornado ripped through a neighboring community. Many people lost everything. I felt an ache in my heart for the victims of the tornado and I wanted to help, but I didn't have much money to offer.

Then a friend told me about a group that was volunteering with the American Red Cross to help people find their belongings and offer emotional support as they went through the process of finding new homes. I joined the group and felt like I made a difference.

According to the author of our textbook, there is no greater anecdote to powerlessness than joining with others in a common cause. Some social issues require longer periods of time before we see much difference being made. For example, the gay rights movement began in the 1950s. And though some progress had been made each decade, it was not until 2015 that the freedom to marry in the United States was granted to same sex couples nationwide. Social change usually does not occur suddenly, but evolves as the result of a committed group of people working in a strategic and focused way to address the social issue over time.

We might also experience fear from not knowing how or where to start. And of possible failure. But we gained strength when we feel a desire to make a difference in the circumstances that negatively affect ourselves, our families, our friends, and neighbors, our communities. Beyond our desire to make a difference, some of the factors that create sustainable social movements include determination, courage, risk taking, and the willingness to listen to conflicting viewpoints. Are you capable of these things? Are you a leader?

Keep in mind that social responsibility does not require being involved in a leadership role. In this week's discussion, you will analyze examples of social movements to identify common factors that can contribute to their success and their sustainability. As you reflect upon the stories you read this week and on

your own experiences, pay attention to what sets apart the people who talk about things they care about and the people who act on them.

You will also write a literature review that focuses on potential solutions to the social issue you introduced in your week two topic exploration and analysis assignment. This is where you really get to shine. Use your passion about this social issue to help drive your creativity. Are the potential solutions you come up with feasible? How might you, your friends, family, neighbors, and community benefit from your ideas?

Remember, successful social movements of the past were often initiated by individuals who are unsure of where to begin. But had a desire to make a difference. In your week five final project assignment, you will introduce your ideas to your classmates and potentially inspire them to further investigate the social issue that you present.

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