

One Personal Change Could Positively Influence the World

I believe that we all have the desire to better our communities in areas that we deem important to ourselves, our families, and our community at large. It can be difficult to find time to enact a positive change in a community when the majority of us are incredibly busy; volunteering our time takes effort, organization, and a result that is not guaranteed. However, can we implement small changes within ourselves that filter out to positive change in our communities?

Mahatma Gandhi said, “Be the change that you want to see in the world”. These words have been with me since I first read them as a teenager. All macro-level changes begin with the individual as it is individuals that come together to enact social change. We often lose sight of the power that each of us have to influence others. Consider the actions of historical actors such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Barry Scheck & Peter Neufeld, and Susan B. Anthony. Dr. King’s approach to (then) civil disobedience was a non-violence that ultimately led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Barry Scheck & Peter Neufeld started the Innocence Project which (as of this writing) has legally exonerated 330 inmates wrongfully convicted of capital crimes (those punishable by the death penalty). Susan B. Anthony led the Women’s Suffrage Movement. What do you have in common with them?

You have an idea to improve your community. Every positive change in society began somewhere, with someone, who identified the problem and decided to enact change. It is not easy to muster the gumption to enact change when larger society does not agree with the problem that is identified; resistance was met (at times) with violence and abuse of the law to maintain the status quo. Overcoming such strong resistance is what inspires and reassures us that change is always possible and that it begins with one person.

I doubt that any historical actor knew that her or his initial actions that moved towards public awareness of the issue would lead to systemic change. The actor had a fundamental belief in a principle that fueled them throughout their journeys.

What is an issue in your community that is against your core principles or beliefs? You must first identify the issue. Zig Ziglar said “You can’t hit a target with a blindfold on”. Identifying the issue is an important first step because it orients you to further direction and action. The issue may change as progress develops; this is very common because the issue initially identified might be a bit different once research is undertaken. You might also find that others have identified the same issue yet they have a more refined scope.

...and this takes us back to many of us not having enough free time to undertake such an endeavor. Do you remember what Mahatma Gandhi said? Seeking to align your actions with your beliefs is an easy first step to take. Those that do this silently inspire others to do the same.

Take a quick minute to reflect upon people who were influential to you as you have grown and developed. It is likely a person- an unsung hero- such as a teacher or a clergy member. These unsung heroes were dedicated to their beliefs and did not seek notoriety for their actions. They are often humble and seek to avoid public recognition of their acts...yet these are the people who

are the base of our communities. Thus, you might inspire people through what inspired you or you may be another's positive influence.

This is how you can be the best that you can be in your community and it requires nothing more than following your core principles and aligning your actions with your beliefs.