

ACTIVITY ONE
THE ROAD TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Can you imagine a time when it was legal not to hire women because of their gender? Or when children were not legally protected from abusive parents? It may be hard to believe, but both were acceptable until advocates stepped in to stop these injustices. Social justice movements are born out of people's courage to stand up for those who are being oppressed in society. The history of national movements, such as the women's rights movement and the civil rights movement, have been well documented, but how is your knowledge of social issues? Try answering the questions below to test yourself.

Circle the best answer for each question.

1 Before laws were passed to protect children from physical abuse, children were protected from abusive relatives under which of the following laws?

- a. An adult-protection law
- b. An animal-protection law
- c. A child-labor law
- d. A human-dignity law

3 The Animal Welfare Act does not apply to which of the following?

- a. Animals on farms
- b. Rats and mice
- c. Birds used in experimentation
- d. All of the above

5 Leonardo da Vinci, Mark Twain, Gandhi, and Albert Einstein were all advocates for which of the following?

- a. Universal vaccinations
- b. Technology in the classroom
- c. Animal protection
- d. The implementation of Daylight Saving Time

8 The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations and ratified by all countries in 1989. The treaty promised kids around the world various rights, such as the right to liberty, education, health care, protection in armed conflict, protection within the justice system, and protection from economic exploitation.

True False

2 Many people thought that pesticides were harmless to the environment until the publication of _____, Rachel Carson's book that showed how destructive chemicals really are to plants, animals, and people.

- a. Silent Night
- b. Take Back Our Plants
- c. Silent Spring
- d. Plants Need Protection, Too

4 Before this law was overturned in 1954, discrimination against African-Americans was legal under the "separate but equal" ruling of _____.

- a. Brown vs. the Board of Education
- b. Plessy vs. Ferguson
- c. Kramer vs. Kramer
- d. Johnson vs. Scott

6 Speciesism is discrimination against animals.

True False

7 Once women were given the right to vote in 1920, they were also treated equally in the workplace.

True False

9 Ida Wells-Barnett, W.E.B. DuBois, Medgar Evers, and Sojourner Truth were known for their environmental advocacy.

True False

10 As a result of consumer campaigns, more than 500 cruelty-free companies have stopped testing cosmetics and household products on animals since the 1980s. The term "cruelty-free" refers to companies that do not test their products on animals.

True False

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ACTIVITY TWO

READ BETWEEN THE LINES: FACTS VS. OPINIONS

When writing news, it is the reporter’s responsibility to present both sides of a story, using facts to back up the information that is being given. Facts and opinions should be “attributed” in news stories, meaning that the sources of the facts and opinions are provided. Reporters are supposed to remain neutral when writing an article and should omit their opinions from the story, but that is not always the case. If the writer’s opinions can be detected in the story or if vital information has purposely been omitted, the reporter has failed to remain impartial.

The “news stories” below were written about a fictitious circus performance. One article presents facts to back up its story, the other uses opinions—but is either one impartial? Read the articles below, then answer the questions that follow.

A. Circus Wows Crowd

The Super Duper Circus put on a spectacular show for a sell-out crowd at the Central Coliseum last night, thrilling kids and kids at heart with one of the best circus performances of all time.

The show began with trapeze artists flipping and soaring through the air as acrobats twirled and somersaulted around the center ring. Elephants, horses, and tigers performed amazing tricks with the help of their trainers and wowed the crowd with daring stunts as tigers jumped through flaming hoops.

“This has been an incredible experience,” said Franklin Hale, a sophomore at Front Range High School. “It’s a great show for the entire family—me and my brother loved it! We got to see real live elephants. It was awesome!”

The crowd yelled and cheered ecstatically as the elephants balanced on stools, walked on two legs, and hoisted the ringleader onto their backs. The trainers gently coaxed the elephants into picking up acrobats with their trunks and “bowing” at the end of their performance. The animals loved the attention and applause from the crowd.

Unfortunately, a rowdy animal rights group nearly ruined the show by picketing in a futile attempt to try to prevent the show from happening. The group even tried to ban the circus from coming to town again in the future, which would disappoint local kids.

The group hounded circus patrons by handing them fliers, insisting that the animals are “mistreated.” But the performing animals looked happy and healthy, and circus ringleader Samantha Gibbons disputed the group’s accusations.

“We take care of all of our animals here,” said Gibbons. “They are healthy and happy, and they live longer with us than they would in the wild. The animal rights group should find more productive ways to spend their time and money.”

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B. Animal Rights Group Campaigns Against Circus

The circus came to town again this year, and an animal-protection group was on hand to help the animals and educate citizens when the Super Duper Circus rolled into the Central Coliseum parking lot yesterday.

The organized group handed out informative fliers about the mistreatment of circus animals, which included reports from several local veterinarians.

According to local veterinarians, circus elephants often suffer crippling injuries as a result of traveling in cramped cages for 50 weeks a year and performing physically difficult tricks. Lions, tigers, bears, and primates are forced to eat, drink, sleep, and defecate in the same cramped cages, resulting in neurotic behaviors that show that their living conditions do not provide for their mental or emotional needs, veterinarians said. Investigations also show that animals are whipped, kicked, and punched during training.

"I didn't realize how inhumane the animals were being treated," said Mark Davidson, a 17-year-old senior at Front Range High School. "I saw the animals being unloaded out of small, cramped cages. I can't imagine how uncomfortable that must be."

Davidson and his girlfriend, Donna Alvarez, relinquished their circus tickets and opted out of attending the performance. Many circus ticket-holders did the same.

"The circus should not be using animals for entertainment," said Alvarez. "Animals should not be forced into performing for our enjoyment."

The circus's animal acts include tigers who are forced to jump through hoops of fire and elephants who are coaxed into standing on their hind legs.

A circus spokeswoman, Samantha Gibbons, said, "We take care of all of our animals here. They are healthy and happy."

But a member of the animal-protection group passed around a report indicating that the U.S. Department of Agriculture had cited the Super Duper Circus for several animal violations, including "housing animals in poor, unsanitary conditions." The report also reprimanded the circus for using electric shocks, whips, and bullhooks to beat and force the animals to perform tricks.

"I don't think I can attend another circus after reading about how the animals are mistreated," said Rita Johnson. "It's awful what they put those poor animals through."

Questions

1. Which article cites multiple sources and attributes information?
2. Which article consists of mostly personal observation?
3. List the facts used in the articles.
4. Is either article impartial? Why or why not?

On another piece of paper, write an impartial, factual article that presents both sides of the story.

When you have finished writing your story, reread it. Were you able to remain neutral? Or did your feelings toward circuses show through in your writing?

**ACTIVITY THREE
CHANGING MINDS, CHANGING TIMES**

Because of the efforts of social activists, laws have been changed to help end discrimination and protect the environment. Advocates work on educating society about issues, drawing attention to them, and changing the laws to reflect their cause. **Read about the recent legal changes that have occurred as a result of social justice movements?**

Animal Protection Movement

THEN Before 1866, no laws to protect animals existed. Philanthropist Henry Bergh advocated for an anti-cruelty law after witnessing abuse. In 1866, he not only formed the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), but also passed the first-ever anti-cruelty law, which was also used to prosecute child abusers.

NOW Passed in 1966, the Animal Welfare Act gives limited protection to some animals but does not cover farm animals or rats, mice, and birds, who are commonly used as test subjects in laboratories.

More than 30 states have recently enacted laws to give some protection to animal companions, making it a felony to intentionally harm or abuse an animal, but the laws do not protect animals on farms or in research labs, circuses, or rodeos.

FUTURE Animal-protection groups are still working to regulate slaughterhouses and gain protection for farmed animals under the Animal Welfare Act.

Groups are also trying to ban the confinement of hens to battery cages, catching wildlife in steel-jaw leghold traps, and other extremely cruel practices.

Environmental Movement

THEN Before the mid-1900s, air and water quality were not federally regulated.

DDT, a potent nerve poison, was used as a chemical pesticide in the 1950s and 1960s but was later found to be harmful to human health.

NOW The Environmental Protection Agency was formed in 1970.

In the 1970s, pesticides such as DDT were banned after being recognized as a health hazard to plants, animals, and people.

In 1990, the Clean Air Act was passed to regulate the amount of pollution that factories were allowed to release into the atmosphere, but enforcement is still disputed.

FUTURE Environmentalists are still working to pass stricter laws that will limit the amount of pollution allowed in the air, ground, and water.

Civil Rights Movement

THEN Segregated schools were legal under the 1896 Supreme Court decision of Plessy v. Ferguson.

NOW In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which stated that all U.S. citizens are considered equal under the First Amendment.

Racism has fast become a national concern that garners political and media attention and is actively addressed in educational institutions.

FUTURE Civil rights advocates are still working toward equal work and educational opportunities for people of color.

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ACTIVITY THREE
CHANGING MINDS, CHANGING TIMES

Laws changed in favor of social justice movements are often the result of group efforts. But it takes only one person to start a movement for a cause and make a positive difference in society. The following people are some of the advocates who have made major contributions to social justice movements.

Environmental Movement: Julia Butterfly Hill / Rachel Carson / Paul Watson

Animal Protection Movement: Peter Singer / Howard Lyman / Gail Eisnitz

Civil Rights Movement: Mahatma Gandhi / Dexter Scott King / Rosa Parks

Learn more about a person who has changed society for the better and write about him or her. Choose a person from the list above or an advocate you are interested in learning more about, such as an activist in your area.

When researching, think about and answer the following questions:
What was the major focus of the person's cause? What motivated him or her to become involved? How did he or she affect society and make a positive difference? What can you do to help sustain his or her progress?

"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Americans throw away enough office paper each year to create a 12-foot-high wall from Los Angeles to New York City.

"Some look at the world as it is and ask, why? I look at the world as it should be and ask, why not?" —Robert Kennedy

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." —Mahatma Gandhi

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Every 2.4 seconds, someone in the world dies of starvation. Of all agricultural land in the U.S., 80 percent is used to raise animals for food—that's almost half the total land mass of the lower 48 states.

**ACTIVITY FOUR
WHAT YOU CAN DO**

There are a number of ways to get involved in society and show that you care about the world and its citizens. There are also a number of ways that you can make a difference. Not only can you choose to be involved, you can also choose how involved you will be in a cause. You might already be making a difference in society—if you recycle and/or use recycled products, you are helping the environment; if you donate time to your local animal shelter, you are helping animals; if you volunteer for a candidate or vote, you are participating in the democratic process; and if you donate clothing, food, and/or toys during collection drives, you are fulfilling the needs of members of your community.

In the video, Apryl, Angela, Richard, and Zach were empowered by their research to do something to help animals. Richard interned at a local animals rights group and actively educated his peers, Apryl chose to become a vegetarian, Zach helped stop animal neglect in his neighborhood, and Angela realized that every little decision that she makes in her life can make a difference.

Think about what you learned in the video, and then use the lines below to write a personal commitment statement that reflects what you want to do to help make a positive difference for animals and your community. Remember, the level of involvement (if any) is your choice.

My personal commitment statement is ...

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To fulfill my commitment, I will ...

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VIDEO RECAP
What You Can Do to Help Animals

- Buy cruelty-free products.
- Buy animal-free clothing.
- Eat vegetarian foods.
- Support animal-free circuses.
- Report animal abuse.

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ACTIVITY FOUR
WHAT YOU CAN DO

Think About This:

What do you think motivates people to become involved in social justice movements?

What motivated the students in the video to make changes and choices that reflect their beliefs?

Write your answers on a separate piece of paper.

“I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.” —Helen Keller

If 25 percent of American families used just 10 fewer plastic bags each month, an estimated 2.5 billion bags could be saved from landfills each year.

“To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men.” —Abraham Lincoln

Did you know that more than 27 billion animals are killed for food every year? The average American eats approximately 95 animals a year.

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“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere ...” —Martin Luther King

RECOMMENDED READING

- **Animal Liberation** by *Peter Singer*
A look at the abuse of animals in society and some possible solutions
- **Animals in Society** by *Zoe Weil*
An examination of the importance of animals in society and the need to protect them
- **Conserving the Environment** by *Laura K. Egen Dorf*
An in-depth look at how to be eco-friendly
- **Drawing the Line: Science and the Case for Animal Rights** by *Steven M. Wise*
A legal perspective on the debate for animal rights
- **50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth**
by *The Earth Works Group*
Ecological and civic-minded tips for concerned citizens
- **The Food Revolution** by *John Robbins*
A look at how food choices can affect our health, the environment, and animals
- **Issues in the Environment** by *Patricia D. Netzley*
An account of issues impacting the environment, endangered species, and government policies
- **One Makes the Difference** by *Julia Butterfly Hill*
Motivating ideas on how to make a difference, written by a woman who spent more than two years living in a redwood tree to save it from being cut down
- **Rosa Parks: My Story** by *Rosa Parks, with Jim Haskins*
The story of the civil rights pioneer who jumpstarted the Montgomery bus boycott in 1960s Alabama
- **Silent Spring** by *Rachel Carson*
An environmentalist's warning of the danger of pesticides and their effects on nature and humans
- **Sojourner Truth: Ain't I a Woman?** by *Patricia C. McKissack, with Frederick L. McKissack*
Biography of the former slave who became an abolitionist and advocate for civil and women's rights
- **A Sporting Chance: Sports and Gender** by *Andy Steiner*
An overview of the struggle for gender equality in sports with bios of outstanding female athletes
- **They Had a Dream: The Civil Rights Struggle From Frederick Douglass to Marcus Garvey to Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X** by *Jules Archer*
Portraits of the leaders in the civil rights struggle
- **Uncle Tom's Cabin** by *Harriet Beecher Stowe*
Famous story about the life of slaves and their inhumane treatment
- **Women's Suffrage: A Primary Source History of the Women's Rights Movement in America**
by *Colleen Adams and Kerri O'Donnell*
An American history of women's rights

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RESOURCES/WEB SITES

- **www.justchoices.com**
Free classroom resources for teachers and students, project ideas, and ways to get involved in social justice issues
- **www.teachkind.org**
Free classroom materials on humane education, resources from various nonprofit organizations, and ideas on how to implement humane education in the classroom
- **www.peta2.com**
A resource-based site that provides information on animal rights with facts and statistics for class projects; includes an interactive board where questions are answered by experts in the field
- **www.humaneteen.org**
The Humane Society of the United States Web site that encourages teens to get involved and make a difference in the world
- **www.nahee.org**
The Web site for the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education, the youth education affiliate of The Humane Society of the United States
- **www.foe.org**
The Web site for Friends of the Earth, the world's largest network of environmental groups; includes up-to-date information on environmental issues around the world
- **www.naacp.org**
Web site for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which is a resource about the history of the civil rights movement and current actions to protect civil rights
- **www.amnesty.org**
The Amnesty International Web site, which advocates for the humane treatment of all people, highlights current information on human rights violations around the world, and allows people to get involved in ending those violations
- **www.ibuydifferent.org**
A Web site dedicated to showing teens the power of the consumer dollar and the impact of daily choices

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