When is it Right to Do Wrong?

Bianca Abbate
La Salle University, abbateb2@student.lasalle.edu

Jacob Garwood
La Salle University, garwoodj2@student.lasalle.edu

Michael J. McGinniss F.S.C
La Salle University, mcginnis@lasalle.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/explorercafe

Recommended Citation
Abbate, Bianca; Garwood, Jacob; and McGinniss, Michael J. F.S.C, "When is it Right to Do Wrong?" (2019). Explorer Café. 80.
https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/explorercafe/80

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Explorer Connection at La Salle University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Explorer Café by an authorized administrator of La Salle University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact careyc@lasalle.edu.
When Is It Right to do Wrong?

2/27/19 Explorer Café
Jacob Garwood, Bianca Abbate, and Br. Michael McGinnis; University Honors Program
A BRIEF OVERVIEW

• Civil disobedience
  • 4 case studies
  • What are your perceptions?

• How can a university do right by doing wrong?
  • Asking the impertinent questions
  • Teaching to transgress
CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

• "It is not always the same thing to be a good man and a good citizen." - Aristotle

• "In an unjust society the only place for a just man is prison" - Henry David Thoreau

• "One has not only a legal, but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws." - Martin Luther King Jr.

• bit.ly/2H3gxQY
THE BOSTON TEA PARTY

- December 12th, 1773
- In protest of the Tea Act
  - Other taxes were already repealed by this time
- No taxation without representation!
BUT WAIT...

- The tea act repealed a 25% import tax
- Tax was in the range of 1-6%
- 90,000 pounds of tea thrown overboard
- In present value, almost $1,000,000 worth of tea was destroyed
- George Washington and Benjamin Franklin both condemned the act
“WITH THIS, I AM SHAKING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE”

GANDHI’S SATYAGRAHA AND THE SALT MARCHES
GANDHI'S PLAN

• British Salt Laws - Since the late 19th century, the British had controlled the manufacturing and sale of salt, only allowing natives to buy the mineral at a high cost from British merchants.

• In March 1930, Gandhi wrote formal requests to repeal the salt tax. He received no response.

• Gandhi planned to use his philosophy of Satyagraha but even comrades were skeptical: “striking a fly with a sledgehammer”.

• Nonetheless, Gandhi put his plan into action.

• “With this, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire”
THE AFTERMATH

• The Good:
  • enhanced media coverage of the colonial injustices
  • Gandhi named Time magazine’s Man of the Year, 1930
  • 1931 - Gandhi-Irwin Pact
  • Martin Luther King Jr. would later cite the Salt March as a crucial influence on his own philosophy of civil disobedience.

• The Bad:
  • suppressed by the British
  • little immediate impact
  • Gandhi arrested
  • Some 80,000 people were arrested in the spree of civil disobedience, and many were beaten by police.
BLACK LIVES MATTER

• First used as a hashtag in 2013
• Following several officer related shootings, the movement started to take a global scale
• A NYU study estimated 1,400 protests from Nov 2014 to May 2015
  • More than half shut down some type of infrastructure
BLOCKING HIGHWAYS

• Protestors would walk out into traffic, and block every lane of major highways
• Blocking major arteries for hours on end can really disrupt a city
• Police often respond with riot gear and tear gas
• In some cases, the protestors were even arrested
PERCEPTIONS: CIVIL RIGHTS VS BLACK LIVES MATTER

• Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed: "We're the home of Dr. Martin Luther King, the only thing I ask is that they not take the freeways. Dr. King would never take a freeway."

• But Dr. King did block a bridge in 1965, in Selma

• Is blocking a highway morally just?
EDWARD SNOWDEN AND THE NSA LEAKS

• In 2006, Edward Snowden was hired by the CIA as a Computer Systems Administrator with top security clearance, which he maintained throughout other roles.

• In 2013, he leaked thousands of classified government documents to several journalists, exposing the federal government's surveillance programs of U.S. citizens.

• Snowden has been charged with espionage, theft and conversion of government property and, in June 2013, sought asylum in Russia.
TRAITOR OR PATRIOT?...MAYBE A BIT OF BOTH

• Strengthened Americans' privacy
• Forced the government to be more transparent
• No lasting harm to U.S. national security
• Showed an incredible failure in the system
• Informed the public of privacy breaches
• "Renaissance of Internet Security"

In 2016, former Attorney General Eric Holder, though calling Snowden's actions "inappropriate" and "illegal", claimed, “We can certainly argue about the way in which Snowden did what he did, but I think he actually performed a public service by raising the debate that we engaged in and by the changes that we made.”
THE BAD AND THE UGLY

• Crippled NSA operations
• Bulk of the documents had nothing to do with domestic surveillance but rather covered America's overseas spy network, including its most sensitive sources
• Did not try legal means, such as going to sympathetic members of Congress...fled the country and leaked info to journalists
• Resulted in heightened distrust in government
**Most Americans Believe It Is Acceptable to Monitor Others, Except U.S. Citizens**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American citizens</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens of other countries</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American leaders</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders of other countries</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism suspects</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


PEW RESEARCH CENTER
THE MEANS OF THE SNOWDEN CASE: UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITIES

- Was how Snowden did it the "right" way?
- What else could he have done?
- Was the kind of information leaked important?
- What was the responsibility of the journalists?
CAN WE TIE THIS BACK TO LA SALLE?

- Asking the impertinent questions is a fundamental part of education

**Definition of impertinent**

1. not pertinent: IRRELEVANT

2. a. not restrained within due or proper bounds especially of propriety or good taste
   - an impertinent curiosity

   b. given to or characterized by insolent rudeness
   - an impertinent answer
AN EXCERPT FROM "TEACHING TO TRANSGRESS"

• Author and professor bell hooks attended Stanford in the early 70s:

• "It surprised and shocked me to sit in classes where professors were not excited about teaching, where they did not seem to have a clue that education was about the practice of freedom. During college, the primary lesson was reinforced: we were to learn obedience to authority."

• In the 1994 book, hooks discusses how education, when conducted in the practice of freedom, could transgress traditional boundaries
HOW CAN WE TRANSGRESS?

- In the classroom?
- On campus?
- In Logan?
- In Philadelphia?
- In our nation?
- As global citizens?