To live for Justice or to tolerate Injustice

Laws. What are they? They are rules set by the government to keep order and safety for their people. They are easy to follow and for some people, fun to break. Although laws are expected to be followed, should they be followed to no exception? Although some people believe laws always need to be followed, Henry David Thoreau and many people throughout history disagreed; Thoreau stated, “One has not only a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.” **Despite laws being put into place by the government to protect and hold everyone accountable, citizens should have the right to civilly disobey unjust laws in order to protect liberties, change laws, and embrace moral freedom.**

Firstly, disobeying laws not seen as morally fit protects liberties. Liberty protection means to protect freedom of choice, protection from restrictions by a higher authority, and protects people’s way of life. Disobeying unjust laws lets us exercise our right of choice. By contrast, obeying laws despite being unjust solidifies the fact that liberties are not being protected. For example, countries like North Korea have citizens obeying laws despite no freedom. Furthermore, Gandhi, an Indian activist, expresses the importance of having our right to protect our liberties through his philosophy of Satyagraha: “Reveal the truth and confront injustice through non-violence” (Philosophy: Satyagraha). He states that as free citizens, it is crucial for people to not ignore injustice. Protecting liberties are important because it protects of way of life, choices and lets people control their lives without restrictions.

Additionally, disobeying unjust laws also creates change. Disobeying laws has the potential to create change within a society. People have a duty to become activists when needed. In fact, many of the world’s greatest social changes were created by activists who believed in making a difference. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Was a well renowned activist because he didn’t believe nor agree with government laws surrounding the treatment of African Americans and protested while spreading awareness for it. He and others like Rosa Parks, fellow civil rights activist, worked hard against government oppression to create changes such as The Civil Rights Act that bans racial discrimination and voting rights which lets everyone vote. King famously said, “Justice too long delayed is justice denied.” Which means that changes need to happen quickly and often-times through civil disobedience of the law. When laws needed to be changed, they can be through disobeying the law and standing for what is right.

Lastly, disobeying unjust laws exercises moral freedom. Moral freedom in the words of German Philosopher Immanuel Kant is being able to “seek out and establish our own principles of morality” (Kant’s Moral Philosophy). Having your own established morals and way of life is important for protecting individuality. For example, in Fahrenheit 451, a novel by Ray Bradbury, the protagonist Guy Montag embraces his moral freedom by reading books despite the government making reading against the law. Guy Montag is aware that he is breaking the law and does it anyway because he knows it is the only way to establish his own morals as well as the only way to protect his individuality as a person. Disobeying unjust laws embraces and exercises people’s moral freedom and individuality.

To conclude, people should have the right to disobey unjust laws in order to protect liberties, change laws, and embrace their moral freedom because people need to be able to control their way of life, change laws they see as harmful or unfit and embrace their individuality. Yes, people could spend your entire life obeying the rules and listening to every order given, but would you rather be free or live as cattle?

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