**A Way to Better Society**

Mohandas Gandhi, Henry David Thoreau, and Martin Luther King Jr. are all historical figures known for their acts of civil disobedience. These people stood up for what they believed in and made a significant difference in society. *Fahrenheit 451* was written by Ray Bradbury and is a dystopian novel exploring the theme of censorship where firemen burn books instead of stopping fires. The main character is Guy Montag who is a fireman. Although it can be suggested that civil disobedience in any situation is immoral, Thoreau and King are right: civil disobedience is necessary in the face of unjust laws. In other words, one ought to do the right thing, regardless of the law. This is because civil disobedience can make positive changes in society, people in power who decide upon laws cannot always be trusted to make fair decisions with citizens best interests in mind, and civil disobedience allows people to mourn over losses as well as grow and mature long-term.

Civil disobedience, when implemented, can be a powerful tool needed in order to change society for the better. It is a legal way of protesting against choices made by the government that one might believe do not hold citizens best interest in mind. Without this peaceful yet impactful method, many unjust laws made by the government would still be in effect. Martin Luther King Jr. lead the Civil Rights Movement from the mid-1950s to 1968 in which he promoted civil disobedience as a peaceful way of protesting against racial segregation and discrimination in the United States (Martin Luther King Jr., Biography). A major event in the Civil Rights Movement was when Rosa Parks, an African-American activist, refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus. Without acts of civil disobedience like this which developed the Civil Rights Movement, society may not be where it is today regarding equality among races. These events gave way to an ongoing fight against discrimination. If Rosa Parks hadn’t given up her seat on the bus, or Martin Luther King Jr. hadn’t promoted civil disobedience as much as he did, racial segregation may still be a norm in society today.

The people in places of power in government cannot be given full trust to always make fair decisions about laws with citizens best interest in mind. The Civil Rights Movement’s goal was to abolish unjust laws which supported racial discrimination. Even though these laws were made by people in power, they held a blatant bias.People in power are human and have flaws as well as bias, so they may make decisions that are prejudiced. Citizens have a responsibility to themselves and others to speak up against these unjust laws. Powerful people are also quicker to recognize injustice against themselves than less powerful people: “Powerful people react swiftly when they are victims of unfairness, while less powerful people are slow to notice and react to injustice, according to research published in the Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin. However, when high-power players thought they benefited from an unfair distribution, they were less likely to speak up,” (Nadia Whiteman). One cannot rely on people in power to make just decisions with citizens best interest in mind, as it is very possible for bias and self-interest to occur. Citizens have a responsibility to point out unjust laws to better equality in society.

Additionally, civil disobedience is an effective coping mechanism to deal with loss and promotes personal growth. As a result of people in places of power making unjust laws, lives can be lost. Civil disobedience is not an uncommon way of mourning over these losses: “After a traumatic event, a person has no choice but to move forward—where she might have a choice is in where she will move,” (Isabel Fattal). Civil disobedience aids in the healing process after a traumatic event and gives those who are mourning a reason to move forward. This coping mechanism allows people to protest against unjust laws that may have played a part in their traumatic event. Civil disobedience can also encourage personal growth. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Montag meets a young girl named Clarisse who lives freely and enjoys connecting with people unlike others during this time. Before meeting her, Montag lived an empty life without truly connecting to people or realizing his flaws and mistakes. Meeting Clarisse set off a series of events in Montag’s life, he first discovers that he is unhappy with his life. Montag used civil disobedience in the form of storing and reading books in a society where reading books is illegal. Over the course of the story, this form of civil disobedience allows Montag to grow as well as understand his flaws, which he then tries to correct: “I'll hold on to the world tight some day. I've got one finger on it now; that's a beginning,” (Bradbury, chapter 3). Montag means that he’s beginning to understand the world, but he still doesn’t understand all of it. His growth is evident because he recognizes that he has come far, but he still has a way to go. Montag is accepting his strengths and weaknesses as a part of himself. This is a result of him using civil disobedience, he grew as a person and learned many new things about himself.

Some may propose that civil disobedience is never justified and is immoral, but when this method is used as a way of calling out discrimination as a cause of unjust laws, it is the most effective way of promoting equality and is therefore justified. Thoreau and King are right, civil disobedience is necessary in the face of unjust laws. In other words, one ought to do the right thing, regardless of the law. This is because civil disobedience can make positive changes in society, people in power who decide upon laws cannot always be trusted to make fair decisions with citizens best interests in mind, and civil disobedience allows people to mourn over losses as well as grow and mature long-term. Living in a world where one has no voice against injustice will only cause rampant discrimination.

**Works Cited**

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. Perfection Learning Prebound, 2012.

Fattal, Isabel. “The Power of Grief-Fueled Activism.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 2 Mar. 2018, www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/03/the-power-of-grief-fueled-activism/554699/.

“Martin Luther King Jr.” *Biography.com*, A&E Networks Television, 14 Feb. 2019, www.biography.com/people/martin-luther-king-jr-9365086.

Whitehead, Nadia. “People in Power Are Quick To Call Out Injustice When They Are Harmed.” *NPR*, NPR, 5 June 2015, www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/06/05/412307984/people-in-power-are-quick-to-call-out-injustice-when-they-are-harmed.