

Mr. Pogreba

97/

8 October, 2017

AP Language

1773, Boston - the beginning of the end of Britain's worldwide empire. Dozens of people participated in throwing hundreds of pounds of tea into the harbor to protest excessive taxation from Britain, entirely illegally. The very birth of the United States was civil disobedience done right. The protest was simple, poignant, effective, and unquestionably illegal. **Civil disobedience can be rendered ineffective through overuse and can destroy the reputation of the cause in question, but, in small and intense doses, civil disobedience can be an good attention-grabbing and effective way to enact change.**

Law-breaking is an inherent part of civil disobedience, but done too often, it can destroy the legitimacy of the laws themselves. Breaking laws can be a delicate business: breaking a law to change a law is something of a paradox. Breaking too many laws in order to change them implies disrespect of the very thing - constantly rewriting the rules of society only to have them be continually broken undermines their effectiveness and makes the entire system flawed. If the intention is not to obey the laws, **it's pointless to enact them.** Naturally one broken law doesn't destroy a constitution in one fatal blow, but in excess it can be dangerous. Some would say civil disobedience doesn't inherently destroy the laws that aren't being protested but, with the great diversity of opinions and viewpoints in our currently deeply divided nation, **the danger of normalizing** of cultural civil disobedience cannot be underestimated. In order to have a deep effect, it wouldn't have to be all laws - it would just have to be prevalent

laws in either importance or majority. For example, a widespread refusal to pay taxes or follow food and health regulations could affect society greatly. As the 16th president Abraham Lincoln said in 1838, "for the sake of example, they [bad laws] should be religiously observed" although they also should "be repealed as soon as possible." **To maintain society, there needs to be a certain degree of lawfulness so as to not cripple the credibility of existing laws. Existing laws aren't always beneficial or perfect, but they are still laws, and in many cases, when it isn't necessary or helpful to break them, they should remain unbroken.** Laws need to maintain their integrity to encourage a civil society, and civil disobedience **can contribute to counteracting** that effort.

Another danger of overuse of civil disobedience is dulling the impact it can have on spectators. If civil disobedience is an everyday occurrence, every illegal protest's effect is lessened. In any situation, that which happens commonly is what ends up being ignored - humanity is programmed to pay attention to the spectacular, not the mundane. To make acts of civil disobedience mundane through overuse ruins its potent effect for every cause, just or otherwise. **Animal rights activists, for instance, who promote their cause by throwing buckets of red paint on fur coats and hats, aren't taken seriously anymore.** That protest has been used so much and for so long that it's often the butt of jokes and its activists are **dismissed as crazies.** The protest has become a caricature instead of being seen as a **legitimate cause.** Part of the effectiveness of any protest is they grab people's attention - civil disobedience doesn't when it happens every day for any cause, however measly or overwrought. Acts of civil disobedience should be **saved for causes that truly do not have the option of legal protest or in very situations (both of which were true in the civil rights movement).** Even

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when civil disobedience is used, the protest cannot be of the same thread - people stop

paying attention. The Women's March of 2017 had incredible turnout - but with successive

marches, like the March for Science, marches for transgender Students and immigrants,

general protests, etc., there was a general trend of less media coverage, ^{and} smaller turnouts.

After millions of people turned up for January 21, the rest just seemed to pale in

comparison. None were as effective as the first major protest during Trump's presidency.

Civil disobedience needs to be used sparingly, thoughtfully, and variably to avoid ruining,

dulling, or nullifying the effect of the protest for everyone.

In addition to the dangers of overuse, civil disobedience can hurt the reputation of both the cause and the protesters involved. Since civil disobedience inherently requires illegal action, police can get involved and make arrests or incite conflict. For most causes, the desired branding for the protesters would hardly be "criminals" or "rioters." **Martin Luther King Jr. himself**

addressed this in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in which he says that in order to

protest unlawfully, one must accept the label of criminal and take the punishment

peacefully to maintain the integrity of the individual and the cause. Just as King warned,

when either breaking the law and especially when already dealing with people's

preconceived notions, it is important to consider the possible effect that it may have on the

cause's reputation. Eventually, even the most peaceful and well-intentioned causes can be

considered extreme and dangerous to be around. Black Lives Matter, for example, is committed

to fighting the pervasive prejudice against African Americans and specifically against race-based

police brutality, a just and important goal. Rather ironically, the organization is now thought of as

a violent, rioting group some opponents even condemn as terrorist (one has to wonder if this

Be careful
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reaction is in part due to the very bias thing they're advocating against). **The intended message** was entirely changed from one of equality to one of violence and extremism. To be clear, this certainly doesn't mean that BLM is in any way responsible for their reputation, it's just a warning to be cautious and aware of people's perception as it may relate to the protest. The red-paint animal rights faced a similar issue: the gentle moniker "animal-lover" has been almost entirely obscured by "insane coat-destroyers." In this way, civil disobedience can be doubly paradoxical: changing laws by undermining them and trying to gain and improve reputation by destroying it. Civil disobedience comes with risks that can undermine the stance because of a terrible reputation gained by breaking social order.

Why, then, did it succeed in helping start the fight for America's independence? Used sparingly at the right time and place, properly executed, direct action and civil disobedience are powerful, world-changing tools. In addition to playing a role in America's liberation from Britain, acts of civil disobedience were an essential part of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. In one of the most famous acts of civil disobedience in American history, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white person. Her brave and rebellious act helped propel her movement and helped promote racial equality and the **abolition** of Jim Crow laws in the South. Especially when used consciously and in small doses, civil disobedience gives an intense, broad-reaching message. When a person intentionally goes to jail or in any other way causes harm to themselves because they believe so strongly in their cause, it is often both attention-grabbing and gives a sense of significance, falsely or otherwise, to whatever they're trying to change or promote. The idea that something is so deeply entrenched in society or so on the peripheral of society's often tunnel vision that the only way to change it is through drastic

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action is heavy and it weighs on people and thus inspires them to act more than through legal process. **Civil disobedience is in some ways much more effective than legal process, but the risks that it carries can greatly affect its net progress gained. The risk doesn't always pay off and the possible negative effects can be hard to counteract initially, but when the risk is deemed worthy, it can be an incredibly powerful tool.** Lobbying and peaceful protests are important tools for enacting change in a legal way, but there are times when it simply isn't enough. Sometimes, to bring an issue to the forefront and make the change that will shape a generation, it is necessary to take risks that may not pay off in the short run, but **may** eventually be hailed as acts of bravery that have sparked turning points in history.

Civil disobedience is risky. It can destroy reputation or undermine a cause. But in small amounts - calculated, pointed, bursts of overwhelming, truly meaningful protest - it is perhaps the most powerful tool for challenging social, political, and economical norms available. Civil disobedience was one of the markers for Britain's downfall as a worldwide empire; it fundamentally changed the social and political environment of the southern United States. It can also be used to influence the state of the nation today, but in order to utilize and maintain its effectiveness, it is essential to watch and wait for the ideal moment and manner in which to strike, lest it lose the unique power it has to alter the course of history.

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1773, Boston - the beginning of the end of Britain's worldwide empire. Dozens of people participated in throwing hundreds of pounds of tea into the harbor to protest excessive taxation from Britain, entirely illegally. The very birth of the United States was civil disobedience done right. The protest was simple, poignant, effective, and unquestionably illegal. In small and intense doses, civil disobedience can be an attention-grabbing and impactful way to enact change; however, overuse dulls the effect of the very laws it's trying to change and endangers its reputation and effectiveness.

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:49 PM
Comment [1]: Something is wrong about your word choice here. Make a better choice. :)

Breaking laws can be a delicate business: breaking a law to change a law is something of a paradox. Breaking too many laws in order to change them implies disrespect of the very thing - constantly rewriting the rules of society only to have them be continually broken undermines their effectiveness and makes the entire system flawed. If the intention is not to obey the laws, their enactment is obsolete. Naturally one broken law doesn't destroy a constitution in one fatal blow, but in excess it can be dangerous. Some would say civil disobedience doesn't inherently destroy the laws that aren't being protested but, with the great diversity of opinions and viewpoints in our currently deeply divided nation, the normalization of cultural civil disobedience cannot be underestimated. In order to have a deep effect, it wouldn't have to be all laws - it would just have to be prevalent laws in either importance or majority. For example, a widespread refusal to pay taxes or follow food and health regulations could affect society greatly. As the 16th president Abraham Lincoln said in 1838, "for the sake of example, they [bad

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:50 PM
Comment [2]: Remember, the thesis needs to be a bit more clear about expressing which side of the prompt you're coming down on. This feels like a caveat, but I'd make the language a bit more clear.

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:51 PM
Comment [3]: This is not terribly clear as a topic sentence. It's an interesting argument, but one better for the body of a paragraph, once you've established your position more clearly.

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:51 PM
Comment [4]: Awkward phrasing. Give it another pass for more clarity.

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:51 PM
Comment [5]: "the danger of normalizing..."

laws] should be religiously observed” although they also should “be repealed as soon as possible.” Laws need to maintain their integrity to encourage a civil society, and civil disobedience counteracts that effort.

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:52 PM

Comment [6]: Make sure that you have time to properly analyze and contextualize AL's quote.

Another danger of overuse of civil disobedience is dulling the impact it can have on spectators. If civil disobedience is an everyday occurrence, every illegal protest's effect is lessened. In any situation, that which happens commonly is what ends up being ignored - humanity is programmed to pay attention to the spectacular, not the mundane. To make acts of civil disobedience mundane through overuse ruins its potent effect for every cause, just or otherwise. Part of the effectiveness of any protest is they grabs people's attention - civil disobedience won't if it happens every day for any cause, however measly or overwrought. Acts of civil disobedience should be saved for big, important causes so when it does happen, people notice. Civil disobedience needs to be used sparingly and thoughtfully to avoid ruining it for everyone.

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:58 PM

Comment [7]: The argument of this paragraph is fine, but it really needs some examples to provide context. Can you provide an example of failed CD because of overuse?

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:52 PM

Comment [8]: Probably need to do some definitional work here.

In addition to the dangers of overuse, civil disobedience can hurt the reputation of both the cause and the protesters involved. Since civil disobedience inherently requires illegal action, police can get involved and make arrests or incite conflict. For most causes, the desired branding for the protesters would hardly be “criminals” or “rioters.” Eventually, even the most peaceful and well-intentioned causes can be considered extreme and dangerous to be around. Black Lives Matter, for example, is committed to fighting the pervasive prejudice against African Americans and specifically against race-based police brutality, a just and important goal. Rather ironically, the organization is now thought of as a violent, rioting group some opponents even condemn as terrorist (one has to wonder if this reaction is in part due to the very bias thing they're advocating against), and in some respects, their opponents are at least partially correct - several Black Lives

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:54 PM

Comment [9]: I'd probably deal with King here, who argued that CD meant accepting the name of criminal and bearing the consequences.

Matter rallies have become violent. In this way, civil disobedience can be doubly paradoxical: changing laws by undermining them and trying to gain and improve reputation by destroying it. Civil disobedience comes with risks that can undermine the stance because of a terrible reputation gained by breaking social order.

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:55 PM

Comment [10]: I think this needs more analytical work. Didn't the white supremacists of the 60s use the exact same tactics to demonize the CRM? Be careful not to make it seem like you're blaming the people who are unfairly being characterized.

Why, then, did it succeed in helping start the fight for America's independence? Used sparingly at the right time and place, properly executed, direct action and civil disobedience are powerful, world-changing tools. In addition to playing a role in America's liberation from Britain, acts of civil disobedience were an essential part of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. In one of the most famous acts of civil disobedience in American history, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white person. Her brave and rebellious act helped propel her movement and helped promote racial equality and the abolishment of Jim Crow laws in the South. Especially when used consciously and in small doses, civil disobedience gives an intense, broad-reaching message. When a person intentionally goes to jail or in any other way causes harm to themselves because they believe so strongly in their cause, it is both attention-grabbing and gives a sense of significance, falsely or otherwise, to whatever they're trying to change or promote. The idea that something is so deeply entrenched in society or so on the peripheral of society's often tunnel vision that the only way to change it is through drastic action is heavy and it weighs on people and thus inspires them to act more than through legal process. Lobbying and peaceful protests are important tools for enacting change in a legal way, but there are times when it simply isn't enough. Sometimes, to bring an issue to the forefront and make the change that will shape a generation, it is necessary to take risks that may not pay off in the short run, but will eventually be hailed as acts of bravery that have sparked turning points in history.

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:55 PM

Comment [11]: abolition

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:56 PM

Comment [12]: But not always, according to the rest of the essay, right?

Don Pogreba 10/9/2017 7:56 PM

Comment [13]: So how does this relate to BLM? Why are the undermining the efficacy of CD and Rosa Parks didn't? Was it just because her efforts succeeded and thus far, their efforts have not? I'd like to see more analysis here.



Civil disobedience is risky. It can destroy reputation or undermine a cause. But in small amounts - calculated, pointed, bursts of overwhelming, truly meaningful protest - it is perhaps the most powerful tool for challenging social, political, and economical norms available. Civil disobedience was one of the markers for Britain's downfall as a worldwide empire; it fundamentally changed the social and political environment of the southern United States. It can also be used to influence the state of the nation today, but in order to utilize and maintain its effectiveness, it is essential to watch and wait for the ideal moment and manner in which to strike, lest it lose the unique power it has to alter the course of history.

- *I'd definitely reshape the thesis. The essay that follows it doesn't seem as clear because the order of the thesis sets up the reader for a different structure.*
- *I like the argument you make in the piece, but I'd like to see more analysis of definitions. I'm not sure that you do enough to explain why some CD is legit and effective, while other CD is not.*