RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR CONTINUING ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL CHANGE

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE • UNIVERSITY STUDIES
PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
In your courses at PSU you may have discussed pressing social issues, been exposed to problems facing our world or participated in a community-based learning project. These experiences generate questions such as: How do we create social change? How do we sustain our community involvement? What resources exist to support our development as engaged and activated members of our communities? This resource guide exists to address these questions and support your continued engagement in community-based social change. Part of the power and potential of social change is beginning to see and foster intentional connections between people to name those issues impacting us and then mobilizing for collective action. This engagement allows us to begin to create a more just and sustainable world.

The following pages explore resources such as workshops, seminars, websites, books, etc. that you can access (pg. 3), different types of engagement (pg. 4-5), how we think about social change (pg. 6), connecting with a community of practice (pg. 7) and how we sustain our engagement over time (pg. 8). All of this information is also available on the website (socialchange.pdx.edu) that has been developed to support your continued engagement as both a student and as alumni in community-based social change. We hope you find this useful!
CONTINUUM OF SOCIAL CHANGE

This continuum helps us think about the different ways to be involved in social change. Over time it is natural to move from one place to another along the continuum. Sometimes it is necessary to shift your position to be able to do the work you want to do. Different types of involvement are placed on particular parts of the continuum to reflect the places where they typically arise. However, it is important to keep in mind how they can shift and might be placed on different parts of the continuum depending on how we engage in them.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
One of the ways that we can think about social movements is as a network of emerging and connected community groups that are working on similar issues. They are one of the least discussed and most powerful forms of social change. Some of the most profound social change we know of came about in this way.

ADVOCACY
Both large organizations and small community groups are involved in advocacy. This type of social change simply refers to advocating for an issue or on behalf of a cause or community.

SERVICE
Many people are involved in service work through their work, place of worship or elsewhere. Through service we accomplish important work and often assist communities impacted by social and environmental problems.

COMMUNITY GROUPS
Small groups of people working together in their communities are one of the most important ways to be involved in social change. Historically, individuals in community working together have created both important social change and many of the organizations, institutions and non-profits we see now.

ELECTORAL ENGAGEMENT
This is often the most commonly discussed form of social change. Voting, volunteering, working for a political party or public service are all important types of involvement in our political institutions.
WHAT IS SOCIAL CHANGE?

Depending on your experience you might be familiar with service, charity, advocacy, community engagement, social movements, civic engagement or other concepts. We are using social change here because it is a broad term that captures the diversity of ways that we engage in the world to improve the communities in which we live. This resource guide is written from the perspective that we, individually and collectively, should be able to make those decisions that affect our lives and that engaged participation in social change is essential to that. Social change arises from many sources, changes in technology, shifts in economic systems, etc. However, this guide is oriented to those processes of social change that occur when small groups of people work together to intentionally shape the world in which they live based on shared values.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
-Margaret Mead

CONNECT WITH A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

A community of practice is a group of people with a shared focus in which you can figure out how to get involved, find opportunities to develop social change skills, learn more about a given issue, meet people passionate about similar issues and receive support in doing the work that you care about. They are also places to build relationships, share experiences and engage in collective reflection to develop or improve upon shared work.

While communities of practice can be found in many places, we try to create spaces for their development with students, alumni and community members. Wherever they are found they are important spaces to stay connected, improve upon our shared work and to find places for continued engagement.

Connect with a community of practice socialchange.pdx.edu/communities-of-practice
We need to see examples of effective action that we can see ourselves taking. Keep looking for types of action you think are effective and if you can’t see yourself taking them search out the skills such that you are able to do so.

We need to constantly see that we are making an impact and see that we have agency to shape the world in which we live. Think about ways in which you can see the impacts of your work.

In order to sustain our participation we need a community to support us. This is about having a community that can be supportive emotionally as well as being there to share and process the challenges, barriers, frustrations and joys of this work.

It is not enough to settle on one approach and then just keep doing it. We need to be reflecting on our work and constantly refining our understanding and analysis of how we effectively engage in social change.

We value your FEEDBACK!

Please let us know how we can improve this resource guide and support your continued engagement by emailing or meeting with David Osborn - dosborn@pdx.edu.

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