

## University of Virginia Center for Politics



### Talking Turkey: Social Justice and Civil Disobedience

Definitions (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>)

- **Social Justice:** a state or doctrine of egalitarianism (human equality).
- **Civil Disobedience:** refusal to obey governmental demands or commands especially as a symbolic, nonviolent, and usually collective means of forcing concessions from the government.

#### Why Civil Disobedience?

Individuals participate in civil disobedience to nonviolently show their disapproval of policies, customs, and ideas, and for the purpose of achieving social justice.

#### Familiar Examples of Civil Disobedience from History:

*The Boston Tea Party (Dec 16, 1773)* - The Sons of Liberty threw a shipment of tea into the Boston Harbor to protest the British Parliament's implementation of the Tea Act. Colonists believed that the Tea Act was unjust based on their rights as Englishmen to "no taxation without representation". This led to the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolutionary War, and the result was American independence from Britain.

- <http://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/boston-tea-party>

*Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott (Dec 1, 1955)* - Rosa Parks, an African American women, refused to give up her seat in the front of a public bus to a white passenger. Her refusal broke the Alabama law that African Americans had to sit in the back of the bus and give their seats to white passengers if the bus became full. A 381-day boycott of the Montgomery bus system took place following her arrest. This led to the 1956 Supreme Court decision banning segregation on public transportation and the 1960's Civil Rights Movement.

- <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/montgomery-bus-boycott>

*The Berlin Wall Protests: The Monday Demonstrations (Sept - Oct of 1989)* - Thousands of individuals would gathered every Monday night starting on September 4, 1989 to have a peaceful protest against the East German Communist government in Leipzig, East Germany. This led to the Alexanderplatz Demonstration on Nov. 4, 1989 and then the order to let East Berliners pass through the checkpoints to West Berlin on Nov. 9, 1989.

- <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/we-are-the-people-a-peaceful-revolution-in-leipzig-a-654137.html>

*Other familiar examples of Civil Disobedience include:* The Vietnam War Protests, the Women's Suffrage Movement, The March on Washington, Gandhi's Salt March, etc.

- Civil Disobedience continues to play a role in modern society, and is an integral part of several current social movements, such as...
  - **Black Lives Matter**
    - Protests against Police Brutality
      - <https://www.nytimes.com/topic/subject/police-brutality-misconduct-and-shootings>
    - Resist currents of racism in law enforcement
  - **LGBT Rights**
    - Marriage Equality
      - <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/marriage-equality/>
    - Transgender Bathroom Rights
      - <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/12/politics/transgender-bathrooms-obama-administration/index.html>
  - **Women's Rights**
    - Planned Parenthood
      - <http://www.pressherald.com/2017/01/29/nemitz-planned-parenthood-now-needs-protecting/>
    - Equal Pay for Equal Work
      - <http://now.org/resource/women-deserve-equal-pay-factsheet/>
        - Events: Women's March on Washington
          - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey->

[cage/wp/2017/01/30/why-the-womens-march-may-be-the-start-of-a-serious-social-movement/?utm\\_term=.7f167c4334c3](http://cage/wp/2017/01/30/why-the-womens-march-may-be-the-start-of-a-serious-social-movement/?utm_term=.7f167c4334c3)

## **Links for More Information and Exploration:**

### **Educator Resources:**

- <http://billofrightsinstitute.org/educate/educator-resources/civil-disobedience/>
- <http://www.teachingforchange.org/>
- <http://www.teachsocialjustice.org/>

## **Talking Points For You and Your Child**

- Do you believe civil disobedience is an effective means for advancing equality? Why or why not?
- What are the pros and cons of civil disobedience from the people's perspective?
- What are the pros and cons of civil disobedience from the government's perspective?
- Is it a citizen's responsibility to participate in civil disobedience? Some people believe that not actively participating in civil disobedience is akin to supporting the status quo--do you agree or disagree with this idea?
- Why is civil disobedience effective?
- Do you believe civil disobedience is the best way to achieve social justice? Is it better than violent means of resistance? Why or why not?
- What are some other situations in which civil disobedience can be effective?