

Social Responsibility and Positive Social Change Leadership

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In our ongoing discussion on social responsibility, positive social change, and their roles as integral aspects of leadership, I would first examine what it means to be a socially responsible leader. A leader is one who is at the forefront of change and directing those who follow and join in the desired change. To be socially responsible is to be ethical. It is ensuring that the change one desires to lead benefits society and the community at large (Social Responsibility and Ethics, n.d.). Leadership comes in many different forms, and when we aim to discuss positive social change, we must consider the element of being socially responsible. As way of an example, Hitler was regarded by historians as an excellent leader. Still, as history would tell us, his actions were neither moral nor ethical and thus were not socially responsible.

In review of the “awareness plus experience equals transformation” concept from 2015’s TEDxTalks archive, I have come across a socially responsible idea for positive social change. As you’ve been aware, there are many incarcerated in the United States, 2.3 million people as of 2016, to be exact (Incarceration in the United States, 2020). It has been proven that education is the single most effective method for reforming convicts and inhibiting further criminal behavior (Bender, K, 2018). Although my idea is already being implemented in part, my idea would be to contribute to, and further the efforts of, educators who are operating within the county jails and state prisons to bring higher learning and education to those individuals incarcerated. Toastmaster’s International is a nationally and internationally acclaimed public speaking and leadership training program. They charge for their literature and to be involved in Toastmaster’s Club; however, they have a division entitled “Gavel Clubs” where an individual can obtain a charter to start a club that can have up to 50 members for a significantly reduced, very nominal annual fee. My idea is to use such a secular program to get involved in the prisons and jails in my region and volunteer to charter a club, teach the convicts who join it, and incorporate college-level education within the prison setting, all while promoting socially responsible leadership.

As a socially responsible leader, ethics and the net effect of my movement must be considered. A perceived risk or possible challenge would be in the concern that a criminal would use the public speaking and leadership skills taught to be more manipulative in future criminal endeavors. Yet, that fear is contrary directly to what research indicates. In support of this, I offer the following quotation based on research:

“In 2016, the RAND Corporation produced a report that showed that individuals who participate in any type of educational program while in prison are 43 percent less likely to return to prison.... Prisons with college programs have less violence among incarcerated individuals, which creates a safer environment for both incarcerated individuals and prison staff.” (Bender, K, 2018)

Other challenges to my movement include overcoming the thinking that a criminal’s life is not worth investing in. The mindset necessary to be prepared to show care for the future success of the incarcerated requires the view that fundamentally that individual is a human being whose life is worth sustaining. Secondly, it requires the belief that upon release that individual will have paid their debt to society. For any family that has been affected by crime, the value of reforming these ‘other’ humans through structure and education is immense. Will you join in, in reducing recidivism, in promoting education, and in support of my movement?

## References

- Bender, K. (2018, November 30). Education Opportunities in Prison Are Key to Reducing Crime. Retrieved May 9, 2020, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/news/2018/03/02/447321/education-opportunities-prison-key-reducing-crime/>
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