Changing the World Without Having a Clue Teaching and Learning Guide

Created by Rudy Correa

**Lecture by:**

Greg Bennick

 He is the founder of 100 for Haiti and has been to Haiti 8 times since the earthquake (2010). Immediately after the January 12th earthquake, Greg was on the crew of the Liberty Schooner, an all-volunteer mission that sailed from Miami to the southern coast of Haiti to bring 10,000 lbs. of medical supplies and food. The Liberty was the first independent relief boat from the United States, and Greg received international press coverage of the trip on the Peter Greenberg Worldwide Radio Program. Greg is also co-founder of the World Leaders Project, a multi-year initiative to discuss issues related to the psychology of human violence, face-to-face with world leaders. An initiative that led to a meeting with the President of Ghana, as well as, correspondence with other governments. He is the co-producer of the multi-award winner documentary Flight from Death: the Quest for Immortality, a film that explores our relationship with death. And he was recently selected to be the office biographer of Pulitzer Prize-winner, Dr. Ernest Becker.

**Date of lecture:**

**Video link:** <https://www.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/757672/uiconf_id/40461542/entry_id/0_ksns4hdc/embed/auto?&flashvars%5bstreamerType%5d=auto>

**Summary of lecture:**

Greg Bennick is an activist and entrepreneur, who shares his stories and experiences on how to change the world without having a clue. His lecture is a testimony of success and a source of inspiration for young leaders and activists. Greg insists that “not having a clue” can be the starting point of a positive change in society. He suggests that change starts with passion and an idea, and the rest “you will figure it out as you go.” The lecture leaves students with a message of the social responsibility we have individually and collectively to make the society better for more people.

Additional resources and links

* One Hundred for Haiti Non-Profit. <http://www.onehundredforhaiti.org>
* Peter Greenberg Worldwide Radio Program. <https://petergreenberg.com/category/radio-show/>
* *Words as Weapons*. Greg Bennick’s Blog. <http://wordsasweapons.com>
* Greg Bennick’s Twitter Account. <https://twitter.com/gregbennick>
* TEDx Greg Bennick –*Creativity and Transformation*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnchjo8J8fg>

Which disciplines would find this most useful?

* Sociology [Introduction to Sociology and Program Planning]
* Non-Profit Leadership

Learning objectives

1. Recognize the relationship between your individual biography and the society in which you live.
2. Identify individual and structural solutions for social problems.
3. Promote individual and social responsibility.

Key concepts

* Sociological imagination
* Social problems
* Other relevant concepts: power and inequality, individualism, social structure, social responsibility, service-learning

Discussion questions

* How would you address *a lack of affordable healthy food for low-income people* (a) from an individualistic perspective and (b) using your sociological imagination? [TIP: you can substitute for any social problem].
* How can you change the world by changing yourself? In other words, what can you do differently in your everyday life that will influence change for the betterment of society?

**ACTIVITY 1 –Discovering the Sociological Imagination**

C. Wright Mills developed the concept, *sociological imagination,* to describe how our individual lives relate to social forces. The sociological imagination gives us the ability to recognize the relationship between our own biographies and the society in which we live. Mills explained the impact of society on individuals this way:

*When a society is industrialized, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman… When wars happen, an insurance salesperson becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar operator; a wife or a husband lives alone; a child grows up without a parent… Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.*

Companion video and reading

* *Sociological Imagination*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BINK6r1Wy78> This video is an introduction of C. Wright Mills concept of the sociological imagination. Understanding and being able to exercise the sociological imagination helps us understand the relationship between the individual and society. Mills focuses on the distinction of personal troubles and public issues. For example, exercising is not just a personal behavior but is vastly influenced by society. The example of obesity in the United States is used to help explain this concept.
* C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 1959), 1-8 (Ch. 1, “The Promise”). <http://spark-public.s3.amazonaws.com/soc101/readings/Mills.ThePromise.pdf>

Instructions

In this exercise, you will research and explain to a peer how your life would have been different if you had been born and living in a developing country.

Recall what C. Wright Mills said about how the society in which we live influences our lives. Imagine you were born and living in a developing country, and reflect on how your experiences would be different.

The following website includes a list and some data on the least developed countries, according to the United Nations: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/ldcs-at-a-glance.html>

1. Look up information on your demographic group (people of your same age, gender, ethnicity, race, religious affiliation, etc.). Describe how, if you lived in a developing country, your life would be different in terms of (a) access to foods and clean water, (b) access to health care services, (c) educational opportunities, and (d) minimum wage and average cost of living. [TIP: you can change any of the categories to address a specific social problem or social reality].
2. Share your answers to question 1 with a classmate/team/or class. [TIP: You can also ask your students to write down a list of their findings and a short reflection of how their experience might be different if they were born and lived in a developing country].

**ACTIVITY 2 –Addressing inequalities and social problems**

*We look at how power and inequality affect every facet of social life. We try to understand how power is exercised, by whom, under what conditions, using what kinds of resources. We look at how much inequality exists, of what kinds, how this inequality is perpetuated, and the consequences it has for people’s lives*.

(Michael Schwalbe; for more inspiration and resources reference *The Sociologically Examined Life*).

Companion video and resources

* *Dear young people, Don’t Vote*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0e9guhV35o>

 This country belongs to whoever shows up. And do you know who shows up for every election? Old people. But only 46% of people18-34 years old voted in the last election. So the elderly have a disproportionate influence on our politics and our country. And a lot of them would like to keep it that way.

* You can find data on various social problems from <http://www.pewresearch.org/>

Instructions

**IMPORTANT!** While individuals can have a significant impact on society, we will not change the world through individual actions. Think about how social problems are the result of complex processes (for example laws and policies, historical and social-economic context, inequalities and privileges, access to services and resources, vulnerability to natural disasters, etc.)

1. Brainstorm and list individual and structural solutions for the following social problems. [TIP: you can substitute any social problems].

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Social problem** | **Individual solutions** | **Structural solutions** |
| Poverty  |  |  |
| Food security and hunger  |  |  |
| Climate change  |  |  |
| Environmental racism  |  |  |
| Refugee and asylum-seekers crises |  |  |
| Sexual violence  |  |  |
| Mass shootings |  |  |

1. Watch the video and continue the conversation on individual and structural solutions for social problems. [TIP: introduce and discuss how voting is an individual responsibility that has structural consequences].