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A2b Exemplar 2

Am I an activist?

An activist can be defined as an individual who campaigns and champions for social change (Lin 2018). Jordan (2002, p. 53), states that 'activism is least visible when actions are being prepared and most visible when action is taken'. Such actions can be undertaken in many forms such as lobbying, boycotting, protests, petitioning etc, in efforts to promote, interfere or impede on social or political issues with the hopes to make social changes (Lin 2018). Through undertaking these actions Jordan (2002, p.53), further explains that these are the 'moments when activists try to make themselves and their ethics unavoidable'.

Aboriginal culture is one of the oldest surviving cultures that still exists within Australia to this day. However, the devastating effects of colonisation is still being experienced in todays 'post-colonial' era by First Nation people and is evident through the statistical over-representation of Indigenous people in custody, morbidity, mortality and negative outcomes in the social determinates of health and well-being (Carlson & Frazer 2018).

Activism for First Nation self-determination is underpinned by theories of human rights and social justice (Kenny & Connors 2017). This is also driven by an anti-oppressive framework in which we as Aboriginal people strive to address issues of significance via strong engagement in activism, advocacy and education to produce change (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2014). Australian post colonialism, still dictates and directs the social norms within society. System theory is one way to understand how oppression and dehumanisation of Aboriginal people still exists, because without any autonomy in governance all power and control over legislation and policy is directed and implemented by euro-centric ideals (O'Hara & Weber 2006). Utilising this theory in addition to critical race theories, allows us to recognise the relationship between systems and institutions and how western society still is heavily centred in whiteness while First Nation people are on the margin.

As an Indigenous woman, I have experienced the oppression that my mob have faced, in particular my grandfather, who is an Elder in the Ngarrindjeri tribe in South Australia. For twenty years, he fought the Federal government for Native Title for Ngarrindjeri land and waters, which was successfully settled in 2017 (Strathearn 2017). Watching his struggles and success, encouraged me to advocate for Indigenous rights in the hopes to educate and create awareness of the systemic oppression my people continue to face.

Freire (2002), argues that in order for humanisation and liberation to occur, only the oppressed can liberate themselves and in doing so, they also free the oppressors. Indigenous people are the expert of their own lives and therefore, understand the oppressions that they encounter and know what is best for them. This is evident in the way Indigenous people create their own campaigns and protests such as deaths in custody, NAIDOC Week, keeping kids with community not in care and Survival day protests (Korff 2019).

There are numerous ways in which I have participated in working towards social justice and social change. January 26, also known as 'Australia Day', marks the day the first fleet arrived on Sydney Cove, which is seen by Indigenous as 'survival or invasion day' (Korff 2019). I have participated in protests for Survival day held at Hyde Park, Sydney, to help educate non-Indigenous people that January 26, is a day of mourning

for Indigenous people, because it commemorates the devastation and loss our ancestors suffered (Korff 2019).

Social media such as Facebook and twitter etc have created platforms for Indigenous people to resist forms of oppression (Carlson & Frazer 2018). McMillan et al. (cited in Carlson & Frazer 2018, p.44), explains that 'Indigenous online activism has worked to challenge the dominant discourses that sustain colonial power relations, to organise action against government policy and to form new political collectives'. As a form of activism, I have also been proactive in social media, by engaging with First Nation groups and posting content that creates awareness to our struggle of autonomy and self-determination, particularly in areas of land rights, which is so important to the well-being of First Nation people.

Keeping culture alive is important to our people and my engagement in land rights campaigns, and deconstructing western media ideations of reconciliation for example the 'Uluru statement of the heart' campaign which was constructed without the consultation of other First Nation mob representation, links to educating non-indigenous allies to understand our plight (Korff 2018). Through engaging in protests, rallies, advocating, challenging, educating and promoting awareness through social media, about the issues surrounding Indigenous people and pushing for social justice and change, I believe I am an activist.



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