Fertile Question: How can we teach the world about justice?

Core Content Area 3: Be the change

TOPIC 3.3: Speak out and use my voice.

Depthing Understanding: People Power

In this lesson students will explore the role of government and the power of the people as agents of change.

Teachers: Before You Start!

1. Read the Teacher Background on Catholic Social Teaching about government.
2. Advice: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are advised that resources used in this lesson contain images and voices of people who have died.

For students to explore the role of government and the power of people as agents of change select from the following activities:

1. Share understandings about the role and duties of a democratic government.
   a. Form learning teams of five and read the allocated statement about the role and duties of a democratic government from Useful Resources.
      i. Read and discuss the allocated statement in your team and synthesise its meaning. Reword the statement in simple language and provide a contemporary example of its application.
      ii. Pass the statement synthesis and example on to the next group. Read the new statement and add another contemporary example of its application. Continue this process until all five statements have been engaged with.
      iii. Display the five statements in the classroom. Use post it notes to record scripture references from Catholic Social teachings and scripture references and Human Rights articles that underpin the intention and application of the statements.

2. Explore a case study of the process of democracy in Australia to bring about change.
   a. Access the website associated with the Eddie Mabo case against Terra Nullius.
      i. View the short clip that explain the story of how people power in the Torres Strait Islands used a democratic legal system to create major change for justice.
      ii. View the short clip entitled The Political Response. Analyse how fear and the misrepresentation of statistics were used as a weapon against change in the Mabo case? How is fear being used today to prevent social change in Australia? Discuss
      iii. Listen to the Paul Kelly song about the Mabo case, From little things big things grow. Examine the lyrics in Useful Resources and retell the significant people and events of Eddie Mabo’s struggle for democratic justice for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
      iv. Use the elements of people power, democracy, greed, and culture represented in the song lyrics to create an artwork or use Toon Doo to create a visual representation of the power of this song (and case study) [http://www.toondoo.com/]

3. Explore a case study about a fight for democracy in a non-democratic country.
   a. Immerse yourself in the case study of Aung San Suu Kyi
      i. View the trailer of the Voice of Hope to gain an insight into the difficulties for Aung San Suu Kyi and her loyal followers who are fighting for justice in an undemocratic state.
      ii. How has activism assisted Aung San Suu Kyi to gain political freedom? Discuss the role of people power in this case.
      iii. Consider signing the petition to free political prisoners in Burma
Statement One

Society as a whole, acting through public and private institutions, has the moral responsibility to enhance human dignity and protect human rights. In addition to the clear responsibility of private institutions, government has an essential responsibility in this area. This does not mean that government has the primary role, but it does have a positive moral responsibility in safeguarding human rights and ensuring that the minimum conditions of human dignity are met for all. In a democracy, government is a means by which we can act together to protect what is important to us and to promote our common values.

Economic Justice for All, #18

Statement Two

It is clearly laid down that the paramount task assigned to government officials is that of recognizing, respecting, reconciling, protecting and promoting the rights and duties of citizens.

Peace on Earth, #77

Statement Three


1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Statement Four

If you asked an ordinary Burmese why they want democracy, the answer will probably be: ‘I want to have the basic right to try to make a decent living for myself without being frightened all the time’.

Aung San Suu Kyi in an interview by John Pilger for The New Internationalist (June 1996)

Statement Five

Democracies allow more than one political view to be expressed at an open discussion. Criticism and open discussion are essential in a democratic system. They help prevent abuse of power by individuals or groups.

Gandhi said: Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress.
Gather round people I'll tell you a story
An eight year long story of power and pride
British Lord Vestey and Vincent Lingiari
Were opposite men on opposite sides

Vestey was fat with money and muscle
Beef was his business, broad was his door
Vincent was lean and spoke very little
He had no bank balance, hard dirt was his floor

From little things big things grow
From little things big things grow

Gurindji were working for nothing but rations
Where once they had gathered the wealth of the land
Daily the pressure got tighter and tighter
Gurindju decided they must make a stand

They picked up their swags and started off walking
At Wattie Creek they sat themselves down
Now it don't sound like much but it sure got tongues talking
Back at the homestead and then in the town

From little things big things grow
From little things big things grow

Vestey man said I'll double your wages
Seven quid a week you'll have in your hand
Vincent said uhh uhh we're not talking about wages
We're sitting right here till we get our land
Vestey man roared and Vestey man thundered
You don't stand the chance of a cinder in snow
Vince said if we fall others are rising

From little things big things grow
From little things big things grow

Then Vincent Lingiari boarded an aeroplane
Landed in Sydney, big city of lights
And daily he went round softly speaking his story
To all kinds of men from all walks of life
And Vincent sat down with big politicians
This affair they told him is a matter of state
Let us sort it out, your people are hungry
Vincent said no thanks, we know how to wait

From little things big things grow
From little things big things grow

Then Vincent Lingiari returned in an aeroplane
Back to his country once more to sit down
And he told his people let the stars keep on turning
We have friends in the south, in the cities and towns

Eight years went by, eight long years of waiting
Till one day a tall stranger appeared in the land
And he came with lawyers and he came with great ceremony
And through Vincent's fingers poured a handful of sand

From little things big things grow
From little things big things grow

That was the story of Vincent Lingiari
But this is the story of something much more
How power and privilege cannot move a people
Who know where they stand and stand in the law

From little things big things grow
From little things big things grow
From little things big things grow
From little things big things grow
From little things big things grow

From Little Things Big Things Grow- Paul Kelly