Throughout the course of the semester, I have learned a great deal about myself and about my interests. I was asked to create an activist profile at the beginning of the semester, and that was one of the first times that I had ever deeply considered what my interests are. I hadn’t participated in many activist events, but I also had no idea what it really meant to be an activist. I paid attention to some social issues and movements but never actually participated in them. Some social issues of my interest that I identified in my activist profile include women’s rights, animal rights, and racial equality such as Black Lives Matter. When I identified these as being issues that I’m interested in, I was only thinking of them on a surface level. Although I cared about them, I didn’t feel passionate about them. However, this course, *Social Change in the 21st Century*, did change that. This course helped me develop an understanding of the issues I care about, what my role is in social change, and how I can contribute to a better world.

I became deeply interested and involved in specific issues that I would have never thought I’d find an interest for. I began to care about environmental waste, specifically plastic waste, unethical puppy breeding, puppy mills, female athletes, and sexual assault. I became so interested in these because they were the focus of my classmates’ campaigns. I was spending a significant amount of time around these campaigns, so naturally, I began to deeply care about and support them. The issue that I became most passionate about was my group’s campaign. My group focused on the excessive waste in the environment, and we chose to work towards reducing plastic waste on our campus. Before this campaign, I didn’t recognize how negative the use of plastic is on our environment. I knew that plastic wasn’t necessarily good, but I did not know exactly how awful and dangerous it is. I think the reason I began to care so much is because of the background research that I was required to do for this campaign. To be completely honest, I started off by viewing my campaign as an assignment rather than a project/passion. However, immediately after I finished my annotated bibliography that contained sobering information about plastic in the environment, I became more passionate than I anticipated.

My role in creating social change is still unclear to me because I am fairly new to the whole activism thing, but I do have an idea on what I can do. I learned that education and facts are essential in getting people to care about an issue. For instance, as I stated earlier, education is what made me begin to become passionate about the excessive use of plastic. Another example of this is my past experience with documentaries. I watched several documentaries on the treatment of animals for profit, specifically about the agriculture industry. After my gained knowledge, I decided to go vegan because I couldn’t “unlearn” what I heard in the documentaries. I think education is a great way to work towards social change because most people are simply oblivious to the issues. This is where I come in. I will educate people on the issues that I care about it in hopes it will get them to care too. Additionally, I will participate in protest events that I care about and work on recruiting other people to participate as well. I plan to continue growing as an activist. Now that I have my foot in the water (thank you to this course!), there is no reason for me to stop.

I feel like I can contribute to a better world by simply practicing what I preach. If I constantly work towards getting other people to gain awareness about issues that I am passionate about, the awareness will grow exponentially. This is how change happens. People need to become aware before they begin changing or advocating for change. I think everyone can contribute to creating a better world by starting with awareness.

This class was tough for me because it was one of my first experiences with activism. However, I am very thankful I took this class because I’ve always thought about being an activist but have never had the bravery. I do view myself as an activist now, and I am equipped with a lot of relevant information that will allow me to continue my activism past this semester. I remain interested in the same issues that I was interested in before this semester, but I have also added to my list. Now, my interest goes beyond just “caring.” My interest has moved to “doing,” and that is what is most important and most rewarding.