

Southfield Public Library

The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-first Century by Grace Lee Boggs

Discussion questions used at SPL November 4& 10, 2015

1. Was this book what you expected? If not, how was it different?
2. Grace Lee Boggs made social activism her life's work. Her solutions sound simple; but, are they realistic for us to carry out when we have our "lives to lead?" Is this plan realistic when our lives are already so complicated? Is she too optimistic?
3. Boggs defines a revolution as the people taking back their power(pg 53). A rebellion shakes up the system, but the rebels see themselves as victims and do not think they need to take a proactive role in their liberation (pg 67). Is this a fair assessment?
4. This book was originally published not long after the inauguration of President Obama. Do you agree with Boggs that the election of President Obama signals the end of a post-capitalistic society? Are the current democratic candidates and their platforms a confirmation of it? Or are the current Republican nominees proof that Boggs is wrong?
5. Boggs believes that the only way to change our society is by turning away from corporate conveniences and participating in local businesses. Do you think this community model is something we as a society can eventually convert to, or is convenience and consumerism too engrained in our culture?
6. Urban farming is mentioned several times as a way to make our cities more community based instead of industry-based. Do you think urban farming will help transform our communities as Boggs suggests?
7. Boggs says that young people are "voting with their feet" by leaving the school system. Do you think young people are dropping out of school because of a lack of creativity in forming the curriculum, as Boggs suggests, or do you think there are other reasons? Can we trust students to direct their own learning?
8. We read a lot about the revolutionary philosophies of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X. In order for the next revolution to happen, do we need our actions to reflect MLK, Malcolm X, or a combination of the two?
9. Since Boggs lived in Detroit for many years, she witnessed its rise, fall, and the beginning of its rejuvenation. Do you think she gives a fair representation of Detroit? Is it accurate or too optimistic?
10. Do you think the next American Revolution will work out in our favor? Historically, revolutions don't necessarily create improvement. The Russian revolution ended in dictatorship.
11. Do you think our society requires the radical changes Boggs calls for? Would we be able function within the global economy after this revolution?
12. What does it mean to be a human in the 21st century?
13. There are many issues covered such as the environment, politics, education, and racism. Boggs talks a lot about how we can change the way we approach these problems in order to bring about

the next revolution. Do you think she leaves us with enough information to go out and begin our own revolution?

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General discussion questions

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author’s writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author’s use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?