

Dissent and altruism
are a matter of
personal conviction,
but situational
factors...



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Altruism and Dissent Altruism is an unselfish concern for the welfare of others and it fulfills the needs of both: society and individuals. Though personal conviction determines altruistic behavior, but social and environmental factors act as the most decisive factors. Altruistic-love or compassionate-love helps nurture the feelings of belonging to society and fellow beings, regardless of class, color and creed. “ Social factors and environment can create undue pressures for self protection or can obstruct altruistic behaviors through resource restrictions.” (Post, 74) The virtue of altruism leads a man to think differently and to shift his/her focus from self-interest to mutual-interest to communal-interest; while dissent is vital in making neutral decisions, which might be contrary to conformity. However, conformity gives us a basis to make decisions, yet it may lead to bad decisions if information is withheld to challenge the consensus. Dissent is a sentiment or a philosophy of non-agreement or opposition to a prevailing idea. It is important for a healthy society not only to protect the interests of individuals but also to encourage dissent. This beats dogmas or pragmatism and brings a fresh change to the overall environment. It is easier for people to abide by prevailing customs and phenomena; even if they are out-dated or cliched and regressive for society. However, it is in the power of a few individuals to dissent from the existing customs and bring about a positive social change in society. The changing dynamics in workplace and private and public circles constantly raise such issues that need to be handled with altruism and dissent- though peer pressure and dogmas dictate our thinking and thus our actions. Following are a few situations that have called for altruism and dissent and the way people responded to it. 1. Choosing a Black Leader or a Woman as President In recent times, women political leaders, <https://assignbuster.com/dissent-altruism-are-a-matter-of-personal-conviction-but-situational-factors-are-involved-also-analyze-five-5-situational/>

activists and individuals belonging to ethnic minorities have entered the political scene, which is a manifestation of public dissent in favor of social justice. People are now more focused on important social and economic factors rather than personal opinions or ethnic discrimination. President Obama was elected as the first Black president in the history of USA, as a consequence of public dissent that took decades to bring out such a revolution. He was not only voted by the Blacks but the White citizens of USA also favored him over other White contestants.

2. Spreading Awareness for AIDS The victims of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases were alienated from the mainstream public, private and workplace environments in the past. However, philanthropist and altruistic individuals worked for spreading awareness, treatment and rehabilitation for the victims of AIDS all over the world. What started as a small group effort for spreading awareness of AIDS later became a global movement supported by millions of people. This is a triumphant success of altruism and dissent in the history of mankind.

3. Working for the Cause of Gays and Lesbians Homosexuals had been fighting alone for their rights but with the passage of time, a number of human rights activists and feminists are also supporting gays' and lesbians' rights, that shows a transformation in the general opinion of the public. This has been made possible with dissent initiated by people who believed that socially alienated groups also had the right to exercise their will.

4. Working for Disaster-Hit Areas, Regardless of their Ethnicity or Nationality Whenever some part of the world is hit by disaster, other nations are quick to send aid. In the face of the current economic crisis, displaying such altruistic behavior promotes goodwill among nations and promises a happy future for everyone.

5. Working for the Welfare of Criminals or Prostitutes It takes a lot to break <https://assignbuster.com/dissent-altruism-are-a-matter-of-personal-conviction-but-situational-factors-are-involved-also-analyze-five-5-situational/>

the norms of society and work for the welfare of social outcasts like criminals or prostitutes. Individuals and social workers that work for the betterment of outcasts face numerous challenges but they are motivated by altruism and are determined to bring a change in society with dissent. A conscientious person will exhibit the qualities of altruism and dissent where necessary. As a responsible citizen he/she is expected to show chivalry towards his fellow beings and also to raise his voice for a better world. Personal conviction deeply affects these two traits. Since these actions involve risk and no reward; therefore, it takes a lot to 'rock the boat' and choose conscience over conformity. References Post, S. G. & Underwood, L. G. (2002) Altruism and Altruistic Love: Science, Philosophy, and Religion in Dialogue. NC: Oxford University Press.