



# Selected Papers of William L. White

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## Foreword

**William L. White**

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Social movements, having left indelible imprints upon American and world history, are now rippling across the globe in ways that are profoundly reshaping our collective future. The successes and failures of organized efforts at social change leave many questions in their wake. How do regular citizens come to be positive agents of change? What distinguishes successful social movements from those that leave no lasting contribution? What are the core ideas and strategies shared by effective social change efforts? These are the questions central to Leonard Jason's engaging new book, *Principles of Social Change*.

In the pages that follow, you the reader will be thrust into a series of engaging stories about how ordinary people played extraordinary roles in changing neighborhoods, organizations, communities, countries, and the world. The book you are entering is in part a biography of social change, filled with such figures as Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Jane Adams, Florence Nightingale, Mother Teresa, and Rachel Carson, to name a few. It is also the story of Leonard Jason's own career as a successful change agent. These

historical and personal accounts alone are worthy of investing time in these pages, but there are two other qualities of this book that distinguish it.

First, Leonard Jason defines the DNA of successful movements aimed at everything from freeing neighborhoods of dog droppings to launching major public health and human rights campaigns. *Principles of Social Change* is in this sense a how-to manual for successful social action. The discussion of action steps alone will draw appreciative readers interested or involved in a wide spectrum of social causes. The discussion of the distinction between quick cosmetic change and the more complex and time-enduring processes of substantive change that elevate the quality of personal and community life is particularly valuable, as are Jason's five principles of social change that make up the heart of this book. The outline of successful change strategies and tactics also contains explorations of two rarely addressed issues: 1) the potential for harm in the name of help in the execution of social change efforts, and 2) the need to anticipate and personally and

organizationally manage the backlash that comes on the heels of social movements.

Second, *Principles of Social Change* ends with a reflective discussion about the deeper sources and solutions to the problems addressed by social movements. This final discussion is an exercise in connecting the small dots to portray a larger and previously unseen picture. Many readers will find this final essay both personally meaningful and a bit breathtaking. Leonard Jason's perception of patterns across social movements that reveal what is now slipping away or has been forever or long missing within our

community life is itself a valuable contribution, as is his vision of how each of us can, as Gandhi suggests, become the change we wish to see in the world.

I have spent more than four decades studying and participating in a spectrum of social and public health reform movements. It would have been a godsend to have had this book as a guide from the beginning. I hope it will be of such value to you.

William L. White

Author, *Let's Go Make Some History: Chronicles of the New Addiction Recovery Advocacy Movement*