

To: Spring 2020 Restorative Justice Group #38

Title: *This I Believe*

This I Believe...what a powerful statement! To strip back all of the noise and descriptions surrounding conversations around a topic and stand up for an idea...an ideal that reflects something so clear in your mind that it requires few words. *I believe...I believe...* Think for a moment...*What is a belief that is so clear to you that you would not cross a line to violate?*

A couple of weeks ago, Ms. Wallace wrote about her belief that ***What You Do Matters***. Through her eloquent and moving story, we came to understand what this belief means to her...and gives all of us the opportunity to put that belief in front of us and reflect on how that fits into our own lives. **Beliefs shape our actions.** *What is a belief that is so clear to you that you are willing to publicly affirm it?*

A little background on *This I Believe*...

From 1951 to 1955, Edward R. Murrow hosted *This I Believe*, a daily radio program that reached 39 million listeners. On this broadcast, Americans---some well-known and others not---read five-minute essays about their personal philosophy of life. They shared insights about individual values that shaped their daily actions. The first volume of ***This I Believe*** essays, published in 1952 sold 300,000 copies---more than any other book that year except the bible. Fifty years later, National Public Radio (NPR) began inviting people of all ages to share their beliefs.

So, now it's your turn...

In this unique space in our lives, when we have so much more time to reflect on who we are, think about a belief that you hold strongly and put that on paper. Publicly affirm what is important to you. Below are some suggestions for writing your own *This I Believe* essay. We've also included another *This I Believe* example from a former principal in Green Bay.

Tips for Writing Your *This I Believe* Essay

- * **Tell a story:** Be specific. Take your belief and ground it in the events of your life. Consider moments when the belief was formed or tested or changed. Tell the things that you know that perhaps, no one else does. Your story does not need to be heartwarming or gut-wrenching---it can even be funny, but it should be *real*. Make sure your story ties to the shaping of your beliefs.
- * **Be brief:** Your statement should be between 350 and 500 words.
- * **Name your belief:** You should be able to name your belief in a sentence or two.
- * **Be positive:** Write about what you do believe, not what you don't believe. Make the essay about you. Speak in the first person...*I believe*....
- * **Be personal:** Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. Simplify it until you find the right words and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

Adapted from www.thisibelieve.org

~Ms. Caro-Bruce, RJ volunteer

This I Believe...

A few years before my father died at the age of 78, he called me one evening just to bat the breeze, as he would occasionally do. Although it wasn't the main point of the conversation, he spoke about how he was enjoying his new job at Wal-Mart where he worked a few nights a week assembling bikes, wagons, garden equipment and whatever else needed constructing before being placed out for sale. He talked about what a good time he and the other older guys he worked with had as they shared wrenches and screwdrivers while at the same time, sharing stories about grandchildren, fishing and the deplorable state of politics.

I remember saying how it was good that he had something like this to keep busy, and he responded with, "Well, you know Ed, I have to work." Now, my father had a good pension as a retired sheet metal worker, and he collected social security of course. His wife also had a good retirement income, so he didn't "Have to" work to make ends meet. He had to work because he believed in work.

I believe in work too.

Both of my grandfathers, one a carpenter, the other a steamfitter, died relatively young considering today's male life expectancy figures. While some in our family attributed their "earlier than they should have been" departures to lifetimes of hard backbreaking work, no one on either side of the family ever disputed the value, virtue and necessity of a rock-solid work ethic.

It hasn't been so long ago, certainly within the memory of aging baby-boomers like me, that people, particularly men, were identified by the work they did. "This is Charlie, the carpenter. Do you know my neighbor Roger? He's a painter at the Rambler plant. Which Gillespies do you mean? The farmers or the ones who work at The Brass?" High school transcripts, as recently as a generation ago listed the father's occupation next to home address and above graduation date.

Work defined us as much as neighborhood, church affiliation and family status did.

Somewhere that changed. I don't know exactly when and I suppose there are a hundred reasons why, but there has been a definite shift from a prevailing "Midwestern work ethic" of putting forth your best effort as a standard to one that looks at work as a necessary evil and doing just enough to get by as a reasonable accomplishment.

I believe in work. Social scientists tell us that a sure way to break a culture is to take meaningful work away from men. Have we somehow, in devaluing work, broken something important in and to our culture?

I believe in work, and I believe in work with a purpose, no matter what the occupation. In an era where "me-time" as the highest personal priority is considered appropriate and reasonable, there are still many who believe, to paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, *that our real and potential labors belong to the good of the community and that no matter what the work is we are about, it is a privilege to do it because it will make our community and the lives of our neighbors better than they might otherwise be.*

Do you work to live or do you live to work? Does it make any difference? I believe it does. It makes all the difference in how you approach the task, the job, the profession.... the vocation.

With permission from Mr. Dorff, Former Principal, Green Bay East High School