

What IF...Scenarios

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1. A Sale on Genes

At first, they thought Gloria was a medical miracle. In the course of a new treatment protocol, she was effectively cured of HIV. Because she was the only patient in the research trial who was successfully treated, the researchers examined her genetic information for possible clues. What they discovered in her personal genetics held great promise as a key for developing a genetic therapy that could have wide applicability for HIV treatment. The researchers filed patents on their discovery. The patents had the potential for great economic value. Everyone involved in the research program was likely to become very rich—with the exception of Gloria. She wasn't listed as one of the collaborators, even though it was her genetic code that enabled this breakthrough.

When a relative of Gloria's read about the possible development of a potential new genetic therapy for HIV, she realized that Gloria was the patient at the heart of the discovery. This relative knew the story of Henrietta Lacks, an African American woman whose cervical cells had been used for generations with numerous medical advancements, all without permission or compensation.

With the support of her family, Gloria gained legal representation to argue that she should benefit in any earnings from the patents. Gloria's legal claim was that she was critical to the discovery: without her unique genetic makeup, there would be no medical breakthrough. A lawsuit was filed and a restraining order was issued on any further development or use of the technology until the legal issues were resolved.

Discussion Questions

1. What property (or other) rights do you think individuals should have over their personal bodily material, such as genes, cells, or tissues?
2. Who else might have rights that are relevant to such medical advances?
3. What trade-offs and complications should we consider when making decisions about individual rights and socially-useful developments?
4. What other values, interests, or purposes, whether individual or social, are important to consider when thinking about this case?

2. Athletes Against Guns

A major group of elite athletes across several different sports has decided to push for meaningful gun reform legislation. Working with a group of gun control activists, they drafted a policy plan for federal legislation that included a ban on assault rifles, universal background checks, closing the gun show loophole, and other gun safety measures favored by a majority of Americans. The athletes even offered memorabilia in exchange for people turning in guns. Their plan was drafted into legislation for Congress to consider. The kicker? The athletes announced a shutdown date for sports if the legislation was not passed.

Discussion Questions

1. What risks might such activism pose for our democracy? For example, what if similar athlete activism arose for other issues, including ones where popular opinion was less clear or ran against the aims of the athletes?
2. Should athletes “stay in their lane?” That is, what role should athletes or other unelected officials play in social change? What about other kinds of celebrities? Philanthropies? Groups of individuals without expertise or training on the contested topic?

3. A Pretty Town for Pretty People?

The flood was the crisis that became an opportunity for the city leaders of Greenbrook. The riverfront district had long been in shambles. The flood had wrecked many properties beyond repair. City leaders seized the opportunity to redesign the waterfront for flooding resilience while upgrading the appearance of the city.

The Greenbrook Planning Department worked with environmental engineers to redesign the riverfront for flood resilience. They also set new building codes and design standards to redevelop the district in a more aesthetically consistent way. Together with developers and new businesses, the city formed a Riverfront Business Improvement District as a public-private venture to support the development and maintenance of the area.

The riverfront redevelopment ended up being hugely popular. The project became a showcase for how a city could transform its appearance. There was growing impetus to change other neighborhoods in the city and upgrade the overall appearance of the city.

Greenbrook also began to become something of an entrepreneurial hub. Entrepreneurs were especially attracted to the vibrant new look and feel of the town. The housing values in the city greatly increased, especially in downtown areas near the river.

One other change in Greenbrook was its population diversity. Many lower- and middle-class families could no longer afford to live in town. People started to say that Greenbrook was becoming a “pretty town with pretty people,” but they didn’t all mean the same thing when they said it.

Discussion Questions

1. How important are aesthetic goals or standards for community design, and how could, or should, communities establish and maintain them?
2. What tradeoffs might we face with aesthetics of a town or city and its economic, cultural, and social base—and how might we manage these tradeoffs?
3. What does “pretty town with pretty people” mean to you? How should we decide these aesthetic principles?

4. Community Commons

A decade ago, Mapleville was a small town with a big division. It was a college town, with the typical “town-gown” tensions. Those tensions eased with a seemingly small development: The Commons—a small park developed out of largely vacant lots.

Over the last ten years, The Commons was living up to its promise of pulling people together. It had green space and benches. There was a small amphitheater for musical acts, which became a popular draw for “Fridays at Five” concerts. It had a skateboard park, basketball courts, and playgrounds. There were pickup games with college students and local residents. Older residents enjoyed the paths and gardens. There was an economic impact as well. Throughout the warmer months of the year, there was a farmer’s market every Saturday. Food trucks showed up, serving dishes from around the world.

But some residents, including members of the Town Council, worried that The Commons had succeeded too well. Some residents were nervous about their kids. What might their kids be exposed to with so many college students around? Shouldn’t there be additional policing, to assure there was no alcohol or illicit substances in The Commons? Others, including several council members, argued that college students’ use of The Commons was blocking town residents from fully enjoying the space. Some complained that vending in the park was drawing business away from other merchants. Momentum was building for town action to restrict access to the park and to establish greater controls over use of the space.

Discussion Questions

1. What roles do you think shared public spaces could, or should, play in communities?
2. What different sorts of considerations should go into designing and managing community spaces for social interactions?
3. What are the different trade-offs that might come from decisions about public spaces like The Commons—and how would you manage those trade-offs?

5. Freedom Stops at the Front Porch

It was a typical college town. Much of off-campus housing was concentrated in an area affectionately known as the “Gutter.” There were a number of older homes that had been converted into multiple occupancy student houses. The houses were old and run down, but this just seemed to add to their charm.

A favorite pastime of students was to sit on their front porch and hang out with friends. Every front porch was filled with old couches and easy chairs. On warm nights, the entire area would be thronged with students.

That changed one Thursday night when the University's football team won a nationally televised game against a national powerhouse. Students poured out of the stadium into the Gutter. Fires were set in the middle of the street. Much of the fuel for the fires were the old couches and chairs. Fires grew to dangerous levels and buildings were threatened.

While no buildings were ultimately damaged, the city council was outraged. In their desire to limit future situations like this one, they banned any furniture from being on porches or external to any residences.

Students were outraged. They claimed that the ban was an infringement on their rights. Lawsuits were threatened, but with the colder weather of late fall, the outrage never went beyond just complaints in the student newspaper.

Discussion Questions

1. What issues and concerns do you think come into play with this situation?
2. How would you resolve these issues—and how might your perspective change if we were talking about flags rather than couches, or about property owners and not renters?
3. How might you compare the couch restrictions to other restrictions individuals might face, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic?

6. Protecting our Jobs—or Investing in our Future?

Aziz was a brilliant computer scientist. Born and raised in Saudi Arabia, he came to the United States for his college education. He quickly assimilated himself, embracing what he experienced of American culture.

After successfully completing his college degree, Aziz hoped to work in the US. He was recruited by a promising young tech firm and was able to get a one-year temporary visa. Aziz quickly proved his value to the firm. They wanted to sponsor him for a green card, allowing him to work in the U.S. indefinitely and even have a pathway for citizenship. This would not be easy, given recent policy decisions to restrict employment opportunities for foreign workers in the name of boosting employment for current U.S. citizens.

In the meantime, Aziz was being heavily recruited by a firm in a small Pacific Rim country that wanted to establish itself as a power in digital technologies. Aziz wanted to stay in the U.S., but the money he was being offered to leave was quite appealing. If he migrated, he would face a clear pathway for legal work status and even citizenship in a new country.

In supporting Aziz's application to continue working in the U.S., his current firm argued that his departure would create a huge technical gap for them. If he remained here, they emphasized that the U.S. would continue to reap the benefits of his U.S. education. If he was forced to leave, another country would be the beneficiary. As Aziz awaited the government decision, he struggled with what would be the best choice for his own future.

Discussion Questions

1. What criteria do you think should be used in making decisions about foreign workers and students in the U.S.?
2. What values, interests, and purposes could, or should, guide policy decisions about foreign migration into, and out of, the country?
3. If you were in Aziz's position, how would you weigh your choices? What would you do?

7. Whitewater Rafting

Whitewater rafting has emerged as a popular outdoor recreation. It has also become a significant tourist attraction in rural areas that have been unsuccessful in attracting more conventional forms of economic development. Whitewater rafting has spawned an entrepreneurial economy, as small groups of local residents have set up their own rafting and river guide companies as well as other businesses that cater to the needs of tourists. However, these companies are not regulated. The tour guides have varied levels of expertise and the equipment is not regulated. The other businesses have mixed levels of success as many are not familiar with the needs or expectations of tourists.

As the whitewater rafting industry grew, so did the interests of larger outdoor sports and tourism companies. When these companies tried to buy out the local entrepreneurs, they often met resistance. Many outdoor sports enthusiasts favored local enterprises and assumed all safety measures were in place and met best practice standards. They tended to rely on public reviews when selecting a rafting company or related business. Large, corporate companies were finding it hard to break into the local market.

To put pressure on the small local rafting companies, the large corporations started lobbying state legislatures to enact regulations regarding the safety and environmental impact of the industry. While the regulations seemed to be well intentioned, they would be difficult for small local companies to meet—unless those companies became part of a bigger company.

In discussions of the proposed regulations, supporters highlighted how they would improve public safety. Opponents pointed out the regulations would likely shut down local entrepreneurial economies. Most small rafting companies would not survive on their own. If they went out of business or were acquired by larger corporations, what would be the broader impacts on local communities and local economies?

Discussion Questions

1. How might, or should, policymakers balance diverse stakeholder interests and inputs when crafting regulations? What concerns about fairness might guide the policymaking process?

2. How might policymakers balance competing policy goals, like weighing economic development with other societal concerns like public safety? How do you think these policy goals should be balanced?
3. What alternative policy actions could be taken to address issues of unintended negative consequences from regulations?

8. Socially Conscious but Environmentally Hazardous?

Hudson Valley Poultry was a regional producer of chicken and egg products. For years Hudson Valley struggled in its competition with the factory farms that had become the dominant players in the poultry industry. The thing that saved Hudson Valley was converting to a free-range environment for its poultry. Socially-conscious consumers were willing to pay a premium price for Hudson Valley's products.

But Hudson Valley's success also threatened its future. Having free-range chickens meant that Hudson Valley could not contain their fecal matter. Local rivers and waterways, which had been quite popular for fishing, were being contaminated from the fecal matter run-off. The waste was also contaminating public water supplies.

Local water authorities and fishing groups asked the state environmental agency to shut down operations at Hudson Valley until the waste situation was properly dealt with.

Discussion Questions

1. What are different ways we might balance different societal goals, like socially conscious food production and environmental protection?
2. How might small or medium-sized agricultural businesses remain viable in the face of regulations that are much more easily met by larger agricultural enterprises?

9. Free Market Thinking

The community of Clareton faced a decision 25 years ago that would change its development and character. Clareton was what could be described as a quaint town that was undergoing a transition. A development group wanted to lease city owned property to establish a regional retail center on the edge of town. The City Council was divided, but the developers won out. Merchants from downtown opposed the deal but the Council could hardly overlook the boost to local tax revenues that the project would bring. The Mayor argued that the citizens of Clareton wanted more retail options, adding "we need to wake up to the fact that we live in a free market society."

The retail center was created and as promised, Clareton became a regional retail hub. For years, the economy of Clareton was thriving. Somehow the core of the downtown shopping area

managed to survive. While many of the original merchants went out of business, others replaced them. The nature of downtown shopping changed. Specialty stores replaced the more traditional retail stores.

That was years ago. Now with the growth of online shopping, the regional retail center faced a steep decline in patronage. The downtown retail stores continued to thrive since what they offered was rarely found online. The regional retail shopping center developer was facing a huge loss and came to the City Council for relief. The developer proposed that the city relocate some of its offices to the shopping center. “We need some relief for the investment that we made,” said the developer.

In the Council’s deliberations some pushed the notion that the city would be better off if the retail center survived. But others reminded their colleagues of the former mayor’s words from decades past, “We need to wake up to the fact that we live in a free market society.”

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think communities should balance community needs and the forces of free markets?
2. “Creative destruction” is a principle often invoked to describe changes that propel an economy in which new enterprises replace outdated ones. What principles or values do you think should guide community development decisions?
3. How might a community weigh the various impacts, long or short-term of various development possibilities? What goals or priorities should guide these deliberations?

10. The Kelly Farm

The Kelly Farm property had been a part of the Kelly family for generations. The property was used for raising both cattle and sheep. Most of the property was used for hay production and corn silage to support the cattle and sheep. Part of the property included wetlands, something that came in handy during duck season. The farm had always been economically marginal. The Kellys had to support themselves with other jobs and with the food they could produce. But the Kelly family was concerned that they may be unable to keep the farm property for much longer.

The saving grace for the family was a series of natural springs that produced a steady supply of water. A bottled water company approached the Kellys about establishing a production well on the family property. The production facility would not be intrusive. However, it would likely dry up part of the farm that was currently a wetland, since the aquifer was connected to the surface wetlands. The offer was very attractive because the Kellys would no longer face the risk of losing their farm but they also realized that the wetlands supported migratory birds and other species of animals that thrived in wetlands.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you decide this issue, if you owned the Kelly farm, if you were responsible for the governmental decision to approve the production well, or if you were a local duck hunter? How would this decision look to other possible stakeholders?
2. How might the needs of a family be weighed against greater environmental concerns, such as the protection of an environment critical to migratory birds?
3. Would it make sense for the Kelly family to be compensated for their loss of revenue that they could earn from the sale of their water rights?

11. Gendered Leadership

“Shana the Fixer,” that was the name that senior executives used whenever a troublesome part of the organization needed fixing. Shana was a tough but very capable turnaround professional. She had an uncanny ability to see what needed to be done to correct an underperforming part of the firm. She was also known for getting rid of those who weren’t effective at doing their jobs. Some said she was abrasive. Others worshiped her determination to “right the ship.” You either loved her or hated her.

Her contributions were well-known throughout the executive suite and boardroom. Major shareholders also were aware of her contributions. When the chief executive officer announced his retirement, Shana was strongly considered for the CEO position but she faced a lot of opposition from the “old guard.” “Shana isn’t very nice” was the most frequently expressed concern about her. “She will want to shake up the organization, and that will spook everyone,” was another concern. “We need a calming influence not a flamethrower” was another expression of concern for candidacy. “She is just too valuable in her current role,” said one of the board members.

The man they hired to be CEO was called a “natural leader,” but had made a career of “results matter” without regard to how the results were achieved. His style was not that different from Shana’s.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think equality of opportunity could or should be assessed in personnel decisions, especially in regard to sex and gender?
2. How might organizations fairly weigh a person’s approach to doing a job without having that evaluation unduly influenced by negative or positive stereotypes regarding things like gender or sexual orientation?
3. To what extent are the decisions of private organizations a public matter? What role, if any, should governmental policies have regarding the personnel decisions of private organizations, especially when we consider things like sex and gender?

12. Lost Art

Georgia Mancuso was an incredible artist. Her paintings captured the essence of the lives of Italian immigrants as they came to America in the early twentieth century. In effect, her paintings were of both artistic and historical merit in their depictions of Italian-American heritage. There was, however, a problem. Very few people had ever seen Georgia's paintings.

Georgia was a very private person who never wanted to be in the public spotlight. Her works of art were on display in her home, but only her family and close friends had ever seen them. Despite urgings from everyone in her family, Georgia would not allow her work to be made public. Museums and historical societies got wind of her work and approached the family with numerous purchase offers. Georgia rebuffed them all. In fact, she was so annoyed by the pressure from her family. She mandated in her will that all of her art would be destroyed upon her death.

Discussion Questions

1. Suppose you were in a position to decide the fate of Georgia's art after her death. How would you weigh the different factors influencing your decision—and what would your decision be?
2. What public obligations might artists have, if any?
3. When we think of art or other cultural works, under what conditions might concern for the public good outweigh the rights of the property holder?

13. Mama Espy's Family

The Mt. Vernon neighborhood was known locally as the "United Nations." It was filled with immigrant families from Central and South America, Africa, and Southern Asia. In most households both parents had to work outside the home. Over the years, many children were cared for by Mama Espy, a 60-year old grandmother who had raised eight of her own children. While Mama Espy had no formal childcare education, the children thrived in her care. They learned each other's native languages. Their parents took turns bringing lunches as the children were well fed and enjoyed foods from all over the world. When school was out, older children also came to Mama Espy's and helped care for the younger children.

The Mt. Vernon neighborhood had the feel of an extended family. There was little to no crime. Properties were well maintained. The children by and large did well in school. But this whole arrangement was threatened when local officials found out about Mama Espy. They said she was running an illegal daycare center and would have to shut down until she was properly licensed. The amount of money it would take to fulfill the licensing requirements was clearly beyond Mama Espy's reach. The families would face an immediate challenge to find childcare, as there weren't any affordable options in the neighborhood. In the meantime, some households faced the prospect of lost earnings or even lost employment as they struggled to balance their work and childcare schedules.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think the situation should be resolved—and what factors would you weigh in your decision?
2. When it comes to caring for children, what responsibilities come to mind, and how might these responsibilities be apportioned and managed? How important are regulations and licenses?
3. How might we balance different kinds of concerns relevant to childcare? For example, how might we balance formal concerns for things like safety and training with informal concerns for fostering robust interdependence of neighbors within a community?

14. The New Science?

After years of dwindling public budgets for scientific research, a change has taken root in the scientific community. The change wouldn't be obvious to the public, but was recognized by those on the inside. Gone were the days of strict protocols for conducting unbiased scientific research with the acceptance that "the results are what they are." Researchers became more politically savvy. They realized that to secure funding, they needed to target conclusions that would be favored. While there were limited cases of outright scientific fraud, scientists knew how to structure research protocols and analyses to produce the results that would garner continued support.

Within the scientific community, there was a general recognition of what was happening. It was simply a matter of survival. An entire generation of graduate students were trained in this "new science" approach. Some senior scientists, especially those with secure positions, wondered in private gatherings whether and how they'd ever restore the integrity of scientific research.

Discussion Questions

1. How can the integrity of science be protected from influences like partisan politics or commercial interests?
2. How can the general public understand what is or might be influencing scientific research?
3. What are the public policy concerns surrounding scientific research and how might we best address these concerns?

15. NOCO2

NOCO2 was a rising protest band that was popular with environmental activists. As they prepared to release their next album, they had a fierce internal debate about how to do this in the most environmentally friendly way. Some wanted only to release the album on streaming services, thus avoiding the issues of fossil fuels and waste that go into the plastic production of CDs. "Even if we find recycled packaging," the drummer pointed out, "when it comes down to it,

it's packaging wrapped around petrochemicals that are gonna end up in a landfill." Others pointed out that streaming services were not environmentally sustainable, since they relied on the massive energy consumption of server farms. The bass player pointed to a story of a forest near her hometown being clear-cut to make room for a server farm, adding to the negative carbon footprint. Besides, she argued, the band needed physical CDs to sell when on tour. Merch sales and touring were the main ways the band made their money. At that point the band was confronted by another puzzle. How were they going to manage the environmental impact of their upcoming 20-city tour?

Discussion Questions

1. How would you suggest the band decide to move forward—and why?
2. How might we weigh and balance competing claims and concerns about environmental impacts? For example, is their overall message more valuable than their limited environmental impact?
3. What policy responses might help us as a society and as individuals to guide our actions and thinking about environmental impacts?
4. As we make personal and societal decisions about environmental impacts, how broad should our evaluation of impacts be (e.g. primary or direct impacts, secondary, tertiary...)?

16. Preserving Developing Democracies?

This small country was one of the few success stories for democracy in the world. Now well into its first decade of a genuine democracy, the president had led the development of economic policies that lifted the entire nation. The poverty rate was a fraction of what it was. This democracy had left behind the turmoil of tribal warfare from past generations. The establishment of an independent judiciary meant the country increasingly could rely on a sense of equality before the law, rather than money and power buying influence. The public health infrastructure, while still rudimentary, was developing.

The U.S. State Department saw the country as a role model for other countries in the region. While the US had no strategic or economic interest in the country, it wanted to see this democracy succeed. Unfortunately, the president's time in office was due to expire. Her most likely successor was very unlikely to carry on with the legacy that was left to her. U.S. intelligence agencies had information that suggested the new president would undermine the hard-earned democratic institutions by empowering a few corrupt oligarchs. The intelligence agencies also reported that a strategic rival to the U.S. was supporting this presidential candidate and was even interfering in order to guarantee her election.

Discussion Questions

1. What role, if any, should established democracies have in protecting the democracy of another country—especially in the case of new or emerging democracies?

2. With global rivals of the U.S. directly involved in influencing the governmental leadership of countries, how might the U.S. counter this influence in the name of fostering democracy?
3. What criteria might be used in evaluating the role of the U.S. in promoting or protecting developing democracies?

17. Privacy Entrepreneurs

Due to social media of the early 21st century, people throughout the world willingly traded some of their privacy in order to connect with others and expand their social networks. This seemed safe to do, since “everyone was doing it.” But serious concerns emerged when college graduates lost job opportunities because of embarrassing social media posts. Students were unaware that their social media information had been archived by employment agencies. Likewise, candidates for public office now had to explain obscure social media comments they had made in the past. Email correspondence that was meant to be private would often show up out of context years later. Individuals were questioned about social media connections to people that had committed some crime or offense.

Entrepreneurial businesses stepped in to help people restore their privacy—for a price. Technologies were created to wipe out the public information of a person. For a fee, one could destroy all social media postings. Social media connections could be scrubbed. Email communications carried “self-erasing” features. The privacy entrepreneurs were in a race with the social media entrepreneurs to protect privacy – for a profit. The ability to escape this scrutiny became a valued commodity by those who could afford it. The privacy entrepreneurs were also in a competition with national security and criminal justice agencies. As revelations about breaches in privacy made national headlines, privacy entrepreneurs advanced new technologies that made it virtually impossible for national security and law enforcement agencies to violate the privacy of those who could afford this protection.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you assess the technical advances of the privacy entrepreneurs, especially in terms of their societal impacts? Do you see them more as a natural, and perhaps beneficial, extension of technological advancement or more as a threat to our society?
2. What do you think of the ways this technology might further divide society by economic status? And how might such concerns be addressed?
3. Within the constitutional framework of democracy, how might we balance competing concerns for privacy, the greater good, law enforcement, or national security?

18. A Kiss is Just a Kiss

Austin was a very loving child. He grew up in a family where hugging and kissing were common. When Austin went to kindergarten, he would occasionally hug or kiss a classmate. This was a

problem because the entire school district had a strictly enforced zero-tolerance policy for all students touching.

Austin's teachers talked to him about his affectionate behavior and gave him behavioral timeouts for each occurrence. The problem was that Austin didn't respond to the warnings. His parents were called into the school. The school resource officer explained to the parents that Austin's behavior amounted to sexual harassment, something the school could not tolerate in any form. Austin would face more serious consequences if his behavior continued.

Austin still didn't understand. While none of the students complained, school officials felt that they had to take Austin's behavior to the next level. The district had instituted its zero-tolerance policy to avoid any appearance of inconsistency in enforcement of behavioral rules. They feared lawsuits if the policy was not uniformly enforced. Additionally, the school was particularly concerned that Austin's affectionate behavior would be copied by other students. The school informed his parents of the escalating possible consequences. For future violations Austin faced everything from the prospect of suspension from school to referral to the juvenile justice system.

Discussion Questions

1. What public policy issues or concerns are raised from this situation, especially in relation to concerns about things like sex, gender, education, and justice?
2. How might we strike a balance among various concerns related to this situation—and how might this appear differently to the different stakeholders?
3. What values, goals, or principles do you think would be relevant for deliberating about situations such as this? In light of these, how would you suggest school and parents resolve situations like Austin's?

19. The Wilson Place

Wilson's Place began life as a farming tool factory just after the Civil War. Located a mile from the small community of Huntersville, the factory was a source of jobs for many people in the area. After the owner of the factory, Aubrey Wilson, passed away the factory and the 3 acres of land around it were left to Huntersville in a trust. Wilson left the factory and surrounding land to the community. She envisioned it becoming a community center for all citizens to enjoy.

One thing that made Wilson's Place special was the graffiti that covered almost every surface. The graffiti memorialized special days and events in the lives of the citizens of Huntersville. Newlyweds would commemorate their marriages by placing their vows on the walls. There was a baby wall that celebrated new births and a senior wall for the graduating high schoolers. Another part of the graffiti was a remembrance of those who had died.

As the community grew, the local school district needed more space for another elementary school. The factory and surrounding land would be the ideal space for the new school and

athletic fields. The school district launched a number of different approaches to secure the land. They urged the town council to assert eminent domain to force the trust to sell the land. Many town members supported this move as it benefited children in the community and would still be a hub for community members. They believed Aubrey Wilson would approve of this transition of her estate.

Discussion Questions

1. What process should communities use to decide how to use their resources and gifts? When should a gift to a community be rejected? When should it be reused or reconfigured beyond the intent of the gift giver?
2. How important is community identity—and how important is it for a community to preserve a sense of local identity over time?
3. How might a community protect its special identity and what factors, or whose interests, should it consider as it does so?

20. Women's Rights in a Changing World

It was one of the boldest moves in U.S. foreign policy in years. Gloria Taft was appointed Ambassador to one of America's strategic partners in a very volatile part of the world. What made it a bold move was that Taft was representing the U.S. in a conservative nation that greatly restricted the civil rights of women. Women were generally kept out of any significant roles in public life.

What was meant to be a human rights gesture quickly got out of hand. Taft's appointment quickly led to a "pink revolution," with women engaging in public protests for equal rights. While Taft herself played no direct role in supporting the protests, her very presence led women in the country to become bolder in their assertion of basic rights.

The king of the host country was furious. In a heated discussion with the U.S. Secretary of State, he demanded Taft be removed. He threatened to deny the U.S. access to military bases. Without these bases, the U.S. would no longer have the presence it needed in a region of such importance to American interests.

Discussion Questions

1. Should we balance the issues of gender equity with the culture, religion, or values of others? How might this balance change if we're thinking within a country or among different countries?
2. What public responsibilities are there to address gender equity? What might be the role of the government, or others, to push back barriers to gender equity?
3. How might a country like the U.S. balance concerns for human rights with other national interests, whether national security, geopolitical, economic, etc.?