



## Timeline Exercise

### Purpose

- See how an issue has evolved over time
- Explore what social inventions have contributed to it
- Explore the role of leadership in promoting the issue

### Materials

- Long sheet of butcher paper, approximately 15 feet
- Thick black marker and several colored markers
- Tape for hanging butcher paper
- Reflection questions

### Preparation

- Choose an issue for reflection
  - Tape the butcher paper to a blank wall where all participants can see it
  - Draw a line horizontally across the center of the butcher paper, dividing the paper into an upper half and a lower half
  - Write on the left-most end of the line "1900." Leaving a foot of room to the far right, write the current year at the right end of the line
  - Using small hatch marks, indicate decades on the timeline: 1910, 1920, etc.
1. Ask participants to brainstorm events that have contributed to the issue. For example, if the issue were the history of the "common good," participants might mention events such as the Civil Rights Act or women's suffrage. Encourage the group to consider science, medicine, social policy, discoveries, and other occurrences over the last century that have contributed to the issue. Recruit two volunteers to record events on the timeline, and request that they record all answers ABOVE the center line.
  2. Record these events where they occurred on the timeline. This part of the brainstorm can go for 10-20 minutes until ideas are exhausted.
  3. Debrief the activity with the use of reflection questions, either in the large group or smaller groups.
    - *What do you notice about this timeline? What stands out? What is missing?*
    - *How does the nature of the issue change over time?*
    - *What characteristics and themes carried through?*
    - *What conditions contributed to the change?*
    - *Who was involved in bringing about these acts and events?*
    - *What is the role of leadership?*
    - *What characteristics and themes of leadership were involved?*
  4. Give people an opportunity to speak about their experience in relation to the issue. For example, if the issue is the common good, people could talk about the moment in history when they first became aware of the concept, or when it made an impact in their life. They can then add their names to the timeline on the bottom half of the timeline, and discuss how and why they got involved in the issue.