

Understanding Personal Stake

A lot is at stake in our country right now. The top one-tenth of 1 percent controls as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent of us. Millions of us are worried about losing our health care coverage or our retirement security. Our students are saddled with thousands of dollars of student loan debt. Our undocumented workers and families are living in fear of deportation. And through all this, our campaign finance system is structured so that millionaires and billionaires can buy elections, and so our elected officials represent their interests instead of ours.

We have a responsibility as constituents to continue to stay engaged in the decisions our elected representatives are making. We must hold them accountable to what's in our best interests—to focus their policymaking on good jobs, affordable health care, quality education, secure retirement and corporate accountability.

Everyone who has decided to work to make change in their communities has a reason this is so important to them. That includes you. You have lived in the world as it is, and you've decided that it is not good enough. You are connected to the issues, and you are ready to take action.

Change is hard. At times, it will feel frustrating, maybe even impossible. **To be successful, we must feel in our hearts why this work is important to us—what is at stake for ourselves and the people we care about.** That is what understanding personal stake is about. Each of us has had experiences that shape the values, beliefs and analyses that we have today. Each of us also has a unique role in our communities, and a unique identity that forms that role and our goals in the quest for change.

It is important that you have a sense of your own personal stake, something that you can go back to when the work seems too hard. Using the prompts below, take some time to think about what made you you, and who you are.

What made me: Key experiences, race and ethnicity, education, gender and sexuality, jobs, economic background, family and friends, immigration status, communities and neighborhoods.

Who I am: Role in your campaign, job/career, political beliefs/identities, gender identity, economic status, religious affiliation, friends and family, community and neighborhood.