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Are the ‘Influential’ maximizing their influence?
By Basil Saab

Graham’s post about TIME magazines 100 most influential people left me wondering. Do celebrities actually use their status and social standing to raise awareness about complex social issues such as the environment, health and sustainability?

Graham argues that influence comes from three qualities: Significance, Influence, and Presentation. These qualities had me thinking about Russell Brand, a standup comedian and actor who transcends his reputation of a brash, sex crazed rockstar to raise awareness and advocate change. As seen in the interview below, Brand articulates complex global issues including economic disparity, climate change and sustainability.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YR4CseY9pk

The above interview raises important economic, environmental and political issues that exist today. He argues that posturing politicians have lead to indifference and widespread apathy when voting. Brand is calling on an alternative political party to offer meaningful change. His controversial stance lead to his appointment as an editor in The New Statesman, a prominent political magazine in Britain.

As a self-confessed former drug addict, Brand is determined to help others with drug addiction. He holds an advisory role in reshaping government policy in a bid to reduce the rate of recidivism and tackle the growing epidemic.

Whether or not you agree with his ideals, it’s hard to deny Brand’s influence. For me, this teaches an important lesson that no matter what our past may hold, we can all be champions of change in issues we hold close to our heart.

MAHB-UTS Blogs are a joint venture between the University of Technology Sydney and the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere. Questions should be directed to joan@mahbonline.org