The House that Changed Lives

A lesson in social action from the life of Sarah E. Ray

Student Worksheet for Discussion Questions

1. Let's look at <u>Bill Moyer's "Four Roles of Social Activism"</u>: the citizen, the rebel, the reformer, and the change agent. Which category do you think best describes Lizz Haskell's work at Action House? Why?

Note: This graphic excerpts the central columns from the extended chart found in Bill Moyer's Four Roles of Social Activism from Doing Democracy: The MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements (New Society Publishers, 2001, p. 21-22 and 28-29).

 Uses official channels to make Promotes positive, widely-held values e.g democracy, freedom, change justice, non-violence · Uses variety of means: lobbying, legál action, elections · Grounded in centre of society · Protects against charges of Monitors success to assure enforcement, expand success 'extremism' and guard against backlash **CITIZEN** REFORMER CHANGE REBEL **AGENT** Uses people power: educates. Protests: Says "NO!" to convinces & involves majority violation of positive values of citizens Uses NVDA and civil · Mass-based grassroots disobedience organising • Puts problems in public spotlight · Employs strategy & tactics for waging long-term movements Strategic · Promotes alternatives &

· Exciting, courageous, risky

paradigm shifts

2. Many of the Action House grants, letters, and proposals discuss a "void" in activities for kids and teens in the Airport Community, leading them to feelings of "frustration and animosity" and "destructive activity." But in Kevin George's interview, he speaks with sadness about playing basketball in dirt and the lack of playlots. How does your environment affect how you feel about yourself and your community?

3. From the oral histories, we can see that to those who grew up in the Airport Community, the bold woman who dreamed up Action House is remembered as "Lizz Haskell." Though the exact date of her name change remains unclear, we know that after marrying Rafael Haskell, Sarah E. Ray began to go by the name of "Lizz Haskell." She specifically said that she changed her name with the unconventional spelling of Lizz "so that folks'll remember me." Why do you think she wanted to be remembered for her activism as "Lizz," but not for her activism as "Sarah"?

¹ Alice Hagerty, "Scrappy director fights for community center," *The Detroit News* (published as *The Sunday News-Tribune*), June 22, 1975.

4. Action House was a neighborhood-empowerment organization, intent on holding politicians accountable to the needs of the people. However, in lots of archival material regarding Action House, Haskell writes about the importance of individuals relying upon themselves and not the government. She encourages teens to get jobs, moms to get an education, homeowners to learn home maintenance. How does taking individual responsibility help you to take care of your community?

5. Recall Rochelle Wilson and Kevin George's interviews. They reflect on infrastructure Lizz brought to the neighborhood for play: the Swimmobile, the Bookmobile, and asphalt basketball courts. Why do you think these adults show so much emotion when talking about happy memories from their childhoods? What do they see now in Lizz's activism that they couldn't see when they were kids?