Be rebel with a cause

Looking at world differently can lead to progress

It has been encouraging to see US teenagers rising to take on the gun lobby. They have a lot to teach us. High schoolers and even primary schoolers have become articulate advocates who have formed a coalition fuelled by passion and dedication and a desire to write a new story.

They are bringing about action designed to force positive political change.

These young people are engaged in constructive nonconformity.

Constructive nonconformity is behaviour that deviates from societal norms, common expectations and the usual ways of thinking and doing things, to the benefit of the community – be it a workplace, school, organisation or wider society.

Francesca Gino is a professor and researcher at Harvard Business School who has spent the past decade researching people who engage in constructive nonconformity.

She asserts that the future belongs to the rebel, to those who break rules, who question situations and dare to think differently.

A behavioural scientist, Gino teaches a range of education programs, has won numerous teaching awards, and advises firms and not-for-profit organisations in the areas of decision-making and leadership.

Her latest research, published in her book Rebel Talent: Why it pays to break the rules at work and in life, argues that the most successful among us break the rules, and that rebellion and unconventional ways of seeing the world are behaviours that we all need to embrace.

Gino describes rebel talent as being characterised by novelty, curiosity, perspective, diversity and authenticity.

Rebels are not afraid to challenge the existing state of affairs or standard ways of doing things.

Rebels seek out challenge and new ideas. They ask questions, they ask “why” and “what if”.

Rebels constantly broaden their view of the world to move beyond their own point of view and perspective, and they challenge rules, routines and traditions to value diversity.

Rebels are open and vulnerable as they connect with others and seek to be agents of and for positive change.

If we want to transform our world and bring about positive change, then we need to discover our own rebel talent.

We need to express what we feel, exercise our own judgment, and use our voices, strengths and unique viewpoints.

If you are interested in bringing out more of your own rebel talent, go to www.rebaltalents.org and take a free assessment to learn about the rebel ingredients that come most naturally to you, and the ones to grow.

Our world needs some rebel action. We have but one life and there is no planet B.