

The importance of being politically involved even though you're unable to vote.....

By Evan

The word "youth" is used to condescend more often than not. Whatever you want to call it, the "system" the "man," whatever, youth are the adults of tomorrow, plain and simple. It is exhilarating and scary to know that we will all be running the world someday, and could quite possibly be looking down on distant images of who we once were.

We live in a culture that validates ageism with messages that young people are bombarded with everyday. Messages that say, either flat-out or subtly, "you are worthless because of your age." No matter what, it is hard to avoid that, and we all buy into it in one-way or another. We have no control over a president, who we were not allowed to vote for, who will appoint a supreme court justice, and this supreme court justice has control over our bodies and the decisions we make, and then we're told that we're just supposed to sit back and allow this to happen? I would personally like to see the voting age lowered, but that does not seem like it is going to happen anytime soon. So, what is left for us? Disillusioned youth either reject the idea of political resistance all together, or feel like all our efforts are worthless, because the only option we seem to have is waving a sign in the street screaming at pedestrians and police officers who don't listen.

The fact of the matter is the mainstream idea of what being "politically involved" means seems to begin and end with voting. That seems to keep the ideas, and the desire for information planted firmly in a specific demographic. This is dangerous. It's not like once you're eligible to vote you'll suddenly be presented with accurate, truthful information about candidates and issues right off the bat. The fact of the matter is, the more you prepare/educate yourself, and participate in different political activities and are all-inclusive, the easier it will be for you to not only make your vote count, but your voice heard. As a male, I have been brought up in a culture where sexism exists. There are institutions set up to benefit men more than woman, and males play into that simply because it is engrained in us from an early age. This is a perfect example of where political activism can come into play. In making the effort to examine these and other forms of institutionalized oppression that I have been brought up with, I've been able to get involved with different political organizations that allow me to make a direct difference. It is also better to work on those things when you are younger, than in your adult life.

Politics are sometimes a scary, overwhelming thing. Sometimes I feel that it is set up that way just to alienate people from informing themselves.

It seems like a clever tactic. Keep the youth uninformed so they turn into apathetic twenty somethings who couldn't care less about democracy. It is not only a lack of information; it is a lack of options that maintains this increasingly apathetic generation.

In addition to taking the initiative to inform yourself, getting politically involved before you are of voting age is an awesome way to combat some of the stereotypes about young people. These stereotypes exist partly because of how little some youth seem to care about the world, and partly because it is just one of the many hierarchies that have been set up in this culture. It is important to let people know that we have voices, and we have the right to use them. For example, as youth in school we are not necessarily allowed the same constitutional rights as adults (we are vulnerable to unwarranted searches and our freedom of speech is frequently trampled on). I for one decided at an early age that I was sick of having certain aspects of my life dictated for me. If we can organize as youth, imagine what we will be able to do when we reach legal adult age. Simply taking the time to educate each other and ourselves is an extremely important act of political resistance, and is just as important as voting. The same thing can be said for internships, volunteer jobs, etc... our country is in a dire state, and it is up to us to do something about it, no matter what your age.