Activism vs. Slacktivism

Brief Overview:
• Youth will learn about the difference between activism and slacktivism

Issue Area:
• Civic Engagement and Volunteering

YVC Strategic Focus Areas:
• Education
• Compassionate Communities

Facilitator Instructions:
• Make sure to do your research if you are not familiar with these terms

Learning Objectives:
• By the end of the lesson, youth will explore the different ways to engage in social activism online.
• During the lesson, youth will analyze pros and cons of digital activism through debate.

Skill Development Potential:
• Teamwork
• Communication

National Education Standards (i.e. Common Core)
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1
  Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2
  Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Materials:
• Notebook (optional)
• Writing utensils (optional)

Instructions/Content:
• As a warmup, ask youth to answer these questions:
  o What is activism?
    ▪ Activism: a practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action, especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue
  o What is “slackivism”?
    ▪ Slacktivism/clicktivism: actions performed via the internet in support of a political or social cause but regarded as requiring little time or involvement
Activism vs. Slacktivism

What are different ways people can engage in activism around a social cause or world issue using technology?

How can technology be used as a tool for activism? (Note: Encourage students to include specific examples when they can.)

Introduce the debate around technology, especially the internet and social media, as tools for activism and social change. Have students record the definition of “activism” in their notebooks, and then engage in a short conversation about what digital activism means.

Ask youth to give examples of when they’ve seen “digital activism” be effective. Ineffective?

Designate and label three different parts of the room “Agree,” “Disagree” and “Undecided.”

Read aloud a series of statements, or prompts, surrounding social media activism and ask youth to move to whatever section of the room makes sense for them. Emphasize that students should try to think critically for themselves and resist being swayed by peers, and remind students of community guidelines that promote a safe space for exchanging ideas. Once you have finished your question, ask students from each group to share the supportive reasoning behind their responses.

- “Social media has the power to change the world for good”
- “Social media is the only way to promote a cause”
- “Social media can be harmful for activists”
- “It is okay to express your opinions online – no matter how harmful they may be to others”
- “Social media is better than face-to-face communication”
- “Slactivism on the internet can be just as important as activism in the ‘real world’.”
- “The world would be better if there was no internet.”

Ask students, “Was anyone’s mind changed about either of the prompts during the activity, especially those who were undecided?” Elicit a few responses from the whole group.

Reflection Questions:
Excellent service-learning incorporates a variety of challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one’s relationship to society.

1. List pros and cons of social media activism.
2. What social issues do you feel passionately about and would want to engage in online and/or offline? Why?
3. Brainstorm ways that you can get involved in activism – both online and in person.
4. What makes activism on social media effective? Ineffective?
5. Create a list of guidelines you believe individuals should follow if they are to engage in digital activism.

Connection to Local Community:
- What activist groups or nonprofits are available in your community?

Career Connections:
- Lawyer
- Activist
- Politician

“Take It Home” Challenge:
- Consider starting an Activist Club at your school!
Sources: