Writings on Activism From REAL People

New tools for activists:

I can’t think of a better, more admirable way for a person to spend their time than getting behind a cause they whole-heartedly believe in and fighting for it with whatever tools they have available. Traditionally, activists are known for organizing in great numbers, with human bulk, in front of locations they oppose. With the emergence of social media in the last few years, we can absolutely see a different kind of activism than our predecessors used.

For an example, take the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act, or CISPA. When this legislative act sought to limit online freedom, websites like Wikipedia, Facebook and others prompted users to educate themselves on the issues and sign a petition fighting the government’s attempted hindrance of free speech. When the petition numbers reached the 100,000 signature plateau, by rule, it earned a response from the White House. This shows the power of a new kind of activism. I’m proud to say I was one of many promoting that cause.

-- Tony Casey, 26, Johnson City, Tenn., journalist, member of The Democratic Socialists of America and The American Atheists

**What does activism mean to you?**

To me, activism is about being involved with a cause that, for whatever reason, is close to your heart, and engaging the world around you in being aware of that cause. It's about putting your words and thoughts about that cause to action. It's about making a difference.

**What is your experience with activism?**

I literally cannot remember a time in my life when I wasn't acting as an "activist" for something! Even if it was helping my mother raise money for our preschool when I was that young by doing things like selling chocolate bars, advocating for causes has just always been something I was taught was important. As I got older, I started making my own decisions about what I wanted to devote my time and efforts to, and volunteering and being an activist for different things in high school and college were some of my proudest achievements during those years of my life. Now I'm doing a year of public service with AmeriCorps, which is sort of like being a professional activist!

**How has activism caught your attention/educated/affected you?**

Activism has had a tremendous impact in shaping who I am as an individual. Parts of my identity are intricately linked to activism and advocacy, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

* Jocelyn Rhodes Cook, Volunteer Coordinator - Pathways to Housing NY

For me, activism is about awareness, it's about giving people the knowledge and the tools to understand the injustices that surround us. I am very active in social justice, and I feel very strongly that we cannot be fully human, cannot fully be present in our society if we are not aware and not helping those who need it.   
  
A lot of people think that there isn't anything they can do, isn't anything they can really help but I think that if you're passionate enough you can change everything- because just changing one person's world changes everyone's world. My experience with working in social justice activism and direct service has made me more aware and present in my community, which is why I'm so happy that I found my passion- even though it can be exhausting.   
  
Gabi Reyes-Acosta, Student

When you step out into the world, past the bubble of our generation or our location, it is astounding to learn how much activism has taught us. I have met many people from many areas of the world who have not been surrounded by active social justice, and I am constantly amazed at the hurtful things they say or the behavior they accept. That is why I think activism is so important. None of the changes in this country have happened with out constant activism, both big efforts and small ones.

While I do not frequently attend marches or hand out fliers, I am active in these spaces where discriminated people's do not have a voice. A simple statement has the power to affect people, to make them think about what you're saying, even if they don't agree with it. Every little bit helps. You can help. The worst thing you can do is stay silent.

-Madeline, Disney Cruise Line Crew