

Young People *Should* Get involved in the Political Process

Local, state and national political reporters weigh in on the subject

With the approaching 2016 election, there has never been a time more important for young people to get involved in the political process. Even those who can't vote yet need to participate in democracy, which our country is built around. "Read local newspapers, the New York Times, and go to political events!" says two-time Emmy-award-winning senior political television reporter and columnist Michael Putney. "Stay informed."

"We live in a democracy, and if you don't vote you have less say in your democracy," says Marc Caputo, political writer for the Miami Herald (and father of G.W. Carver Middle School 8th grader Liv Caputo). He explains that what we have right now is mostly elderly people voting. "If you don't get involved, if you don't voice your opinion, if you don't learn the issues and educate yourself on them and become a participant in your democracy, the democracy won't work the way you want it to," he says. So far, the democracy isn't: We have a primarily elderly electorate, and young people aren't getting what they want because they aren't taking the stand to get involved.

"This is your world!" says Stephanie Doscher, the director of Global Learning at FIU. "The people that are leading now were kids 20 or 30 years ago." She couldn't be more correct. "The people that can envision the future the best are the people that have a big long future to live," she says. What she says isn't hard to understand: It's OUR future, and we've got to shape it the way we want it. "We're going to be gone when your future comes," she says of people her age, "so you've got to start now."

There are other reasons why young people should pay more attention to politics, too. Former U.S. Representative Joe Garcia says that it's not only easy to get involved, but also that young people bring a lot to a campaign that older folks can't. "Knowledge of the internet and how to use social media," he says, are just some of the things young people are great with. "All campaigns can use that. Young people do that as second nature while us old folks take half a day to put up a Twitter post."

It has always been important for young people to follow politics, and now there's even more reason to. "We can be informed and educated in ways that our parents could never have been," says Alexis Catalyud, president of the Student Government Association at FIU.

We can influence the world by taking simple actions to get informed about what's going on. But we can't make the changes we want to see in the world happen if we don't get involved. "If we're not involved in the political process, we miss out on one of the biggest platforms for change for our societies, for our communities, for our world," said Ms. Catalyud. We can speak out and have a voice, and our microphone is that voting booth. But if we don't use the microphone, what good is it? "We will be living, we will be working, and we will be paying the government tax money, but we won't have any say."

People have known this for a long time, but no one has followed through. It's as simple as this: We aren't voting. "Not enough people are voting. Not enough people are paying attention to government and civil society," says Emmy-award-winning news reporter for MSNBC Andrea Mitchell. "I can't think of anything more important," she said on the importance of young people's activity in the political process. She says that if not enough young people are politically involved and we don't have a government we like, "It's only ourselves that we have to blame.

"My generation did not do a good enough job so it's important for your generation to take over," she says.



MSNBC News reporter Andrea Mitchell
with Alexander Sutton, Carver
Chronicle writer/editor