

Essay for Brittani Davis - 2nd place winner

Youth is more than just a category of people. Between the stages of childhood and maturity, one undergoes a series of developments. These developments can empower young people. Whether it's starting a club at school or persuading people to get out and vote or to have their voices heard; the power of youth is far more significant than many may assume.

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." This amendment gives all United States citizens, young and old, the power to exercise their freedom of speech, religion, and expression as long as they do so in a peaceful fashion.

With this freedom, all United States Citizens have the opportunity to utilize their power. This is important to young people because it is assumed that they do not have as much power as adults. Although young people are younger than adults and have not fully matured, young people have just as much potential to make the most of their power as adults. One of the most common places young people express and utilize their power is in school. In school, students have numerous opportunities to use the power given by the First Amendment. Student run organizations are bursting with young people who seize the opportunity of having their voices being heard. These organizations are very powerful in the school setting. They get the thoughts and ideas of a particular group of students out to the rest of the school population with the intention of grasping their classmates' attention and getting them involved.

Young people do not just have power in a school setting. They also have power anywhere they go. This past November, the United States had the most historic election in the history of United States' elections. It was the first time that an African American and a woman ran for president. Young people were very involved in this election. Many expected that African American citizens would vote for Obama and women would vote for Clinton. Not only did voters not vote as expected, Americans, including young people, also paid a great deal of attention to what each candidate stood for and researched their backgrounds. Many young people also got directly involved in the election, walking door to door canvassing while others volunteered their time at their local Obama or McCain offices.

The vote of the young people was truly an important factor in this election. Young people had the power to be heard and they took advantage of it. People who were not even of age to vote were very involved in the election. They did not just sit back and let the adults determine their future for them. The youth are the future and their power must never be underestimated.