

What's News Noelle?

Social media makes us soft

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA IS CREATING POLITICAL APATHY

Noelle Harff, *Editor in Chief*

I hate to break it to you, but no one cares that you reposted a picture of some climate tragedy or political initiative... and chances are, you don't care that much either. Teenagers and adults seem to be sharing their political opinions at a historic high with the pervasive use of social media. However, voter turnout and action continue to plummet.

As of 2017, 45% of adults have shared articles on global warming at least every few weeks, according to Statista; yet, the last major federal climate action was the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, which wasn't even civil action.

More and more people share their opinion, but these words aren't met with action. The problem isn't that people are speaking about what they are passionate about; the problem is that many believe that an Instagram post is enough. In June of 2016, over a tenth of all social media posts from adults were political. Still, only 12% of Americans made a monetary contribution to a political campaign or organization in that year, according to Statista. So, statistically, when it comes to politics, Americans don't put their money where their mouth is.

"I think it's abysmal. I don't understand why Americans don't vote. If you talk, then you have to walk the walk, and if you don't vote, you don't have a leg to stand on," said Maria Volker, Spanish teacher.

Activism is in her blood. Volker's parents were supporters of the Cuban Counter-Revolution during Fidel Castro's dictatorship. Volker moved here with her

grandmother at the age of one and her parents followed years later. Volker's parents were war criminals for many months. While jailed, her parents were tortured; they eventually sought asylum in America.

Volker continues her activism through not only her Facebook feed, but she uses her skills, time, and money to support the causes she believes in. She plans on spending this election season driving Americans to the ballot box so they can vote. She will be using her Spanish to connect to different citizens across the state.

Stone Hudson, senior, is active on social media. He recognizes the multitude of political posts, but isn't swayed by the messages behind them. "There are plenty of 'thoughts and prayers' on Twitter that raise awareness, but nothing ever gets done," said Hudson, in regards to Twitter users response to gun violence in America. "In my honest opinion, if you're not going to do something about it, don't tweet about it," he said.

Hudson went on to discuss social media's impact on apathy. "Social media makes us lazy. No longer do Americans think for themselves, we just get information off of tweets we see for ten seconds. We form our opinions off of anything we read on the internet," said Hudson.

Policies such as climate change, student debt, and health care will dictate the direction of our generation. 140 characters on Twitter won't make a difference, and unless your words are met with change, your post is worth no praise. Maybe instead of putting your name on a cause, put yourself behind it by volunteering, voting, or donating to what you care about.



Graphic by Andy Thompson and Alex Willman
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