

Does Social Media Activism Make a Difference?

Herbert Tom, IV and Julie Noreene Quibuyen, *VIBE* 11:10 p.m. ChST January 17, 2016

Social media plays an essential role in the lives of teens. Teens use it everyday and it has emerged as a news source of the 21st century. According to a recent report by CNN, teens in the United States spend about nine hours a day using media. The question is, do we use it effectively and for all the right reasons?

On the evening of Nov. 13, 2015, a series of haunting terrorist attacks occurred in Paris and the news quickly began circulating around the Internet in a matter of minutes. A few days after the attack, Facebook introduced the new feature of a French flag filter that can be added to a user's profile picture to show solidarity for France.

The intention was simple and benevolent. However, do filtered profile pictures, posts, tweets, and comments make a difference? Or do they just make people feel like they're supporting a cause without actually doing anything supportive?

"For us teens, our part of social media is more focused on the trends nowadays." says Eries Moreno, a sophomore at Tiyan High School. "Style, food, the new shows, etc. So in a way, social media impacts us to what 'we' think is important and not the rest of the world does."

People are finding it increasingly necessary to rely on social media to know what's going on in the world. These issues that are discussed online greatly affect people's perspective of life and engender different reactions. This entire adjustment is, as we know it, social media activism.

People have been using social media to spread awareness and discuss current events. These fighters for change have a vision they hope to communicate to a group. Whether it is a Facebook group page, an online blog, or a hashtag on Twitter, these are all different means of movement.

So, does social media activism actually work? Are we actually doing enough just by spreading awareness? Some argue that actions speak louder than words. "If I change my Facebook profile to the flag of France, does that mean I'm being active in any way? What am I doing? I'm just posting a picture of the flag. How is that helping?" says Andri Baynum, an Advanced Placement American Government and Psychology teacher at Simon Sanchez High School. "Posting a flag, it's showing support. Is that activism? There's a difference."

To be socially active requires the drive to get up and take initiative. This applies to many realms of life, not just being an activist on the media. Baynum also elaborates on how people recognize certain things only after the event rather than prior.

The question still proves debatable, but the effectiveness of making a difference via social media is circumstantial. Depending on what the action is, many feel social media activism is a good way of getting the word out while others find it challenging to change society just by changing one's profile picture. As a teen in society, where do you stand?