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Book: Parkland

Prompt

In early 2018, a mass shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. In the months afterwards, various survivors of the shooting took to the creation of a nationwide movement advocating for gun control reforms. These actions had a large effect on the American public conscious and brought the issue of gun violence to the forefront of politics. This sparked another conversation, not on what the students were saying, but whether they were able to truly deliver it, and if they, as young adults, were the right people to be sending their message. Those who believed that worked well with their new roles claimed they, “chose a story of hope”, while those opposed said that the students, as teenagers and minors, were not fit for the realm of politics and protest.

Carefully read each of the following sources, and synthesize at least three sources and incorporate them into a coherent, well-written essay developing a stance answering the question of “To what extent should/do young adults in America have the power to influence and create political change?”

Your argument should be the focus of your essay. Use the source to develop your argument and explain the reasoning for it. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or

summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

Source A - *Parkland* (Cullen, Dave)

Source B - “Youth in Revolt: Five Powerful Movements Fueled By Young Activists” (Erin Blakemore)

Source C - “No, We Shouldn’t Lower The Voting Age To 16” (Davenport, David)

Source D - “March for our Lives could be the biggest single-day protest in D.C.’s history” (Durando, Jessica)

Source E - “Student Activism 2.0” (Jason, Zachary)

Source F - “Youth of Color say the March for our Lives represents a lifelong battle” (Student Reporting Labs)

Source G - “Amplifying Youth Voice in Today’s Political Climate” (YIPA)

Source H - “Understanding the Teen Brain” (University of Rochester Medical Center)

Source B

Blakemore, Erin. "Youth in Revolt: Five Powerful Movements Fueled by Young

Activists." *National Geographic*, National Geographic Society, 23 Mar. 2018

The following is an excerpt from an online article written upon the effect of children's voices in revolts throughout history and in current day.

LOOK AT PASSIONATE young people from any era and you'll find impressive catalysts for change. The leaders of this weekend's [March for Our Lives](#) are no different. Students from Parkland, Florida—who faced a tragic shooting at their high school in February 2018—organized the event to demand gun-control legislation and an end to school shootings. Though the teenagers have drawn criticism from some, they've been commended by others for their spirit, focus, and savvy. They've maintained a clear message, mobilized a nation, and rallied support from celebrities and politicians—even [former president Barack Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama](#). But they aren't an anomaly. These students are the newest link in a decades-long chain of youth activists at the forefront of social change across the globe. Youth were instrumental in the civil rights movement's most memorable moments—and they

were just as engaged behind the scenes. Together, these young adults desegregated schools in the Jim Crow South, challenged racism during Freedom Rides, and pushed forward voter rights and civil rights legislation.

Among the most influential cadre of student organizers was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a group that embraced nonviolent protest and helped train many of the movement's foot soldiers. Fiercely independent, the group maintained organized efforts on countless fronts of change, enduring physical violence and state repression along the way. Fueled by young people's rejection of white supremacy, SNCC was once the nation's largest and most well-organized civil rights group. "We were right about the war," said Michael S. Ansara, who led Harvard University's chapter of SDS. "We understood that we would provoke a reaction and that it would give us a chance for discussion and debate," Ansara [told](#) *The Crimson's* Laszlo B. Herwitz. "You're not going to get a debate by being polite."

"I envy the freedom that my students enjoy here," says [Rowena He](#), assistant professor of history at St. Michael's College in Vermont and author of [Tiananmen Exiles: Voices of the Struggle for Democracy in China](#). A teenager in China in 1989, He explains, "When I was around their age, millions of us took to the streets in cities throughout my home country demanding these basic rights that American students receive as their birthright and often take for granted

Source C

Davenport, David. "No, We Shouldn't Lower The Voting Age To 16." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 25 May 2016,

The following article discusses the recent push to lower the voting age in the United States to 16 years old.

Ever on the bleeding edge of change, San Francisco is placing a measure on the November ballot to allow 16-year olds to vote. Congresswoman [Nancy Pelosi](#) can barely contain her enthusiasm, "because when kids are in school, they're so interested, they're so engaged." Tell that to the teachers whose students, according to surveys, don't know who their U.S. senator is or how to amend the Constitution. Pelosi's real enthusiasm is more partisan, of course, since young people are frequently liberal until they start paying taxes and really have to deal with the government, which does not happen at 16.

I'm sorry but if having 16-year olds in the voting booth is the answer to some civic problem we have, I guess I don't know what the question is. People point to pitiful voter turnout, but is simply adding more eligible voters the answer to civic malaise? One organization that supports this nationally, FairVote, says it will have a "trickle-up effect," getting parents more engaged. I suppose when my teenagers wanted to support Ralph Nader for president, it mildly engaged my ridicule instincts.

The last time the voting age was changed nationally was in 1971, with the adoption of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution. With 18-year olds fighting in Vietnam, it seemed wrong to say they couldn't vote for their national leaders until they were 21. In other words, there was some serious and logical reason to make the change, which doesn't seem evident here. In fact, other legal age thresholds have been going up, not down. The drinking age is 21, and the age when kids may drive a car without any conditions has now increased to 17 or 18 by most state laws, not 16. In other words, the law has moved toward greater maturity before responsibility, not less. If it is a question of maturity, researchers generally agree that the brain is still developing until the mid-20s, with moral reasoning and abstract thought coming later in the cycle than previously thought. Perhaps it should also be a question of having a real stake in the process—such as serving in the military (age 18, or 17 with parental consent) or writing a check to the government to pay your taxes. Or, how about requiring younger voters to pass the citizenship test as an incentive and qualifier, tying civic engagement with civic education?

In fairness, there is not exactly a stampede in favor of lowering the voting age, though it is taking place. Two cities in Maryland—Tacoma Park (population 10,000) and Hyattsville (population 18,000)—have lowered the voting age to 16 for municipal elections only. In the primaries, 22 states allow 17-year olds to vote if they will turn 18 prior to the general election in the fall. I suppose this makes some sense, allowing the same voters to narrow the field who will ultimately choose the winner.

Lowering the voting age is tricky under the law. The federal law allows it, since the wording of the 26th Amendment provides that citizens over 18 may not be denied the right to vote based on age. Arguably the Constitution could again be amended to change the age to 16, though the bar

for such amendments is high, requiring two-thirds of both houses of Congress and three-fourths of the state legislatures to approve. The real locus for change, however, would be in state legislatures, since the states basically control elections under the Constitution. Efforts by cities such as San Francisco and the two cities in Maryland can only affect their own municipal elections, which are likely to be of limited interest to teenagers, just as they tend to be for other voters.

I think Major League Baseball replay reviews have a good standard for changing things like the question of voting age. Unless the review shows “indisputable video evidence” that the play on the field was called incorrectly, the call stands. OK, maybe we don’t need “indisputable” evidence, but how about some evidence that we need or even want 16-year olds voting? It’s just not there.

Source D

Durando, Jessica. "March for Our Lives Could Be the Biggest Single-Day Protest in D.C.'s History." *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 25 Mar. 2018


The chart below compares statistics from past marches in Washington D.C. to the student-led March for Our Lives protest.

How March for Our Lives compared to other protests in U.S. history

Marches in Washington D.C., approximate numbers:

2018	March for Our Lives	800,000
2017	Inaugural Women's March	500,000
1969	Demonstration against the Vietnam War	500,000-600,000
1995	The Million Man March	450,000 to 1.1 million
1963	The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom	250,000

SOURCE USA TODAY, Washington Post and march organizers
Alejandro Gonzalez/USA TODAY



Source E

Jason, Zachary. "Student Activism 2.0." *Harvard Graduate School of Education*,
www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/18/08/student-activism-20.

This writing was taken from a larger article on the history of student activism written in Harvard University's online magazine.

Younger students, however, have a better chance to build a movement with the opposite tack. "High school activism takes place best when it's focused on the outside community, not the school itself," Reuben says. "Whereas college students are often considered adults, teenagers are often dismissed as acting out when they challenge adult authority within their administration." (There are rare exceptions. Sixteen-year-old Barbara Johns' walkout in protest of disgraceful conditions at her all-black high school became a foundational case in *Brown v. Board of Education*.)

The sight of children addressing national issues, however, has captured the country's imagination. In 1917, a white mob killed 38 and injured hundreds more African Americans in St. Louis. In response, hundreds of black children dressed in white and marched hand-in-hand, leading 10,000 African Americans through Manhattan in the Silent Parade, which aimed, as *The New York Times* reported, to make President Woodrow Wilson aware of the "lawless treatment"

of black Americans nationwide. It became a blueprint for the civil rights movement. In 1963, when more than 1,000 children skipped school to march in Birmingham, Alabama, images of police spraying fire hoses and unleashing attack dogs on them ignited a furor that forced the city to desegregate and paved the way for the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Children's Crusade, as it became known, "turned around the entire civil rights movement," Levinson says. And today, the vigor and anger of children who had just watched their classmates bleed to death in their hallways has propelled the most serious national debate over gun control in years.

Source F

Labs, Student Reporting. "Youth of Color Say the March for Our Lives Represents a Lifelong Battle." *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, 25 Mar. 2018, www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/youth-of-color-say-the-march-for-our-lives-represents-a-lifelong-battle.

The following article below speaks on youth attendance and participation in the March for Our Lives movement.

For some participants, the March for Our Lives was yet another exercise in a long fight against gun violence. Hundreds of thousands of people joined the demonstration in cities across the nation on Saturday as part of a massive call for gun reform that began after a mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, killed 17 people on Feb. 14. A rally in Washington, D.C., brought together youth advocates from around the country who have recently organized their peers in school walkouts, at town halls and in other community spaces. But students of color, whose communities are disproportionately affected by gun violence, say the March for Our Lives was especially significant to them. On Friday night, Diamond Ocasio, 16, boarded a bus to drive 13 hours from Chicago to attend the march. Her cousin, Frankie Gonzalez, was shot and killed in crossfire while he was sitting in his car at the age of 25.

Now, Ocasio works with the youth-led organization BRAVE, or Bold Resistance Against Violence Everywhere, which took a front-and-center place at the rally on Saturday. The Chicago-based organization works to to increase awareness and inspire action around human rights, justice issues and feminism. It also advocates against gun violence in a city where the number of shooting incidents jumped from 2,426 in 2015 to 3,550 in 2016, and where the

majority of those incidents occurred in areas where low-income black and brown people predominantly live, according to the **Associated Press**. Ocasio said she wants people to understand that many young people of color in inner cities experience gun violence every day. “The Parkland kids, for them it was just that one moment and with us, every day someone dies,” she said. “For us it’s forever, it has been forever.” Baltimore city youth also marched and spoke out on the effects of gun violence in black communities. Jecha Wright, 14, who traveled from Baltimore, said, “Everybody needs to be safe ... Everybody shouldn’t get a gun just because they want to. There needs to be more rules and [the government should] make it harder to get a gun.”

Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh announced earlier this month that the city would organize an effort for 3,000 Baltimore students to travel to the march for free by bus. She told the NewsHour that young people “left their classrooms to express their concerns around the violence that’s occurring in our city and in our country.”

“The voices of urban youth need to be heard,” she said.

Source G

“Amplifying Youth Voice in Today's Political Climate.” *YIPA*, 26 Nov. 2018,

yipa.org/youth-voice-todays-political-climate/.

This source comes from YIPA (Youth Intervention Programs Association) and talks about how youth workers can get involved in changing the working environment.

“As youth workers, we need to use our position and power to amplify the youth voice to ensure that the needs of the youth we serve remain central to policy planning.

Open Government Guide tells us that listening to youth voice can:

- Lead to better-designed policies – they need to draw on the lived experience, insights and innovative ideas of young people
- Engage all people under 18 as allies in the development and sustainability of new programs and policies – this includes giving feedback on current projects or developing new social programs
- Give youth and young people a greater stake in society- this increases the likelihood that they will be civically active as adults

With 23% of the population in the United States under 18 years of age, youth workers need to use our power and position to advocate for including youth in decision-making.

We need to:

- Make sure formal engagement structures are in place that enables youth to participate in decision making- at both the policy and program level.
- Engage in specific outreach to involve young people – this can be in the form of dedicated consultations, events, and activities that provide an opportunity for youth share their views and influence policy

We know that the youth we serve want to be and are civically engaged. This is seen in their use of social media. In just a few clicks, young people are signing petitions, responding to calls for a demonstration and inviting all of their friends/followers to do the same.”

Source H

“Understanding the Teen Brain .” *Understanding the Teen Brain - Health Encyclopedia - University of Rochester Medical Center*,
www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=1&ContentID=3051.

This source is a excerpt from a medical study done at the University of Rochester Medical Center done by multiple medical reviewers who examined the understanding of the teen brain and its development.

It doesn't matter how smart teens are or how well they scored on the SAT or ACT. Good judgment isn't something they can excel in, at least not yet.

The rational part of a teen's brain isn't fully developed and won't be until age 25 or so.

In fact, recent research has found that adult and teen brains work differently. Adults think with the prefrontal cortex, the brain's rational part. This is the part of the brain that responds to situations with good judgment and an awareness of long-term consequences. Teens process information with the amygdala. This is the emotional part.

In teen's brains, the connections between the emotional part of the brain and the decision-making center are still developing—and not always at the same rate. That's why when teens have overwhelming emotional input, they can't explain later what they were thinking. They weren't thinking as much as they were feeling.

Medical Reviewers:

- Anne Fetterman RN BSN
- Joseph Campellone MD
- Raymond Kent Turley BSN MSN RN