



HUMAN
RESTORATION
PROJECT

“IF YOU ARE FREE

YOU NEED TO FREE

SOMEBODY ELSE.

Childism

Social Justice; namely, overcoming systemic and structural inequalities, as well as dealing with power relations that pertain to everyday interactions, including amongst children, and between children and their teachers, tutors, and care providers.

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Purpose

You may have heard of **ageism** as the stereotypes and prejudice against someone based on their age. While ageism does not only refer to biases against older people, it is often used that way. We participate in ageism when we associate forgetfulness with aging, when we stereotype older drivers as unsafe behind the wheel of a car, and when we ignore their perspectives because we believe they are “out of touch”. Ageism can also take the form of age discrimination. For example, a company may not hire an older person because they perceive that the older person may not be able to handle the fast pace of a work environment compared to a younger person. Ageism against young people, particularly children, is called **adultism** and can be defined as the discrimination against or oppression of children and young people based on the idea that adults have power over young people and can act on them without their permission and consent. In 1959, as protection against **adultism**, the United Nations - [an international organization dedicated to promoting peace between nations](#) - passed the Declaration of the Rights of the Child demands, among other rights, the right of children to free expression and identity, to participate in cultural and creative activities, and to be protected from exploitation, abuse, and war.

According to the [Childism Institute](#), similar to the way feminism seeks equal opportunity and participation for women and girls in society, childism “recognizes that young people are often disadvantaged compared to adults. And so it strives to change societies in ways that better respond to children’s actual lives.” In this lesson, you will...

- learn about childism
- evaluate how childism functions in school
- examine youth-led activism that has made the world a better place for everyone
- begin to organize for change in your school and community

Introduction

Read “[Childism: An Introduction](#)” and respond to the following questions:

Define childism in your own words.

Who can be a childist? What does that mean?

What is your most important takeaway from the reading?

What is one question you still have?

Consider This

Since [Greta Thunberg](#) first held a sign outside of the Swedish parliament at the age of 15, she has gone on to become a Nobel Peace Prize winning world leader and advocate for action on the issue of climate change on behalf of young people.

Read through this description of [6 Youth-Led Political Movements](#) and reflect in the spaces below to get inspired to join or lead your own youth-led movement:

What do these movements have in common?

How do these groups get adults to listen? How do they work to achieve their goals?

Though this article is focused on the United States, what is an issue or group near you that you would like to get involved in?

You can also use the [UNICEF: Five child activists you need to know](#) article from the Media section instead of the linked article for this section!

Making Change

Childism helps us understand how young people and children should have a say and a stake in how the adult world impacts them. The youth leaders mentioned throughout this lesson make clear that the future and the adult world is always up for re-negotiation, there is always room for improvement in society, and that youth as future adults are the ones to lead that change.

Though children and students in school are not generally protected by the same labor laws as adults, the tools for organizing for change remain largely the same! LaborNotes has made resources from their book, [Secrets of a Successful Organizer](#), freely available to print, use, and share.

If there is an issue in your school, community, state, or nation that you believe needs to be changed or conditions that need to be improved, use these resources and the checklist below to help start the organizing process toward change:

 **WHY MAKE A NEWSLETTER?**

If you're looking to keep your organizing going beyond a single campaign, monthly meeting, or shop floor transformer that comes out on a regular schedule such as monthly. Even in a more professional world, a good newsletter can be:

- **Create an opportunity for conversations.** "Has there you seen that? What do you think?"
- **A visible expression of the union's power in the workplace.** Organize can't do it to not allow in organizing management's activities. One would notice in another and say, "They got a hold of that!"
- **A tool to pressure management.** Issues don't like to sit there without being out for light of day. You can tell by the way they react to the printed word.
- **A forum for information and debate.** The organizer can show and management. Address workers about what's happening in other departments and in the outside world, and offer criticism and proposals by the union.
- **The voice of a caucus.** In a local that's very healthy, no, a reasonable newsletter can be one of the most ways that teachers find out what's going on.
- **An attractive project to join.** A newsletter covers jobs for people with different sorts of skills: gathering news, writing, editing, designing, taking photos, designing, taking out, distributing, and fundraising.
- **The face of your organizing committee.** The union people behind the organizer give credibility and heart to support. Anonymous newsletters have too credibility. Some newsletter groups, rather than putting a signature on each article, print a list of the names of everyone involved, so that the newsletter is a collective product.

 **HOW TO BE A GOOD LISTENER**

- **Avoid distractions.** Look the other person in the eye, and put your phone away.
- **Slow down.** Our brains process thoughts four times faster than spoken words. It's easy to skip ahead in a conversation, using your imagination to fill in the gaps and miss your response. Start slow and fast. Focus on what is actually being said.
- **Don't interrupt.** Take the time to hear the full story.
- **Keep an open mind.** Don't assume you already know what someone cares about. People will surprise you.
- **Don't fish.** Avoid leading questions like "Don't you agree that...?"
- **Practice empathy.** Sometimes people need to let off steam. Don't discourage them. Your immediate task is to hear what they have to say, not to judge.
- **Show that you hear what they're saying.** Repeat, ask follow-up questions, and repeat back what you understood. If you don't understand, ask.
- **Find common ground.** You don't have to agree with every point, but look for areas of agreement, and acknowledge where you differ.
- **Don't feel you need to sell something.** An organizer is not a salesperson. You're generally looking to hear the other person's point of view and create something new together.

 **ORGANIZING ESSENTIALS**

TALK ONE ON ONE
Learn to talk one on one with an adult worker. Share your own ideas. Don't just present a plan—help create a plan. Show problems that can be solved.

ENCOURAGE CONFIDENCE
You and your co-organizer help build trust together. In safe and confident adults help. Showed people what will happen if they do nothing. Bring them down on their confidence in management of their life.

CHALLENGE AUTHORITY
Management don't need to dominate the flow. We do need to encourage people to question authority and stand up for their rights. Right one time to challenge the people in power.

RECRUIT GOOD LEADERS
Look for a mix of people, organized and unorganized. Look for leaders who are not just workers but also have some ideas. Don't be the white of the line.

IDENTIFY COMMON PROBLEMS AND SHARED HOPES
We organize to bring people together. Talk and listen and see to build a picture of the common life of your co-workers. Share what you've heard.

ORGANIZE DEMOCRATICALLY
Include everyone who's in regular contact. Share and discuss your ideas and the people need the smallest. Adult workers and workers are never people or people in decision. Find a way to organize.

SET CONCRETE GOALS
Each activist to specific. Start with what's easiest to win. Make sure the majority of people agree on the goal.

GET PEOPLE MOVING
Don't just talk to the masses to bring them out. Making friends, connections. Choose a person. Make them a strong point. Your leader need help. It's all day every day. Make sure the meeting, and enough of the group.

 **QUALITIES OF A GOOD ORGANIZER**

- Effective organizers are **good at their jobs and respected** by the people they need to win.
- They have the **trust of their co-workers.** These organizers earn respect. When they offer advice, people listen.
- The best organizers are respected by a **strong sense of justice** and clear principles.
- They're **responsive, honest, and compassionate.**
- They're **realistic, and courageous.**
- Organizers want to be **good listeners.** They know you don't have to be the most vocal to have the biggest impact.
- They **bring people together**—discussing new connections on the job and looking for ways to liberate every worker.
- Organizers **move people to collective action.** They don't just solve problems, alone—they engage their co-workers to solve problems together.
- They put the **interests of the group first**, ahead of their individual concerns.
- They don't operate at low energy. They **respect group decisions.**
- Good organizers are **knowledgeable about their contract.** Not just about the labor when they don't know the answer.
- They can stay **cool under pressure** and handle stress and conflict.
- They're willing to **stand up to management**, and they can inspire others to stand up too (sometimes at work).

Organizer Checklist

Use this Organizer Checklist, summarized from the resources linked above, to consider a real issue or role-play a scenario, and use a separate sheet of paper, online document, or the spaces provided to brainstorm your response!

- **Identify an issue and set concrete goals**
A good organizing issue is widely felt, deeply felt, and winnable. Start from your ultimate objective and create goals and action steps that will lead to achieving that final objective. What is your ultimate goal on this issue? What are the in-between steps you'll need to reach this goal?
- **Identify the steps to make change on that issue**
Is it as simple as arranging a meeting with a school leader? A school board? How can you escalate your response if you are unable to make progress?
- **Identify others who are willing and able to help make the change**
These can be individuals and other groups (parent groups, for example, if the issue is in school or community groups if the issue is broader). The more people you have, the bigger impact your effort will have! Who are your allies on this issue? Who will join with you to help make change?
- **Evaluate the strengths of people in your group**
For example, if someone has a particular skill in drawing or graphic design, have that person design fliers and posters or social media content that can make your message sharable to a wider audience! What are the strengths of the people in your group? What do they do best?
- **Craft a message and communicate it**
More people will be willing to join and help if they understand and have awareness of your issue. Set up web pages and social media that people can easily join, follow, and share. How will you best communicate your message to the audience it will be most effective with?
- **Create opportunities and events to build community**
This can not only create opportunities for friendship and camaraderie, but can also generate positive action on your issue! Is there a regular meeting new people can attend? Are there immediate roles people can play to get involved and stay involved?
- **Show up IRL!**
Social media sharing is a good first step, but you also need to find a way to mobilize your community into action in real-life. Do you need to all attend a school board meeting to make your voice heard? Organize a letter-writing campaign to elected officials?
- **Celebrate success!**
You will keep up morale in your organization and motivate your members toward future action by celebrating individual and organizational success. Keep track of your goals, celebrate your successes, and shout-out the efforts of those who are making those goals possible! How will you celebrate successes as you achieve them?

Reflect

How would you rate your understanding of this concept? *Place an "X" in the corresponding box below.*



How has your understanding of this concept changed as a result of this lesson?

Which individual or community actions do you think would be achievable? Why?

What does social justice mean to you as a young person?