

Activism/Activist

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'Activism' has been present throughout history, in every sort of political system, however, attention towards activism has become increasingly prominent from the 1950's to today.

Definition:

Activism is action that goes beyond conventional methods to effect political or social change. This action generally consists of, but is not limited to, neighborhood organizing, protests, marches, and sit-ins.

An *activist* is a person who campaigns to bring about social change. Activists typically challenge policies and practices with a social goal, not to obtain power themselves. Many activists are members of groups, which can be local, national or international. Operating in groups allows activists to undertake larger tasks through specialization of member roles, mutual support and organization.

Significance:

Activism is essential to bring about change in a political society. It gives people the power to intervene in social, political, economic, or environmental reform to make changes in their communities that benefit the perceived greater good. Throughout history activism has proved to be highly effective in movements such as the Labor movement, the Women's Rights movement, and the civil rights movement. Recently, activism has had a major impact on movements like the Black Lives Matter movement. Activism includes the act of speaking up about personal causes, voicing the support of an individual's opinions. Activism enables marginalized and minoritized groups to stand up for themselves to achieve a social or political goal on issues that impact them. Activism also represents how effective one can be by becoming engaged with their community when those in power are acting against what they believe.

Methods:

Nonviolent action, a technique of action for applying power in a conflict by using methods that are not physically violent, is a major component of activism and oftentimes utilized by activists to peacefully bring about change. Researcher Gene Sharp has contrived a list of 198 methods of nonviolent action that has been used to generate social change in the past. This list contains acts of staying at home or letter writing to international boycotts. Noncooperation is widely used in social movements and consists of acts such as boycotts and strikes. The third type of nonviolent action used in activism movements is intervention which includes sit-ins, fasting, and political institutions. A less commonly used method of activism is violent action. Violent activism is carried out by those not authorized to do so, sometimes referred to as freedom fighters or terrorists.



Key Ideas/Tools:

Commonly used methods of nonviolent action:

- Protests
- Marches
- Letters of opposition or support
- Lobbying
- Teach-ins
- Sit-ins

Ways to become an activist:

- Educate yourself and others
- Practice the type of activism you support
- Protest
- Sign petitions
- Donate
- Vote

Further Scholarly Resources:

Articles:

198 methods of nonviolent action. Albert Einstein Institution. (n.d.).

<https://www.aeinstein.org/nonviolentaction/198-methods-of-nonviolent-action/>.

Parsons, E. C. M. (1AD, January 1). *"Advocacy" and "activism" are not dirty words—how activists can better help conservation scientists*. *Frontiers*.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2016.00229/full>.

Books:

Jordan, T. (2004). *Activism!: Direct Action, hacktivism and the future of society*. Reaktion Books.

Parsons, E. C. M. (1AD, January 1). *"Advocacy" and "activism" are not dirty words—how activists can better help conservation scientists*. *Frontiers*.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2016.00229/full>.

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