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Devil's Advocate: 16-year-olds are reasonable and responsible enough to vote

By Alec Calvillo

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(Kayla Alcaraz / Daily Titan)

In April, Charles Allen, a district council member, introduced the idea of decreasing the legal voting age to 16 in Washington D.C. Allen was inspired by the “March for Our Lives” teens who protested against [guns in March](#).

Students are taking on new roles as activists and some are even more informed about politics and legislation than adults. There’s no reason or argument to prevent them from voting because as future leaders, it’s better to get them to actively participate in the processes that drive society.

Rob Robinson, political science assistant professor, holds an optimistic outlook and said 16 and 17-year-olds can be responsible voters.

“The average 16-year-old and 17-year-old is not really any worse off in terms of intellectual ability, engagement or passion than the average 50-year-old,” Robinson said.

Lowering the voting age isn’t a radical idea for the United States. In 1971, the 26th Amendment was revised so the voting age went from 21 to 18.

It seems the United States always waits for tragedy to occur in order to create new legislation. Protesting isn’t enough to persuade politicians. The students at Stoneman Douglas High School started their own campaign called “[March for Our Lives](#),” which has sparked a new revolution through student activism.

Whether older generations would like to believe it or not, youth also share many distinct similarities with them. Not only do 16-year-olds have the desire to vote, but they can drive, pay taxes and work. They take on the same responsibilities as adults, yet they can’t vote.

Student expression in grade school has been limited for many years. The government has tried to silence their speech with ridiculous precedents like the famous Supreme Court case *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*.

The students at the Hazelwood East High School newspaper were writing articles on teen pregnancy and death when the principal decided to pull the articles before publication. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the principal, and found his actions didn’t violate the First Amendment.

The federal government is scared of allowing youth to object to their laws and would rather keep them cooperative by feeding them nationalism. They’re scared of any disagreement that might stir up among students with different political views, but America has already created hostile partisan debates.

The government can't keep the youth silent anymore, not when their schools are victims of another mass shooting.

Students from Stoneman Douglas High School stomped on Marco Rubio in Florida and got him tongue tied during the town hall meeting hosted by CNN back in February. They have caught on to dirty tricks that senators and their parties have, like laundering money through nonprofit organizations that are also known as super PACs.

Along with lowering the legal voting age, schools should enforce more government-based classes so students can learn how to be good voters and how to recognize false information.

The government is afraid of Generation Z because they're the ones who are going to change the United States the most, and it starts with lowering the voting age. Hopefully, California will follow in the footsteps of Washington D.C. and lower the age too.

Allen and others are willing to give youth a chance and it's time to give democracy a new look because the one we have currently looks like a plutocracy.