

Traditional activism, the right approach

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



Traditional Activism, the Right Approach Imagine the President of the United States creating a ban on something everyone enjoys like cookies. You may feel outraged and have two choices. On one hand you may find a page online and “ like” the page or “ follow” it for support. If you choose this route, the President may see the page and overlook it seeing no threat. On the other hand you could organize a group to protest outside of the White House to get the ban lifted. In this case the President may feel more threatened and may seriously rethink his law. Traditional activism is the best way to get results. Although it takes more work it provides a better outcome in the end.

Traditional activism provides close friendships, it contains a hierarchical organization, and it is a legitimate way to earn respect for your efforts. Social media and networking is the exact opposite of these things. Half a century ago, four African American college students performed a sit in at a local diner. Soon, many other individuals across the country, especially the South, had joined in. It slowly became an important civil-rights movement. Back in the early nineteen-sixties, computers and the internet were not a factor in people’s everyday lives. Therefore, this big movement was created and spread by word of mouth. This experience shows that change always was and still can be achieved without the help of texting, Facebook, e-mail, etc. Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites offer one to have many “ friends”. In reality, though, this amount of friends is extremely higher than the actual amount we have in our lives. Traditional activism has been proven to create many true friendships without the help of social media. While one may have never met over half of their online friends, they could have met many or all of their friends through the act of traditional activism. For

example, in the case with the diner sit in, David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair, and Joseph McNeil were all friends with each other and some were even roommates (Gladwell). Their close ties with each other started a civil-rights movement and other friendships with other people cause the movement to spread through other areas of the nation. With friendship comes courage and with courage comes change. This type of change would not have been as successful had it been started through social networking. Social media and networking lacks one important factor of activism, hierarchical organization (Gladwell). Within a hierarchical organization there is a single leader and everyone below him or her follows the rules. Without one every person has their own opinion and contribution which could cause the group or organization to fall apart. International-relations scholars Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Calvert Jones state a very good fact pertaining to Germany in the nineteen-seventies, the far more unified and successful left-wing terrorists tended to organize hierarchically, with professional management and clear divisions of labor. They were concentrated geographically in universities, where they could establish central leadership, trust, and camaraderie through regular, face-to-face meetings. (qtd. in Gladwell) Whereas the opposite of these groups who lacked a hierarchical organization were not disciplined failed due to disloyalty and un-organization. When a person is a member of a group on the internet they are likely asked for donations. A lot of times one may not know who is really asking for their money. Clicking to give a donation is a “ small change, is a movement and a piece of faith that contributes to a greater whole...a hell of a lot easier to do on the Internet" (Boyd). People see this as the easy way out

to helping a cause however they are giving away a lot of personal information. How do we know if this person or group is legitimate and will not steal our information and money? In many cases we do not know. Identity theft is a big problem on the Internet today and people are too willing because they believe that donating to a group on Facebook is a legitimate substitution for traditional activism. Every time a person “likes” a cause or “follows” them on twitter, it shows up on their own page. The question here is, “are the groups causes? Or are they accessories—a piece of virtual flair that members could collect to show off their cultural sensitivity” (Hesse). While we may like to feel we have done something important it is human nature to want to be recognized and appear to be a “good person”. One day someone likes one cause and the next they forget about it and move on to the next one. Traditional activism, however, takes dedication and lacks the emptiness that social media provides. In her article Jennifer Preston writes about an incident of police brutality in Egypt. A man was beaten to death. “Human rights advocates said he was killed because he had evidence of police corruption” (Preston). The article states that there were video tapings posted on YouTube and a Facebook page was created in honor of the deceased man. The Facebook page was created to give Egyptians “a rare forum to bond over their outrage about government abuses” (Preston). The death of this man and the publicity it created supposedly inspired the Egyptians to stand up against the government for doing such terrible acts. The article, however, has no proof of any action taking place. Traditional activism would have united the opposition and strengthened their ties to come up with a solution and to act on it. Once again, social networking as a form of activism

had failed. In conclusion, traditional activism is the right approach to get results. It provides one with friendships not available online, it is organized, and it provides a person with the "flair" that they are searching for.

Traditional activism is the right approach to a big issue and it provides people with a successful way of changing the world they live in while social media and networking does not. Works Cited Boyd Myers, Courtney. "Has Social Media Reinvented Social Activism?" *The Next Web*. *The Next Web*, 12 Sept. 2010. Web. 13 Sept. 2011. Gladwell, Malcolm. "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted." *New Yorker*. *New Yorker*, 4 Oct. 2010. Web. 13 Sept. 2011. Hesse, Monica. "Facebook Activism: Lots of Clicks but Little Sticks." *Washington Post*. *Washington Post*, 2 July 2009. Web. 13 Sept. 2011. Preston, Jennifer. "Movement Began With Outrage and a Facebook Page That Gave It An Outlet." *New York Times*. *New York Times*, 5 Feb. 2011. Web. 13 Sept. 2011.