

A Short Introduction to Youth Rights

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Adam Fletcher.

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Recommended citation:

Fletcher, A. (2014) *A Short Introduction to Youth Rights*. Olympia, WA: The Freechild Project.

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1. Why Talk About This?

The world keeps changing. More people are gaining more access to more information than ever before. Along with that information, more people are creating opportunities for themselves. Unlike the past though, young people are included as never before.

For much of the last decade, I have been engaged in an ongoing conversation with young people and adults around the world focused on the question, “What can youth do to change the world?” The answer is that there is no limit.

It is important for adults to recognize that young people are assuming more responsibility than ever before. As my work through The Freechild Project has shown, youth *are* changing the world like never before. They are doing this by improving schools, healthing the environment, promoting positive community development, challenging apathy and promoting civic action like no other generation.

Unfortunately, cultures around the world have had oppressive attitudes towards young people for hundreds of years. We have routinely and systematically segregated children and youth from adults; made them into the chattel of adults; eliminated their economic livelihoods; fought their attempts to restore balance to social perspectives of their capabilities.

I hope this *Short Introduction to Youth Rights* shows another way.

— Adam Fletcher
Olympia, Washington, USA
October 2014

The solution of adult problems tomorrow depends in large measure upon the way our children grow up today. There is no greater insight into the future than recognizing that, when we save children, we save ourselves.

—Margaret Mead

2. What Are Rights?

There are certain things that everyone should be able to experience, do and have in their lives. They should be able to do those things *simply because they are human beings*. Nobody should have to earn those things. Those things are called *rights*, and everyone has rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the first international statement to use the term "human rights." It is short, and worth reading the whole document. There are many rights included in the document. Among the 50 rights included in the document, some include:

- The right to equality
- Freedom from discrimination
- The right to life, liberty, and personal security
- Freedom from slavery
- Freedom from torture and degrading treatment
- Right to recognition as a person before the law

The European Convention on Human Rights was the first international document that gives people the right to take the government to court based on human rights abuses. In the United States, rights are named and protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The legal system was designed to protect, enforce and uphold those rights. Most nations have legal mechanisms like a Bill of Rights that make rights available for certain people.

3. Who Are Youth?

There is no universal agreement on who youth are. Some people say that youth is more a state of mind than a time of life, like former United States Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who famously said, “This world demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease.”

However, many government agencies, nonprofit programs and media outlets define youth as a distinct period of time in life and name ages for when it begins and when it ends. In some instances, youth begins at 8 years old; in others, it starts at 16. The same ambiguity exists when naming when youth ends, as some it is happens at 18, 21 or 25 years old.

Legal systems around the world skirt the issue by using terms like adolescent, juvenile and teenager to describe this age range. Sometimes, this is to provide a distinct boundary for when people can begin voting or serving in a military; other times, it is to allow a person to be executed or taken from their families. The age ranges of youth are generally defined in law to meet political objectives, rather than for the genuine wellbeing of young people or society at large.

In the case of this publication, I will define youth as anyone between the ages of 12 and 18 years old. Anytime I refer to children, I am talking about anyone 11 years old and younger. When I use the phrase young people, I am including all people under the age of 18.

*Too many people grow up.
That's the real trouble with the
world, too many people grow
up. They forget. They don't
remember what it's like to be
12 years old. They patronize,
they treat children as inferiors.*

—Walt Disney

4. What Are Youth Rights?

Youth rights are the specific things every person has between the ages of 12 and 18 years old, including opportunities, freedoms, rights and responsibilities. They are distinct from the general human rights identified earlier because of the nature of the people addressed being between the ages they are. They are different from children's rights because they acknowledge the evolving capacities of youth, as well as the evolving nature of the society we all share.

A. Traditional Youth Rights

For more than a century, some youth and some of their adult allies have been advocating for youth rights. These rights have generally fallen into three categories:

1. **Provision**—Protect young peoples' access to particular things like food, clothes, shelter, education, etc.
2. **Protection**—Make sure that young people are safe from abuses, including physical, mental, and psychological abuse.
3. **Participation**—Give young people the opportunity to make, direct, evaluate and critique decisions that affect them throughout society.

Following is a list of the traditional youth rights that people have granted youth before, or that have been advocated for across the last hundred years.

Abuse-free living—All young people have the right to live free from all types of abuse, including emotional, physical and psychological abuse. They should live free from economic, social, cultural, religious and personal exploitation. They have the right to know peace and nonviolence throughout their lives.

Creativity—Without excuses, all young people have the freedom to creativity in speech, expression and action. This includes physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional creativity which can be shared without harming another person’s wellbeing or freedom to creativity.

Education—Whether through informal or formal avenues, all young people have the right to free and universal education. This education should cover everything essential for democratic participation throughout society.

Employment—All youth everywhere should be free to choose work that fulfills their objectives as young people. Reasonable limits focused on safety, health and wellbeing should be considered and taught to young people rather than mandated without their consent. Youth also have the right to fair pay and benefits for their labor.

*The young do not know
enough to be prudent, and
therefore they attempt the
impossible, and achieve it,
generation after generation.*

—Pearl S. Buck

Food access—The right to healthy, sustainable and essential food is the right of all young people everywhere in order to ensure their health and wellbeing.

Healthcare—The right to healthcare is essential for all youth. This includes mental, physical and spiritual health, and should not be limited according to a young person’s income.

Recreation—All young people have the freedom to recreation, whether through informal or formal avenues. Time and physical space should be guaranteed with both structured and unstructured opportunities to relax, have fun and socialize.

Shelter—Youth have the right to safe, secure and sustained shelter, whether with their family of origin or in other situations they find suitable. Shelter should not be provided contingent on adult approval or through manipulation.

Youth rights—Youth do not leave their rights behind at the door to the schoolhouse. As such, in educational environments young people have the distinct freedom and responsibility to exercise their rights, both as participants in democracy and as learners.

Movement—Young people have the right to movement and should not be restricted from it. This means they can walk, bicycle, or otherwise transport themselves, and should not be restricted from accessing public transportation the same way as other members of society.

Voting—Youth have a right to political representation in elected bodies, as well as the right to establish or relinquish laws affecting them and the larger society they are members of. This happens through voting and political participation.

5. Expanding Youth Rights

Somewhere along the way somebody got the idea that children and youth were not sufficiently protected by the general human rights documents. Worse still, youth believed they were protected but still had their rights routinely violated. So different people have created a variety of documents to expand the rights of children and youth.

A. The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The most powerful statement ever supporting the notion that young people have specific rights is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Combining all three categories of rights (provision, protection, participation), this document is the most-widely ratified treaty in the world, with every single nation on the planet except for two signing on. Those two nations are Somalia, where there is no functioning central government; and the United States, where conservative Republicans do not agree with the function or objectives of the document. Since the CRC focuses on “every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable under the child majority is attained earlier,” it includes youth rights.

Let us acknowledge and celebrate what youth can do to build a safer, more just world. Let us strengthen our efforts to include young people in policies, programmes and decision-making processes that benefit their futures and ours.

—Ban Ki-moon

Some of the rights guaranteed by the CRC include:

- Protection from discrimination
- The best interests of the child
- The right to life
- The child's right not be separated from his or her parents against the child's will
- The child's right to maintain contact with both parents if they separate

- The child's right to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings
- The child's right to freedom of thought
- The child's right to privacy
- The child's right to information from national and international mass media.
- Children placed in physical or mental health care settings have the right to a periodic review of their circumstances and treatment.
- The child's right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
- The child's right to rest, leisure and recreational activities.
- State obligations to protect children from all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to the child's welfare.

B. A Short History Of The Youth Rights Movement

As early as the 1860s, young people began protesting for more rights around the world. Working hard and earning meager wages, youth in Western nations demanded higher pay, fewer hours and access to more services. Later, as adults became allies in youth rights struggles around the world, young people fought for universal education, health care and more.

In the 1930s, an organization called the American Youth Congress produced a *Declaration of Rights of American Youth*, which they presented in front of the U.S. Congress. This was the first recorded effort by youth for youth to push a concise youth-focused policy agenda on the federal level. While they succeeded through the creation of the federal National Youth Administration, their efforts were ultimately dismissed because of the political affiliations of their membership.

During the 1950s and 60s, the Civil Rights Movement included a lot of brash leadership by young people. Claudette Colvin was 15 when she refused to give up her seat for a white woman, 9 months before Rosa Parks' famous launch of the modern movement. The youths

at the Greensboro Sit-ins were 18 and 19 years old and in their first year of college. The Birmingham Campaign, focused on challenging the cultural, political, economic, educational, and social discrimination blacks faced in that Alabama city, was most successful when adult organizers actively engaged child protesters in calling for their rights. While these were youth rights-specific campaigns, they were successful civil rights movements that continue to inspire young people today.

In the 1960s and 70s, a youth liberation movement emerged around the idea that young people of any age could and should have the full and complete rights of all adults, and not just the limited ideas that were pushed around by well-meaning adults. According to those youth rights activists, children and youth of all ages should be allowed to vote, work, drive, own property, travel, have legal and financial responsibility, control their own learning, and have a guaranteed income. There were even more far-out elements of this platform that called for all young people to be able to use drugs and have sex without restraint. Some of these radical ideas were clearly differentiated from the youth rights movement, although some of the platform continues to influence individuals and organizations today.

*To trust children we must first
learn to trust ourselves...and
most of us were taught as
children that we could not be
trusted.*

—John Holt

In the mid-1990s a youth rights movement emerged on the Internet calling for society to pay attention to several parts of this platform. In other arenas, youth-led organizing has expanded towards completely youth-led campaigns in cities across the U.S. and around the world. At the same time, work in the United Kingdom and across Europe led to particular expansions of youth rights, including increased opportunities for civic engagement and voting rights being lowered in several nations.

Since the beginning of the new millenium, youth rights advocates have been active around the world. Youth in Chile have taken over the nation's school systems in order to have more rights in schools. Youth in Scotland played a vital role in their nation's referendum to stay

part of the United Kingdom. Youth in the United States are organizing for social justice across the nation. Youth in Hong Kong are leaders in the pro-democracy movement.

Its important to understand that there is no single agenda for youth rights everywhere, all of the time. Instead, the youth rights movement is made of many, many agendas reflecting the diversity of young people around the world today. Following are some of the youth rights issues being addressed today.

C. Nontraditional Youth Rights Issues

Age discrimination—Bias towards adults leads to discrimination against youth, which is called adultism. Adultism exists throughout society, including places made for young people. Young people have the right to live without being discriminated against because of their age.

Curfews—Youth have a right to live without arbitrary confines based on time. In the presence of curfews based on age, young people cannot express themselves, take work, or fulfill their right to free movement whenever they want.

Behavior modification camps—In the absence of being able to choose what is best for their own health and wellbeing, youth effectively loose all their rights. Behavior modification camps inherently discriminate against every part of a young person’s identity.

Civic youth engagement—The right to vote, run for political office and campaign freely for themselves or other people belongs to all young people. Being able to complete other civic activities is a right of youth too, including volunteering and participating in community groups.

Criminalization—Portraying all young people as castaways to mainstream society, the media and police often make young people into criminals by virtue of being young. Youth have the right to not be associated with crime, victims or punishment belonging to people who do.

Drinking age—Young people have the right to learn responsible drinking through moderation and education instead of limitation and separation.

Driving age—Without arbitrary age determining ability, young people should have the freedom to drive vehicles as they are physically and mentally capable.

Economics—Youth have the freedom to earn money, save money and invest their time and energy how they choose. They should have the right to use economic institutions at their own volition, and to be represented for the taxes they pay.

Education reform—The right to learn should not be sacrificed to adults who do not know how to engage young people as partners in schools. Youths have the right to transform education as equal and meaningful partners throughout the education system.

Emancipation—The right to become independent of their parents for legal purposes is important for the safety, wellbeing and health of youth.

Entertainment—Access to entertainment and the creation of media for themselves and other people to consume is a right all young people have. The ability to choose for themselves what they want to consume, what they want to produce and whether they want to participate should be determined by their capacity to choose, rather than their age.

Juvenile Justice—Youth have the right to equal and fair treatment in the eyes of the law, whether through traditional trial by peers or restorative justice. Punishment, retribution and

We are all creative, but by the time we are three or four years old, someone has knocked the creativity out of us. Some people shut up the kids who start to tell stories. Kids dance in their cribs, but someone will insist they sit still. By the time the creative people are ten or twelve, they want to be like everyone else.

—Maya Angelou

other consequences should reflect their personal growth and abilities, and not be generalized across all youth.

Media Representation—Being portrayed unfairly due to their age is not justice for anyone, and because of this all young people have the right to be represented fairly in the media. They should not be typecast or stereotyped because of their age, race, socio-economic status, educational level, or other perspective, either.

6. Youth Rights in Schools

As a distinct environment where young people spend a majority of their waking hours, schools affect youth in very specific ways. Following are issues regarding youth rights in schools.

The information in this section was adapted with permission from The Student Bill of Rights Project. It was a collaboration to create a national student-led mandate for schools in the United States led by the National Youth Rights Association in coordination with Oblivion, The Freechild Project and Students for a Sensible Drug Policy. More than 3,000 edits were made by more than 100 participants from each of these organizations.

Students don't shed their constitutional rights at the school house gates.

—US Supreme Court,
Tinker v. Des Moines

Existence and Belief—All youth have the undeniable right to the freedom of existence and belief in every imaginable area including, but not limited to, sexual orientation, political, moral, and spiritual beliefs, and the freedom to express such beliefs without fear or influence from our schools, as long as no one's property or person is physically damaged or violated by said beliefs.

Expression—Youth have the right to wear any clothing they want, when they want, how they want, without codes of appearance hindering their free expression in schools. Clothes should not materially, substantively, and/or directly disrupt the educational process (to be judged by youth and adults). All youth in all schools have the right to freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom to organize protests or petitions of grievances to any employee in the educational system, which includes the school, district, state, or federal staff, and all elected, appointed, official or unofficial leadership.

Self-Control, Self-Management, and Self-Leadership—All youth in all schools have the right to choose what classes he or she wishes to participate in, without pressure from parents, teachers, guidance, and administration.

Skills Recognition—All youth have the right to be certified in their skills and educations, regardless of arbitrary requirements imposed by school administrators, the government, or parents. To fulfill this, certificates of completion and class transcripts individual to a given course should be awarded by schools for each course they teach. Youth have the right to choose which form of diploma they may pursue, be it individual class, vocational or career-specific, college preparatory, or state awarded. From this follows that youth have the right for their certificates of academic preparation to be equally evaluated by any future school, college, or university to which they may apply; and youth who choose to pursue diplomas other than a standard high school diploma have the right to have their individual courses evaluated as a measure of their academic achievement.

Self-Incrimination—All youth in all schools have the right to deny self-incrimination. No youth can be forced, under threat of punishment or otherwise, into signing any documents that state that they confess to having done something against school policy.

Assistance—All youth in all schools have the right to refuse assistance in school, specifically help in the form of special education curriculum and instruction, medication, or psychiatric help. No public school may expel a youth who refuses these or other services. A youth may also reserve the right to petition the school for these services if he or she feels that they would help in some way.

School Records—All youth in all schools have the right to view on their own accord their school records and to request a copy of the specified documents.

Possessions—No school policies, such as zero tolerance, can punish a youth for having an educational tool, such as scissors or a compass, or a medication that is useful or needed. If a faculty member thinks a questionable object is unfit for school it can be confiscated (as long as it is returned in a timely manner) without punishment, but no one can deny a youth a

needed medication. If a youth is found with a medication considered unfit to be on their person, a faculty member may take them to the nurse's office, but cannot personally confiscate it.

Refusing Education—All youth in all schools have the right to refuse education on a given day or altogether if they so choose. Laws inhibiting this act are unconstitutional by the Thirteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution prohibiting involuntary servitude.

Community Serving and Service Learning—No school may have a policy requiring a youth to complete community service requirements in order to graduate.

Any discourse about the future has to begin with the issue of youth because more than any other group they embody the projected dreams, desires, and commitment of a society's obligations to the future.

—Henry Giroux

Physical Safety and Support—All youth in all schools have the right to be free from harassment, assault, or bullying.

Corporal Punishment—All youth in all schools have the right to be free from all forms of corporal punishment, including but not limited to paddling, i.e., beating the youth's buttocks with a wooden board. It is, further, not enough to offer coercive choices to keep corporal punishment as an option. Schools, just as workplaces, need to be entirely free from all forms of corporal punishment and the sexualized and sadistic hostile environment they impart to all youth and staff.

Medical Care—All youth in all schools are entitled to immediate medical care if needed. The nurse's office shall not refuse any youth who expresses that they feel that they might vomit, have a seizure, become unconscious, or any other function that may lead them to be a danger to themselves and other youth in the classroom setting. Anyone who needs medical care is to be first priority.

Restrooms—All youth in all schools have the right to use the restroom facilities as needed.

Grievances—All youth in all schools who are the victims of harassment, physical, sexual, or otherwise, assault, or bullying, both verbal and physical, have the right to have their grievances dealt with in a proper manner, including an investigation into said incident, and proper punishment of the culprit, and determent of any act of vengeance. This includes harassment, assault, and bullying by teachers, staff, deans, guidance counselors, head principals, and vice principals. No youth is required to go to a specific person to report such incidences. Furthermore, any staff member who witnesses such acts is obligated to report them. Any youth or staff member who reports such incidences has the right to confidentiality.

Separation of School, Home, and Community—All youth in all schools have the right to organize, promote and participate in organizations of their choice on or off of school property, so long as they are law abiding.

School/Community Connections—All youth in all schools have the rights to seek sponsorships for their organizations from outside sources such as private businesses, church groups, and community centers. This right extends to sports teams, clubs organizations, and to music and art departments. This is to ensure that youth are able to enjoy activities of their choice without having to worry about funding being cut partially or completely from the school's budget.

Socio-Economic Status—All youth in all schools have the right to deny participation in any scholastic activity that requires communication in any form about family finances, home life, and/or the occupation of the youth parents.

School/Home Connections—All youth in all schools have the right to the separation of authority between home and school. Unless the school has strong suspicion of abuse (sexual, physical, and/or psychological), neglect, and/or endangerment, they may not question a youth about his or her home life. If the school has evidence of abuse, they are to report it immediately to the authorities.

Privacy—All youth in all schools have the right to refuse drug testing unless there is a court ordered warrant for it. Refusal to take a drug test is not to be considered sufficient reason for a warrant.

Searches—All youth have the right to refuse searches of their person and personal belongings such as purses, book bags, and lockers unless there is a court ordered warrant for it. Refusal to allow a search is not to be considered sufficient reason for a warrant. Furthermore, all youth have the right to have a purse or book bag in their possession, and also the right to the temporary ownership of any available locker.

Fair, Equitable, Adequate, and Appropriate Learning—All youth in all schools have the right to be provided an adequate and well balanced education regarding the topics of drugs, alcohol, and human sexuality. Youth and only the youth are to decide whether they want to learn these topics. A parent may not withhold their child's education if the youth is willing and wants to learn. Likewise a parent cannot force their child if the youth does not want to learn, and nor can the school, unless it is considered necessary for a degree in a particular subject.

School Continuity—All youth in all schools have the right to an uninterrupted education. No school will refuse to enroll a youth or deny a youth their education because of their living arrangements or home situation. A parent may not un-enroll their child from school if the youth wants to continue to attend. No law shall be passed or enforced that directly or indirectly denies a youth their right to an education.

Topics—All youth in all schools have the right to a quality education that covers the disciplines, including music and the arts, and is fair and balanced. Teachers have the right to teach and cover more material than what the school administration has prescribed, so long as it is within the limits of the law and all the required material is covered.

Democratic Participation—All youth in all schools have the right and responsibility for being involved in educational decision-making at all levels, including decision-making

affecting them personally, in their classrooms, local schools, and at the district, state, and federal levels.

Influencing Youth Leadership—All youth in all schools have the right to be led by the moral and political leadership of their peers while at school. No adult may directly or indirectly impede or influence the activities of a youth governing body.

Teacher Evaluation—All youth in all schools have the right to express their concerns and complaints regarding a teacher's or staff member's performance, and have their opinions taken into consideration.

Youth Participation—All youth in all schools have the right to participate throughout their school and the education system. This includes the right to representation, participation, and meaningful involvement as education planners, evaluators, teachers, researchers, advocates, and as community organizers focusing on education.

Full Participation—All youth in all schools have the right to full participation in all forms of formalized education decision-making, including committees, site councils, school boards, and other venues. Youth must be allowed, encouraged, and able to full participation, including voting in school boards, budget referendums, and other activities, and in all areas of education, including budgets, personnel, and curricula.

Youth Courts—All youth in all schools have the right to youth-led courts. These courts have the right to privacy and effectiveness, and no adult may directly or indirectly impede or influence their ability, authority, and sustainability without permission of the youth governing body.

Participation—All youth have the right to participate in any school sponsored activity. No school may deny any youth the right to participate in any sport based on their grades, performance in said sport, or membership in any youth based group. No school may deny any youth the right to participate in any sport on the basis of gender if the sport is not offered

for both males and females. No school may deny any youth participation in school athletics if they are involved in a community athletics team.

Access—All youth in all schools have the right to knowledge about this document and the values, perspectives, and knowledge contained herein. No school has the right to keep a youth ignorant about his or her freedoms within this document, or any other document that contains information such as rules or rights the youth has. No employee of a school may lie to a youth about his/her rights, or anything contained in these documents.

7. Today's Youth Rights Movement

The youth rights movement today continues with varying agendas and purposes. Some of the issues being addressed by the youth rights movement around the world include families and home; education and schools; society and culture; government, law and legality; medical and mental health; elections; and economics.

There are dozens of organizations and programs committed to convictions that young people have the right to free speech, sexual education and safety, foster youth rights, youth involvement, and much, much more. At least one annual conference heralds youth rights exclusively, and more areas than ever are concerned with youth rights than ever before. Activists around the United States are challenging discrimination against youth by holding protests, producing publications, going to court, and creating pro-youth climates in a variety of communities and institutions. Around the world, young people are demanding more action than ever before.

Our youth are not failing the system; the system is failing our youth. Ironically, the very youth who are being treated the worst are the young people who are going to lead us out of this nightmare.

—Rachel Jackson

The gulf between the intent and activities of the youth rights movement and the children's rights movement continues to grow. Traditional children's rights advocacy organizations continue adult-driven, adult-centric change focused on benefiting children's basic human rights; youth rights organizations are generally focused on expanding the current civil rights of youth and challenging discrimination against youth. Young people themselves, as well as adults who were youth rights activists, are winning court cases, taking influential jobs, and serving their communities in a variety of ways that continue to promote youth rights agendas, all without the multi-million dollar budgets and high influence of the people involved in the children's rights movement.

A. The Future Of Youth Rights

As the youth rights movement reaches into the future, I think it is important to ask if it is healthier to have a single, unified movement, or a movement coming from many directions asking different things.

- Is there a new agenda for youth rights in this millennium, or is the agenda set 40 years ago still useful?
- Does race, class, culture and education influence youth rights and youth activists?
- Is there a wider alliance beyond youth that the youth rights movement can find allegiance with?

Having answered many of these questions for themselves, I believe many youth rights activists can continue to influence and steer legislative, judicial and cultural change into the future.

8. Resources

For more resources and information, visit The Freechild Project, connecting young people and social change around the world at freechild.org.

A. Glossary

- **Activism**—Any attempt led by young people designed to create change in a community, school, government or other area.
- **Adult**—Any person identified by society as an adult; usually over 18, 21, or 25; or a person outside the age of majority.
- **Adultcentrism**—The practice of regarding adult, including their opinions, interests and actions, above young peoples’ opinions, interests and action.
- **Adulthood**—Bias towards adults and the resulting discrimination against youth. Schools, lawmaking, movies and music all reflect adults’ interests and perceptions. Even young people can unconsciously share adults’ perceptions of young people.
- **Adultization**—The elimination of childhood and adolescence by schools, marketers and parents in order to promote order and eliminate the “inconvenience” of youth.
- **Adulthoodocracy**—A governing system that assumes power should be concentrated in the hands of adult members of society; the collection of obvious and unobvious tools adults use to impose their authority, domination and superiority over children and youth.
- **Age**—An anniversary of birth.
- **Age of majority**—The age at which a person is granted by law the rights (as ability to sue) and responsibilities - (as liability under contract) of an adult.
- **Ageism**—Discrimination based on age.
- **Censorship**—Restricting access to information or limiting/eliminating freedom of speech
- **Child abuse**—Any violence—physical, emotional, social, moral, etc.—against a person because they are a child.
- **Children's liberation**—Freeing children from bondage they feel is imposed upon them by adults.

- Children's rights—Civil and human rights of children who have not yet reached adolescence; also, any right ordained by any common usage or ethics process of such a person.
- Civic engagement—Strong feelings of connection individuals make between themselves and the larger society in which they belong.
- Commercialism—Manufacturing and distribution of objects and traits that were formerly free to young people, particularly in the forms of education and culture.
- Consumerism—The process of identifying, training and transforming young people into complacent consumers rather than dissatisfied citizens.
- Criminalization—A formal and informal process that makes young people or their specific actions illegal, particularly when young people or their actions were legal in the past.
- Corporal punishment—Causing somebody pain in order to punish them.
- Cruising—Driving a car in a leisurely fashion for social purposes.
- Curfew—An order, rule or law that after a certain time a particular activity stops.
- Decoration—When young people are used to make a situation look sufficient, often without their consent or knowledge.
- Democratic schools—Learning communities in which students experience democratic norms in order to learn about democracy.
- Demonization—The process for making young people evil in order to justify attacking them in the forms of character assassination, legal action and to get rid of their civil liberties.
- Discrimination—Whenever someone makes a decision that does not include other people. Everyone discriminates all the time, and that is not always bad; also means treating an individual or group unfairly because of a predetermined judgment or their value, beliefs, action or otherwise.
- Drug testing—A biological test to determine the presence of alcohol or drugs within a person.
- Drinking age—A defined age at which a person can consume, purchase or be in possession of alcohol.
- Driving age—A defined age at which a person can operate a motor vehicle.

- Education—The transmission of values, culture, beliefs and knowledge, deliberately or otherwise.
- Elected office—A governmental position obtained through voting.
- Emancipation—A parent's relinquishing authority and control over a minor child; also, a court upholding a child's petition to force the parent to relinquish authority and control.
- Empowerment—An increase in a person's social, emotional, spiritual, political or educational ability.
- Engagement—The emotional, psychological, physiological or other connection a person feels towards a person, place, thing, activity, or outcome.
- Ephebiphobia—The fear of youth.
- Gerontocracy—Older people dominating the governance of institutions or governments in order to benefit.
- Gerontophobia—The fear of older people.
- Homeschooling—Structured learning happening away from a formal school environment, usually in a house.
- In loco parentis—Control over students legally appointed to schools; literally means "in absence of parents".
- Infantilization—Whenever a person is made unable or assumed to be incapable of something because of their age, presumed development, or education. Making a person feel, act, think, believe or otherwise become younger than they are.
- Intergenerational equity—Parity among all ages that sustains total participation throughout society.
- Jeunism—Preferring young people because they are young, and in turn, discriminating against adults (also called Youthism).
- Loitering—To delay or procrastinate, often by occupying one place for too long
- Manipulation—When adults exert influence over young people in order to gain for themselves.
- Maturity—The degree to which a person has developed (without regard to age); A perceived notion of above tied more to a person's age than their actual maturity

- Militarization—The process where young people and the procedures they participate in become overtly manipulated or controlled by the military or administered in a military fashion.
- Military conscription—The forced participation of people in the military that is disproportionately focused on young people (also called The Draft).
- Paternalism—The notion that by “protecting” children and youth, adults are preventing young people from harming themselves.
- Pediaphobia—The fear of children.
- Status offense—An act which is only considered criminal when committed by a minor.
- School reform—Intentionally changing schools to promote improved teaching, learning, accountability or outcomes.
- Student rights—The inherent freedoms and responsibilities of learners within an educational setting.
- Student voice—The unique perspectives, ideas, actions and knowledge of learners within an educational setting.
- Tokenism—Whenever young people are included in order to make it appear that young people are participating; occurs exclusive of meaningful participation.
- Unschooling—The term given to an increasingly popular method of homeschooling. Proponents of unschooling argue that a system of public education does not allow children to receive the best education available, as it is too centralized. Under unschooling education, parents act as facilitators and are responsible for keeping a wide-range of resources available to provide their children with a quality education.
- Voting rights—The ability of a person to share their formal opinion about an issue, for a representative, or otherwise within a group setting.
- Voting age—The formal age determining the right to vote.
- Youth/adult partnerships—Informal or formal relationships between people recognized as youth and as adults designed to foster equity between partners.
- Youth liberation—The complete emancipation of young people from adultism, adultcentrism and adultocracy.
- Youth rights—Distinct civil and human rights afforded to people people between the ages of 12 and 18, or otherwise according to an organization or government’s agenda.

- Zero tolerance—The complete refusal of an organization or institution to accept antisocial behavior, typically by strict and uncompromising application of the law.

B. Books by Adam Fletcher

Following are some additional books by Adam Fletcher, available from your favorite bookseller or online.

Ending Discrimination Against Young People

An examination of all the places, ways and issues where children and youth face adultism today. Includes an exhaustive look at the subject, and proposes deep changes as well as immediate steps everyone can take to make a difference.

The Practice of Youth Engagement

Provide a concise summary of the practices of the best youth engagement practitioners, this book details essential lessons, critical thinking and powerful considerations for all kinds of people, including parents, youth workers, teachers, counselors and others.

The Freechild Project Youth-Driven Programming Guide

An introduction for nonprofits, government agencies, and other youth-serving organizations that shares approaches, planning tools, evaluations and assessments, and more.

C. Learn more

The following organizations, websites and books can help you learn more about youth rights.

- Freechild’s Survey of North American Youth Rights freechild.org/SNAYR
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights: hrweb.org/legal/udhr.html
- European Convention on Human Rights
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Convention_on_Human_Rights

- United States Bill of Rights en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Bill_of_Rights
- Votes at 16 votesat16.org
- History of the American Youth Congress newdeal.feri.org/youth/index.htm
- National Youth Rights Association youthrights.org
- Youth Policy youthpolicy.org/
- Short summary of the CRC bit.ly/CRChildSummary
- Longer summary of the CRC bit.ly/CRCsummary
- Full text of the CRC bit.ly/UNCRChild
- Children's Rights en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children's_rights
- American Youth Congress en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Youth_Congress
- Declaration of the Rights of American Youth newdeal.feri.org/youth/ayc.htm
- YouthFacts youthfacts.org

Books

- *Framing Youth: Ten Myths about the Next Generation* by Mike Males
- *Scapegoat Generation* by Mike Males
- *Dumbing Us Down* by John Taylor Gatto
- *An Underground History of American Education* by John Taylor Gatto
- *Escape from Childhood* by John Holt
- *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* by Grace Llewlyn
- *Youth's Battle for the Ballot* by Wendell W. Cultice
- *The Handbook of Children's Rights* by Bob Franklin
- *Free the Children* by Allen Graubard
- *1984* by George Orwell
- *Teen 2.0: Saving Our Children and Families from the Torment of Adolescence* by Robert Epstein