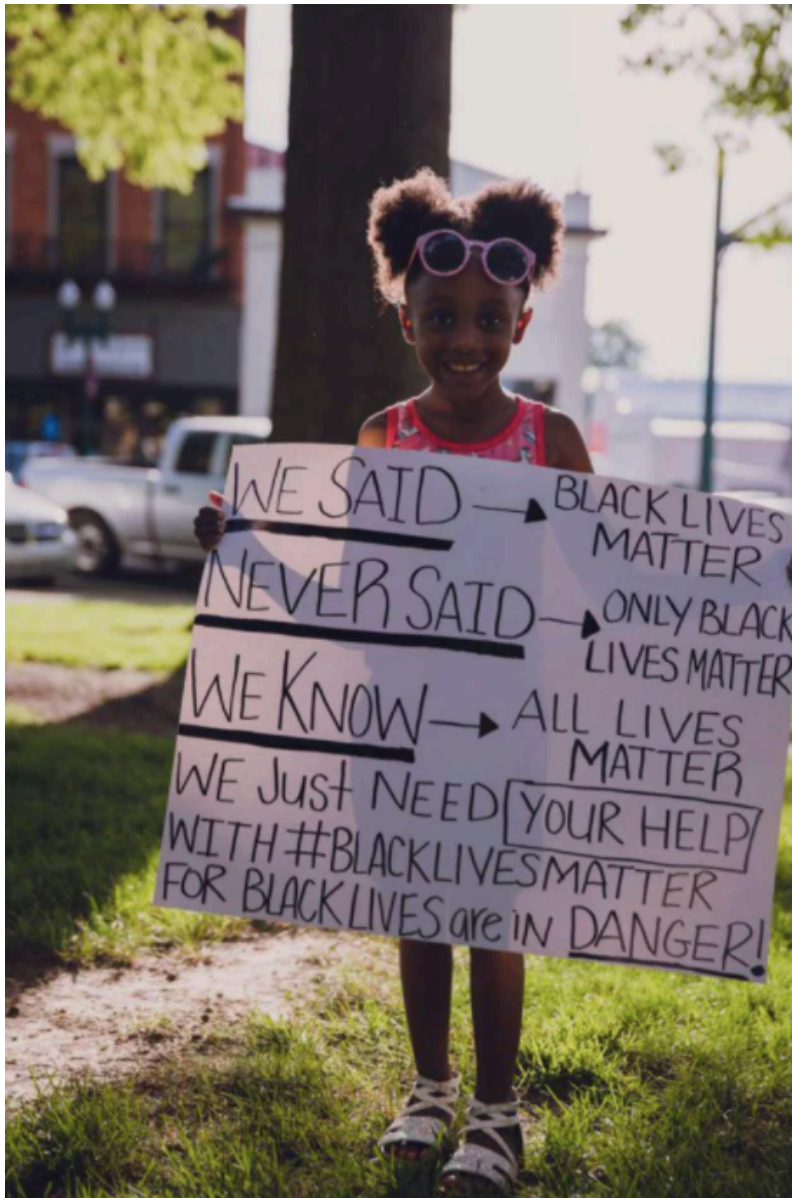


In 2019 I created my theatre company Todos Teatro and we began touring our first piece of theatre Turtles Don't Like Plastic for ages 3-7. Its a simple story about a turtle who gets trapped on an island made of plastic, who meets a plastic monster who's mission is to consume more and more and more and spread his plastic island across the whole world. The turtle teaches him to swim to show him the devastating impact his plastic empire is having on other sea-creatures. In the end (spoiler) he decides that 'less' is better and begins to clean up his island. In this show we wanted to communicate these big issues in a way that was simple and entertaining and in a way that very young children could understand. During the show we often have mini-hecklers getting involved (keeps us on our toes) telling the plastic monster off for making a mess and shouting at him to be kind and help the turtle. At the end of the show we have a big clean up and all the kids get involved with collecting and recycling all the rubbish on stage. We've witnessed pester power as a force for good when kids start asking their parents why they are drinking out of disposable plastic bottles. Parents have reported that their kids have stopped to pick up every bit of rubbish on the way home so it won't go into the sea and 'make turtles sad'. We've since made our mission to create theatre for young audiences in response to ecological crisis that inspires positive ecological change. We've been inspired by how children and young people are at the forefront of movements in climate and social justice. movements and want to make theatre that inspires and supports them.



Some might argue that children should wait until they are adults to get involved in activism and should enjoy their childhood in innocence and imagination. The fact is is that children can see what is happening in the world, they can watch tv, they are online, they hear it from their peers, from their parents. They might be victims of racism themselves, they

might wonder why some friends have more or less than themselves materially, they might feel confused about concepts of gender and why boys and girls are treated differently or feel like those labels don't feel true to who they are, they might feel very afraid for the future of the planet. Anyone who is raising siblings knows well that children feel unfairness deeply, even children as young as 15 months understand equitable treatment. This frustration and sense of injustice can be channeled into taking action. Getting involved in activism can be a great way for them to feel empowered, listened too as well as to change the world to make it a more sustainable, safer and fairer place.



In fact The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12, states that children should be allowed to express their views on things affecting them, and those views should be taken into account.

Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Here are some ways that kids can make a difference and be activists. They can't vote yet and don't have disposable income to donate but there are many ways they can make change. Nora Kramer of Youth Empowered Action has these suggestions

Awareness-raising, as we mentioned, can take the form of talking to friends and even grownups about an issue. Kids can also write for their student papers, or go to bigger platforms like social media or YouTube, to educate others about the issue. For younger children this could be as simple as creating posters for your windows

“Advocacy is turning awareness-raising into a call to action, specifically from a decision maker,” Kramer explained. This can take the form of marches and protests. Or it can be something quieter. You could help your child research whether there is legislation being proposed related to the issue, that might mean your local MP or council, for example. Then you can begin making phone calls or writing letters or emails together. You never know what kind of impact you can be making with these acts of engagement and communication.”

Direct service is essentially volunteering, for example helping to feed the homeless, or delivering groceries for older people during the pandemic. It could even include a beach clean up. These are small acts but they make a huge difference to the people receiving them.

Fundraising and donating can take on many forms, and no amount is too small, Kramer said. The old-fashioned lemonade stands and yard sales may be hard to do this year, but kids can still solicit donations from family members or on social media.

“It could be something that you do together as a family,” Kramer suggested. “You decide, ‘This week we’re not going to do this thing because we’re saving money, because we want to donate to this cause together.’”



In November 2019 the Australian prime minister Tony Abbot condemned the Schools Strike for Climate by saying “What we want is more learning in schools and less activism in schools.”. Arguably activism is as valuable educational experience as school time. Kids can learn organisational, research and communication skills, planning and strategising. They can learn to listen to others whose experiences may be different to their own and form ethical opinions. They can learn resilience and collaboration as no movements happen without setbacks and achievements can only be made when a group works together in solidarity.



What is very important for activists of any age is for them to understand what their cause is fighting against and what solutions exist that they are fighting for. This needs research and a commitment to always be learning so that good intentions translate to useful actions. At the end of this blog I have shared some family-friendly resources for further learning and with ideas about how to talk about about racial injustice, LGBTQ+, and women rights, anti-poverty and homelessness and environmentalism with young people. Conversations that come from this research can be uncomfortable, tricky and may challenge your own perceptions. Parents shouldn't avoid political conversations with their children, says Dr. Gail Saltz, an associate professor of psychiatry at the New York- Presbyterian Hospital Weill-Cornell School of Medicine, even if their children aren't quite ready for them, just that they should be adapted to the age and maturity of your child. Poet and activist Stacyann Chin and her daughter Zuri have some great examples of this in their Living Room Protest series on YouTube. Topics include consent, body-positivity and racism that are handled in an open and honest way that are totally age appropriate and acknowledge Zuri's big feelings. Just the same as adults self-care and play are vital, young activists need fantasy, imagination and escapism just as much as anyone. With that in mind let's encourage the

young people we know to express themselves, ask questions and work together to make the world we live in a better place.

Advice on children getting involved in activism.

<https://ideas.ted.com/activism-isnt-just-for-adults-and-teens-we-need-to-teach-younger-kids-to-be-activists-too/>
<https://yeacamp.org/what-you-can-do/>
<https://standuptothegrownups.net/147/basic-activism-principals/>
<https://hbinretrospect.com/2019/10/20/should-children-be-activists/>
<https://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/2272618/children-activists-protests-parents/>
<https://www.kq2.com/content/national/497897821.html>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86U11quqybU>

Resources for Kids and Families

Anti-racism

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Talking-to-Children-About-Racial-Bias.aspx>
<https://booksforlittles.com/racial-diversity/>
<https://www.todayparent.com/family/parenting/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-racism-an-age-by-age-guide/>
<https://www.essence.com/entertainment/childrens-books-racism/#540890>
<https://www.healthline.com/health/parenting/anti-racism-resources-for-parents-and-kids>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52965984>

LGBTQ+ Rights

<https://kids.kiddle.co/LGBT>
<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/>
<https://www.woojr.com/lgbt-trailblazers-pride-month-curriculum-kids/>
<https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/is-gay-pride-family-friendly>
<https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/06/14/rainbow-craft-ideas>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zr9q4xs>

Environmentalism

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52712926>
https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/8xwvq3/11-young-climate-justice-activists-you-need-to-pay-attention-to-beyond-greta-thunberg
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-climate-change>
<https://www.climatealityproject.org/blog/just-kids-what-climate-change-and-what-can-i-do>
<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/nature/save-the-earth-hub/>

Anti-poverty and Homelessness

https://kids.kiddle.co/Right_to_an_adequate_standard_of_living
<http://www.mothering.com/articles/6-simple-ways-your-children-can-help-the-homeless/>
<https://ripplekindness.org/10-things-you-can-do-to-help-the-homeless/>
<https://wellspringfs.org/blog/14-ways-effectively-explain-homelessness-and-poverty-your-child>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CX4TzWdDAFY>
<https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/>
<https://www.verywellfamily.com/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-poverty-4142890>

Women's Rights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6TMTGjCVzg>
<https://kids.kiddle.co/Feminism>
<https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-feminism>
<https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/5-ways-i-teach-my-children-intersectional-feminism-and-why-it-matters/>
<https://www.malala.org/>
<https://girlsinc.org/about-us/>