

Do You Vote? What Are Your Responsibilities?



Yes, I vote because it is one of the most important rights I have.

Iris M. Santiago



I don't vote because I don't like to vote. I don't know who the mayor of the city is. I don't know who my local representative is. I take responsibility in my community by paying my bills, taking care of my kids, and going to school.

Jose Ortiz



No, I don't vote because I don't like rules. But I respect my neighbor. I respect women at my work. I went to jury duty. And I pay taxes.

Ramesh



I believe poor people and middle class people, especially kids, have a right to health care. I believe it is important to pay taxes because that is the way the government raises funds to pay for services for the people. It is also important to know what's right and what's wrong and to take responsibility for your actions. Volunteering for your community and helping people is a good way to be responsible. Speak your mind about what's right and wrong. And vote. It is very important for us and our community.

Yashira Velilla



Voting doesn't matter because it's just an inside job. My responsibilities are my children. I make sure they do their school work and keep going on the right path.



Dennis Rodriguez



Do I vote? Yes, I vote because my vote makes a difference. I take responsibility in my community by not throwing garbage on the street, by taking care of older people in my community by helping them cross the streets, and by helping young children if they are lost in the community and take them to the policeman.




Suhail Arce



Do I vote? No, I don't vote, and to be completely honest I don't have a reason why I don't vote. My responsibilities in my community are (1) being a cautious driver. I make sure I'm safe, and I'm not a danger for others. (2) Volunteering: I like to help so the community can get better. And (3) child care: I love kids and I try to help so they can be good, helpful and most importantly so they can be safe.

Iris Anavitate

These quotes are from ABE and GED students in the Holyoke Adult Learner Opportunity (HALO) Center in Holyoke, MA. They were collected by teachers Margaret Boyle and Kelly Martin as part of classroom writings and discussions about voting and elections. Glenn Yarnell photographed the students and recorded the audio clips. This was the first time that HALO students utilized digital recording technology as part of class, and it sparked many ideas for future projects. Audio versions, read by the students themselves, accompany writings where you see the headphones symbol.  Listen to the audio at <www.nelrc.org/changeagent/extras>.

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Do you vote? Why or why not?
2. What are your responsibilities to yourself, your family, and your community?
3. Do you think voting is a right or a responsibility or both or neither?
4. Look at the "Three Types of Community Member" chart on page 4. Make your own chart with a column for each type of community member. Pick several of the students above and list their actions in the appropriate columns. For example, Suhail Arce directs lost children to the police. What type of community member is she when she helps lost children? What about when she votes?
5. Make a list of the actions you think contribute to a strong democracy.