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A teen's perspective: Voting on issues, not party can make all the difference

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Voting is a civic duty, is what I got told in school. But now I know how urgent it is. There's climate change, corporations dumping waste into the environment, healthcare, systemic racism, a world in which people are worried about basic necessities.

I'm 19 and this is my first general election.

There are a lot of hot button issues and reasons why young people should vote. Climate change exists. Some people still refuse to believe it. The person I vote for would also believe in the science, and listen to scientists about preventing climate change.

A current topic — defunding the police — reminds me of the phrase, "When your only tool is a hammer, every problem starts to look like a nail." A lot of shootings of people could have been prevented if police officers were taught de-escalating tactics.

A lot of people just vote for their party, which is fine, unless your party seems to be racist and misogynistic. All I want from politicians is to be responsible adults.

Greta Thunberg — that was her whole message" 'Hey, this is happening to the environment; adults, why don't you stop it.' They gave her a medal and did nothing about it. The president tweeted that she should be going to the movies with her friends instead, and got into a little Twitter war with her. That was ridiculous. You're not going to win a Twitter war with a 14-year-old, even if you're president.

What's important for people to know about young voters? Most of us definitely know how to spot fake news. I hear a lot of conservative news that says the coronavirus is like the flu. More people die from the flu, they say, but we have a vaccine and medicine for the flu, but we don't have that for coronavirus. The president got it, used his expensive medical care, and said it's not dangerous. But he has the best health insurance in the world and a whole team of doctors. Most people don't have what he has.

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Voting is important. We don't live in a world where change happens because countries just conquer one another. It's not medieval times. Besides protesting and running for an elective position, voting is the only thing that's going to help change anything.

On October 22, I'll be participating in a youth-led candidate forum for candidates running for office. The forum is sponsored by Peckham, Michigan's Children and the Institute for Educational Leadership. Forums are useful in helping you decide who to vote for and not vote for.

I'm going to be very clear there about what I believe in — like mask-wearing. I work at a hot grill seven hours a day, and I don't take it off unless I'm drinking water or eating. Wear a mask, wash your hands, don't go anywhere. That seems like the most important thing to tell everybody.

Boaz Overley, 19, attends Lansing Community College and successfully participated in Jobs for Michigan Graduates, a drop-out prevention program for youths facing barriers to high school graduation, at Peckham.