



## **Interview with Youth Activists: Anya Edwards & Tayjairine Arrieta**

### **Slide 3. What does it mean to be a student activist?**

*Tay:* I think being a student activist means understanding that the world isn't perfect. You can think outside of yourself to do the best you can to make change in the world. Everyone has the power to do that.

*Anya:* On a basic level, a student activist is a student who sees the change they want to see and actively tries to change it.

### **Slide 4. What influenced you to become a student activist?**

*Tay:* In middle school, I wasn't aware of things going on around me. Then I moved to a high school with a more diverse group of students, and my eyes were opened to the struggles of others.

*Anya:* Going to school has influenced me because from the first day of school a lot of the work is centered around being an artist activist. This is part of my everyday life.

Slide 5. **What kind of things have you done as a student activist?**  
**What was one of your first experiences?**

*Anya:* I went to protests with my mom at a really young age. But the first things that made me consider myself a student activist were things I've done this year. This year in the pandemic of Covid-19, I saw there was a push to open schools, and that this would put students and teachers in danger. The pressure was especially on schools with students of color and in families with low incomes. So I formed a student activist group. I gathered people without help from adults and facilitated meetings.

Slide 6.

*Anya continues:* I was asked to speak to the press, and that day school leaders decided to delay school openings. Everyone worked together with a clear goal. We felt happy because we felt people at the top were listening to all the people asking for more time and more resources. That was quite a victory.

Slide 7.

*Tay:* My first experience was last year. I went to the climate strike. Everyone there was from a different background, it was huge, and everyone shared a common goal.

Slide 8. **What have you enjoyed most? What's been challenging?**

*Tay:* It has been challenging to understand that people have different opinions.

I enjoy the community. Through the Black Lives Matter movement, people have been coming out from all over to protest. They dance in the streets and enjoy themselves while trying to bring about change.

*Anya:* A challenge is being brave. Speaking at a press conference was frightening. Public speaking is very scary for me, and there were a lot of cameras.

I agree about community. Also, when the scary things pay off it's joyful. The moment after you step down from the press conference, for example, is a different type of joy.

Slide 9. **Is there something you are working on now or something upcoming?**

*Anya:* I am student body president. The work we've been doing this year is focussed on creating space for student voice at my school.

*Tay:* Outside of school, I'm planning a beach clean up day. My little brother—he's six—is into the environment. If I use plastic at all, he gets upset! So I planned something for him to clean up a beach.

Slide 10. **Do you feel like your activism has made a change in your school?**

Anya: All of the tiny things you do can create change. Nothing I did individually caused change, but in the greater picture there was definitely change. I was part of that.

Slide 11. **Anything else you would like to share with second graders?**

Anya: Be brave; you can do it. The only thing you have to do is take action and this can be very small steps.

Tay: You don't have to be a big kid to be an activist. If you see something you feel is wrong, speak up because your voice is just as powerful as someone who's older than you.