

What's It Like to Be a Middle School AAPI Activist?

A middle school student is paving the way for future generations of youth activists by proving that even the youngest people can make a significant impact in their community.

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In March 2021, over 1,000 people marched over an I-580 pedestrian overpass in Berkeley, California, chanting and carrying signs with messages reading “Stand With AAPI,” “I Am Not a Virus,” and “Don't Mess With Grandma.”

The protesters—who gathered to speak out against [a rise in anti-Asian hate and violence in the Bay Area since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020](#)—were assembled thanks to the work of middle school student and activist Mina Fedor and her friends.

It was the first rally Fedor had ever organized. But it was certainly not the last.

Fedor is the founder of [AAPI Youth Rising](#), a youth-led organization dedicated to advocating for the issues impacting Asian American and Pacific Islander youth and amplifying their voices. “We sort of realized that youth could have a really big impact on the world and that our voices deserve to be heard and that our stories deserve to be told,” Fedor explained.

The group formed in 2021 while organizing that initial rally. Since then, AAPI Youth Rising has grown to 20 members, most of whom are middle school student activists. Members of AAPI Youth Rising have spoken at summits, contributed to youth leadership panels, registered new voters, and even discussed their work on “Good Morning America.”

Most recently, Fedor and her peers at AAPI Youth Rising have set their sights on education. The group hopes to fight anti-Asian hate and xenophobia by advocating for the inclusion of AAPI history in K-12 curricula. They want all students to know about the sweeping history of the AAPI community and their many contributions to American society—a [history that is seldom taught in schools](#), including Fedor's.

Fedor felt “failed” by the education she received about the AAPI community in school, which was limited to one “very traumatic” lesson about the [wrongful incarceration](#) of Japanese Americans in the 1940s. “There wasn't any sort of celebratory things about the accomplishments of AAPI or anything like that,” she said.

In addition to alienating students yearning to learn about their own history in school, Fedor believes that a lack of diversity in history curricula can have serious consequences for all youth. “It's very important to learn your own history and learn others' history because that is the first step to sort of working against racism,” Fedor said. “You have to learn about histories of racism and histories of celebrating other communities as well.”

In response to this lack of diverse curricula, AAPI Youth Rising launched the [ONE/180 pledge](#), which asks schools to provide at least one lesson on AAPI history each school year. The group is also providing their own [AAPI history lesson plans](#) that youth activists can present at their schools or student groups.

[DOWNLOAD THE LESSON PLAN](#)

For other middle school students who want to get involved in youth activism but don't know where to start, Fedor had this piece of advice: Try starting with one small action, such as speaking out about an issue at school. But keep your ambitions expansive.

“Don't feel like any action isn't significant,” Fedor said. “Don't feel like anything will be too big for you to achieve.”

Watch the video above, produced by One Day Studio, for more insight into how Fedor came to found AAPI Youth Rising.

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