

# portfolio piece

*What are we going to do differently when we get up tomorrow?*

— GLORIA STEINUM

*Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*

— MARGARET MEAD

## Action #2: Service/Activist's Guide to an Issue

For this major assignment, I'd like you to prepare a "Service/Activist's Guide to an Issue." The idea here is that you spend some time thinking about a social issue that is of real concern to you. (If nothing is coming to you, do a little reading, research, investigation, and thinking to find your focus.) Then, prepare a thoroughly researched document that presents the issue in-depth with the purpose of informing a person about the social issue you selected and moving them to action. You might think of this as a kind of "pamphlet" that could be used to convince and prepare someone to take action on this issue. So, this document you are preparing should be informative, persuasive, and practical to someone who wants to get involved.



### **What this Project Must Include**

While you can be creative with how you put together this persuasive guide, at a minimum, it should include the following important sections.

#### **1. Overview of the Issue**

First, it will be important to inform your reader of the broad issue. In this section, introduce the issue to your reader. This section, along with those that follow, should be well researched, so that your message is a credible one. As you inform your reader on the issue here, be sure to present the various perspectives on this subject so that your reader can understand any controversy. Why is it an issue? To whom is it an issue? What are the competing viewpoints? Consider both local and global perspectives when possible. Ultimately, your reader should understand why he or she should care about this issue.

#### **2. Background Research**

While the first section of your "Service/Activist's Guide" provides a broad overview on the issue, this section will go into more detail regarding background research. What factors have lead up to this issue? What is the important history surrounding it? Who has been involved with and/or affected by this issue? What progress and/or setbacks have those working on this issue experienced? Dig deep in this section. Show your research.

#### **3. The Current Situation and Challenges**

To work effectively on a difficult issue—whether through service or activism—it is important for a person to know what the current situation is surrounding that issue. The previous two sections provided broad explanation of the matter and some deep background, but what about the current moment? What's happening most recently on this issue? What's in the news? What are the present struggles people are facing in working on this issue? Find out what's current. (You will likely need to consider different kinds of sources to get the most recent information.) This will give your reader an understanding of what one would be getting into if he or she decided to take on this issue.



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## 4. What's Being Done?

In this section, include information about what people and/or organizations are currently doing to address the issue. This section, like the others, requires some research. It should include the specific information about activist or service organizations that are targeting this issue. Be sure to highlight specifically any local organizations (or chapters of organizations) that are addressing this issue. Don't underestimate the research you will have to conduct to write this section well. You should consider contacting some of these organizations to talk with a representative—maybe interview them, maybe visit their organization if this is an option. Really get to understand what they are all about. Also, as you write about the various organizations involved in this issue, be sure to make it clear to your reader what the mission of the organization is and how they go about doing their work. How extreme or moderate would you say the group is? For example, in the area of animal rights, PETA is sometimes considered rather aggressive in their methods, whereas the ASPCA is just as committed but does not have a reputation for being “extreme” in their tactics.

## 5. How Can You Get Involved? How Can You Help?

Remember, this document you are writing should be designed to help inform others about the issue and persuade them to take action. This section should include that specific call to action. What can somebody do about the issue if they want to help? As an individual what specific actions can a person take? Who can a person contact to get involved in addressing this issue? Most known social issues have groups of people or organizations working on them. This section should include specific contact information for someone who wants to get involved with such an organization. It should also include ideas about specific actions one could take as an individual. Are there specific individual behaviors that one could change to help make a positive difference?

## 6. To Learn More

In this section, you should provide a short list (three to five) of quality sources that one could read to learn more about this issue and how to get involved. These sources are what one could use to learn more beyond what they are learning in this document, so the sources should not be ones you are using in the other sections of this piece; they are in addition to what's already been referenced. You should write this section like an annotated bibliography. What's an annotated bibliography, you ask? An annotated bibliography is very much like a works cited page at the end of a research paper, but without the research paper. Plus each bibliographic entry is accompanied by a brief critical annotation of about 200 words each. Keep in mind that an annotation is more than just a summary of what the source is about. It's a critical evaluation of the source. So it should include a concise yet specific summary of the source, its focus, scope, and so on, but it should also evaluate the authority and background of the author, comment on the intended audience, possibly compare/contrast the work with another source you've cited or other well known sources on this subject, and explain how the work is valuable to further illuminating this issue of concern. The idea is to find useful, credible, powerful sources on the issue such that you can offer them to others also interested in learning more.

## 7. Works Cited

This overall “Service/Activist's Guide to an Issue” is very much a multi-sourced research work. This means you've used several sources to put it together, and so, of course, you need to properly cite and document those sources. They should be cited with in-text notes in the body of the work, and the full source information needs to be documented in a “Works Cited” section. (This should be review from COM 101.) Use the MLA Handbook, your Fister trifold “Working With Sources” (that you bought for this class), and/or another up-to-date handbook to help you properly document your sources.



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## **A Note about Formatting**

Again, remember, this document has a specific purpose for an intended audience. It should help someone understand this issue better. It should also move them to action and guide them on the path to getting involved. So, consider how you might format this piece to make it most usable. Certainly you will want to use clear headings to allow your reader to quickly and effectively navigate your document. But you might also find other ways to make it visually appealing and persuasive. Consider the possibility of adding meaningful images or other graphics, for instance. This is not necessarily required, but it could enhance the effectiveness of your piece. If you have questions, just ask.

## **How this Assignment Will Be Assessed**

First of all remember that this assignment will not be fully assessed until you include it as a part of your final portfolio project; however, as an initial draft that will be reviewed by members of the class, completing it on time is essential to stay on track toward at least a B in this course. Refer to the grading contract on the syllabus for more information about the importance of meeting all deadlines, and for general information on what makes for exemplary writing in this course.

*The basic expectations that I have for average and acceptable work for this project are as follows. The work should:*

- represent something you actually care about (this will make all the difference)
- include all required sections as outlined above and offer the specific details as outlined for each section
- should be informative, persuasive, and practical for one to learn about an issue and how to get involved
- use no fewer than five sources (not counting those included in section 6)
- properly cite all sources using both in-text notes and an accurate MLA works cited page/area
- have a creative, interest-catching, representative title
- be well edited and free from careless mechanical errors
- be around 2500 to 3500 words long

## **Due Dates**

This work must be posted to the course “Splatter” site and categorized properly as “work for review” by the scheduled due date. If you are having technical challenges with this, it is your responsibility to seek assistance from the instructor as soon as possible. Be sure also to keep your own electronic copy of your draft, so that you can easily return to it for revision at a later time. Also, note that if you have chosen to collaborate with others on this proposal project, each member of the collaborating team must post a complete proposal under his or her name (even if identical). Consult the course schedule for a complete list of due dates.