

BEHIND THE SCENES INTERVIEW: Gen Rise Media

1) What is your organization and why and how did you start it?

I am the editor-in-chief of Gen Rise Media (genrisemedia.com), a media organization dedicated to elevating Gen-Z voices on commentary related to progressivism, culture, and current events in general, striving for social advocacy and education. I started it as a small Wordpress blog back in 2017, when I was a sophomore in high school, and it has now boomed into a larger group focused on daily content, a quarterly magazine, and weekly podcast.

2) What good experiences have you had so far with your organization?

I love the community of creators and organizers that I've been able to meet in my 3 years with Gen Rise Media. A large part of Gen Rise is about perspective and experiences, and despite all of us being Gen-Z, we have a huge spectrum in terms of identity and lived experiences, which really is so valuable in terms of connecting and learning. This has really helped us be more successful because of the diverse array of people and content.

3) How do you feel your organization has made an impact or will make an impact on the world?

I would like to think that we've made an impact on at least some parts of the youth, especially those who are active on social media. We're generally in sync with some parts of the youth organizing community and I often hear back from some about the work I and the other Gen Rise members have done, in terms of impacting them and the important issues that many of our articles, podcast episodes, and other creative work brings up. The hope, in the far future, is to extend this even further, to a larger audience of Generation Z.

4) How and why did you choose youth empowerment & activism as the focus for your organization?

I wanted to feel empowered when I created this organization. I had already been pretty interested in the dialogue of social justice and politics before creating Gen Rise, but the 2016 election was a pretty major event to me and many others in the world. It gave me the push to move and actually taking the tangible steps to start this thing. And, I wanted to have a collective, of other youth who felt how I did, to be able to vocalize our thoughts in a way that might let us be heard. I don't know if I thought this in the beginning as much as now, but I like to think of this as a bridging step to organize and get involved in activism, through the education via creative work, and to highlight the activism in our own communities, small and large.

5) Why is youth activism important to you?

Youth activism is so important, because this is our world, and it's important to be taking action when there are issues we should be acting on. However, I don't count myself an activist at all – or an organizer – and I'm not saying this to try and get moral "brownie points." Youth activism is important, but I also feel like what is considered activism has been a bit muddled, especially in the last years. Many tend to use activism to get those moral "brownie

points" or for the resume or just for the outward appearance, and it's when that becomes hyper focused on, things get murky. I absolutely admire the youth organizers who really are doing the work for the work – shoutout to the USCYS kids. Though, I mostly categorize myself as an advocate and storyteller/creative. However, despite my previous sentiment, I believe all action is important, as I feel like it can help a bit to normalize discussions of all the issues we need to be talking about full-on.

6) What makes your organization unique?

I honestly don't think my organization is that unique anymore, as the concept of making zines and podcasts have become pretty popularized in youth circles. But, the more the merrier, really. I suppose that I'd like to consider Gen Rise important, rather than unique, in the emphasis on support, learning, community, and empowerment throughout the process, rather than just a really separated community, which is totally possible because most of the members of Gen Rise have never met one another before. I like to consider this an open space for those with unabashed progressive ideals – or those who might lean more center – can have support and feel free to be able to express the things they care about without huge resistance.

7) What is your plan for the future to grow your organization?

We're gonna keep doing what we're doing, and keep collaborating with other youth, and we're going to play our part in the youth, progressive movement. I think this space is something that should always be available and exist, to help the youth with the betterment of the world, to have a community, and to continue advocating and talking about the world.

8) What are you most excited about for the future?

I'm super excited to continue to grow Gen Rise, and perhaps, put it into another capable person's hands in the far future as I grow older. I'm also very excited to be continuing my college years, continuing with advocacy and creative work, especially in the performing arts, as it's my main focus outside of Gen Rise, journalism, and my studies. Everything's super unpredictable, especially now, but I'm excited – in good and bad ways – for what's next

9) For fun: What's your favorite thing to do on a hot summer day?

I would like to hope I have access to a car, so that I can hit the lake or a beach. Or, maybe have a little (or big) party with my friends at home or out in the city. Also, maybe just get some boba – not to be that typical. Hot summer days are my favorite days, and I might honestly even just chill in my backyard and do some outdoor karaoke with friends.