Selecting an Issue

**Objective:** To choose one issue for the group to address.

**Time:** One Hour  
**How Many:** Up to 30

**Materials:** Markers, Butcher Paper, Signs of Each of the 3-5 Top Issues

**Enroll:** From all the initial work we've done, what is our top 3-5 issues?

**Do/Experience:** Forced Choice Activity.

Write each issue on a separate piece of paper and post the papers in different areas of the room. Have all youth stand in the center of the room. For each statement, ask youth to go to the issue they feel fits the statement the most appropriately. Choose from the statements below. Add any additional statements that you feel are important.

**Note:** It is crucial that you take notes during this activity so you can remember the discussion.

After each statement, let a few people from each corner speak about why they are standing there.

What issue most affects you personally?
What issue impacts the most people in our community? (the most widely felt)
What issue effects people so that they feel they feel uncomfortable being a part of our community? (the most deeply felt)
What issue do you think adults know the least about?
What issue will the adults be the most ok with?
What issue will the adults be the least ok with?
What issue would be the hardest to make change on?
What issue will be the easiest to make change on?
What issue will be easiest to involve lots of other youth in our community?
What issue will take the most time and energy for us as a group?

What issue are you most passionate about?
**Process:**  What did you notice during this activity?  
What factors seem to be the most important in choosing our campaign?

**Label:**  When we pick an issue, we have to consider all kinds of factors, including: What will make the biggest difference? And practical concerns such as: what are our resources, is this issue winnable, do we have allies to support us?  
Problems can be deeply felt, or widely felt or both. We should consider both deeply felt and widely felt problems. Some problems may not have been said as many times as other problems, but they may be deeply felt—they affect people in serious and profound ways, cause severe stress or threaten your physical or emotional health. These problems may not be voiced as often because they may be difficult to talk about or they may be specific to a certain population.

**Demonstrate:** Advocating for your issue.

Break youth up into groups depending on what issue they are most interested in.

In groups, youth should create an argument for their issue. Use markers and butcher paper to create a visual that illustrates

   a. The importance of their issue such as: what are the effects of this problem on people? Why should this problem be important to this group?  
   b. Who is impacted the most (neighborhood, people, age group?)  
   c. Is it deeply felt, widely felt, or both?  
   d. What are some possible solutions that we as a group could accomplish concerning this issue?  
   e. Include anything else that they think is persuasive.

Have students present their issues in groups to the entire group. During this time, the entire group should discuss any concerns they have about the issue.

**VOTE on the issue**

Options:

- do a secret ballot vote  
- do a “five finger” vote (shows range of interest)  
- allow multiple votes (e.g. they vote for their top 2 choices)  
- put post-its near their favorite and least favorite issues  
- simple hand-raising vote
Review: What factors were most important to us in choosing our issue? Why were they important?

Celebrate: YEAH! We’ve Chose ______________________ to work on! GOOD LUCK.

Homework for youth: Ask youth to write a two-paragraph reflection on their personal experience with the issue. They will be reading what they write during the next meeting.

Homework for Coordinator: Think about your connection to this issue. Find an article or piece of writing, by someone well known that you will share with the group the next time you meet.