Social Media: Best Practices Guide

COUNTER MILITARY RECRUITMENT TOOLKIT: SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY RESOURCE

A how-to-guide of strategies for Counter-recruitment activists using social media.

The Importance of Social Media

Active use of social media is an effective way to foster engagement and advocate around specific issues. Integrating social media into a youth and counter advocacy allows defenders to spark conversation, encourage participation, and develop a community around shared goals.

Counter-recruiters can use social media to:

• Quickly share important information, as it happens;
• Expand reach to include broader, more diverse audiences;
• Personalize messages that can be tailored to specific audiences; and
• Facilitate interactive communication and public engagement.

General Social Media Do's and Don'ts

Do's

•Do: Have A Strategy.

Be aware of content, where you post content, and why the content was posted on that specific platform. Use a consistent voice that your followers can readily identify

.•Do: Post Regularly.

Actively post content to ensure that followers have not forgotten about your campaign or issue.

•Do: Go Where The People Are.

Understand your target demographic to appropriately determine which social media platform is best to use.

•Do: Encourage Participation.

Engage with followers by asking questions and responding to them.

• Do: Edit Images.

Ensure that images are well-cropped and appropriately sized for each platform they are being posted on, so the images do not appear cut off or pixelated when posted.

• Do: Interconnect Accounts.

Cross reference your different social media applications and use posts on one account to lead followers to another.

Don'ts

• Don't Over share.

It is important to post consistently, but not constantly. Remain a familiar presence in your followers' feeds, but not an overwhelming one.

• Don't Be Repetitive.

Mix it up among images, videos, and text, so followers do not become uninterested because of repeating content.

• Don't Automate.

Write original messages depending on the social media platform and its intended purpose.

• Don't Abuse Hashtags.

Hashtags connect your posts to similar content posted by others. When used correctly, hashtags can expand the audience for your post. However, if used excessively, hashtags can make your posts appear as spam or illegitimate.

Facebook

Facebook is the world's largest social media platform that enables you to share links, images, and posts on a customizable page that can imbue your advocacy with personality and character.

Best Uses:

• Creating & promoting events
• Providing updates on news related to yourcause
• Sharing photos & videos of your work
• Sharing personal stories

Pro Tips:

1.Create a Facebook "business" page, not a personal profile

o   A profile is a personal Facebook account that's designed to share personal information and photos with friends and family. Business pages are public profiles that empower you to connect with a broader audience. Business pages look similar to personal profiles, but they include unique tools for businesses, brands, and organizations. Followers simply have to "Like your Page" to see up dates from you in their News Feeds.

2.Add CTA (Call-To-Action) Buttons at the top of your page

o   Facebook provides the option to place a call-to-action button at the top of your Facebook Page. You can choose from seven pre-made button options ("Sign Up," "Shop Now," "Contact Us," "Book Now," "Use App," Watch Video," and "Play Game") and link it to any website that aligns with your page's goals. The CTA can link to your website homepage, a petition, a contact sheet,or any page you wish to direct followers.

3.Use Facebook Insights

o   Facebook Insights is Facebook's internal analytics tool that helps you measure and analyze your Facebook presence. Using Facebook Insights, you can view analytic data about Page visits and engagement, helping you understand which content is and isn't engaging to your followers. Access your page's Insights by clicking the 'Admin Panel' on your Page.
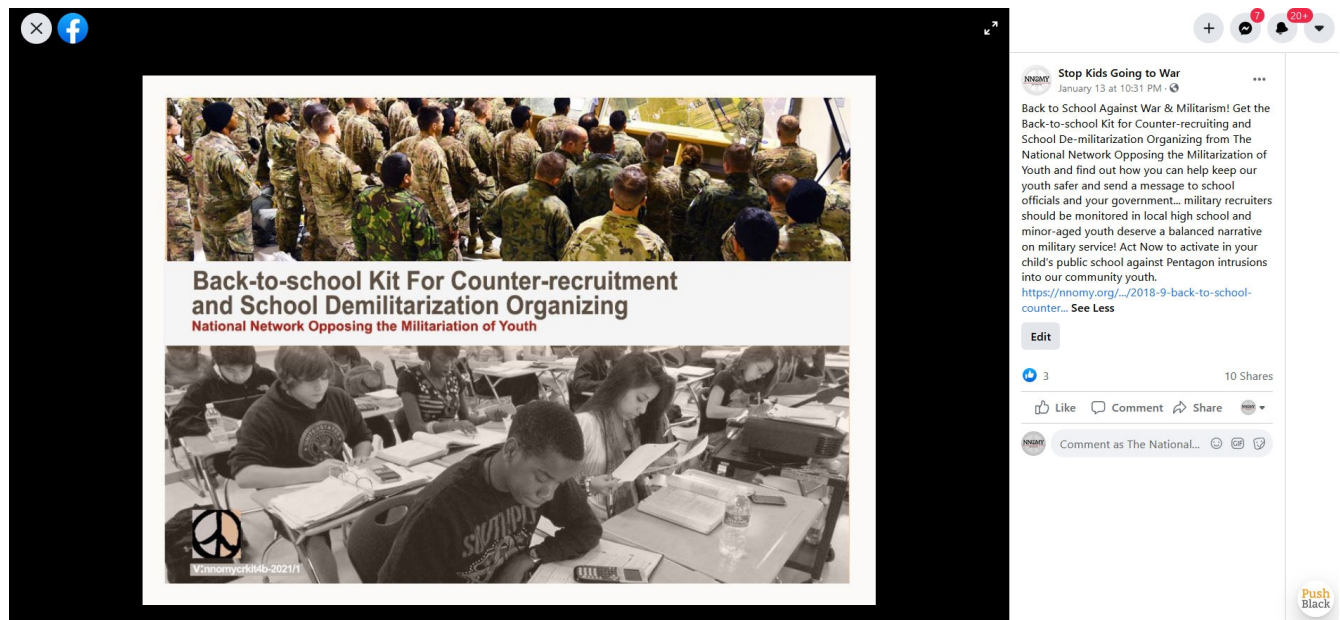
Sample Facebook Posts from the CR network:

Illustration 1: NNOMYpeace promotes their resources guide for counter-recruitment activists on Facebook including dedicating an entire channel to it.
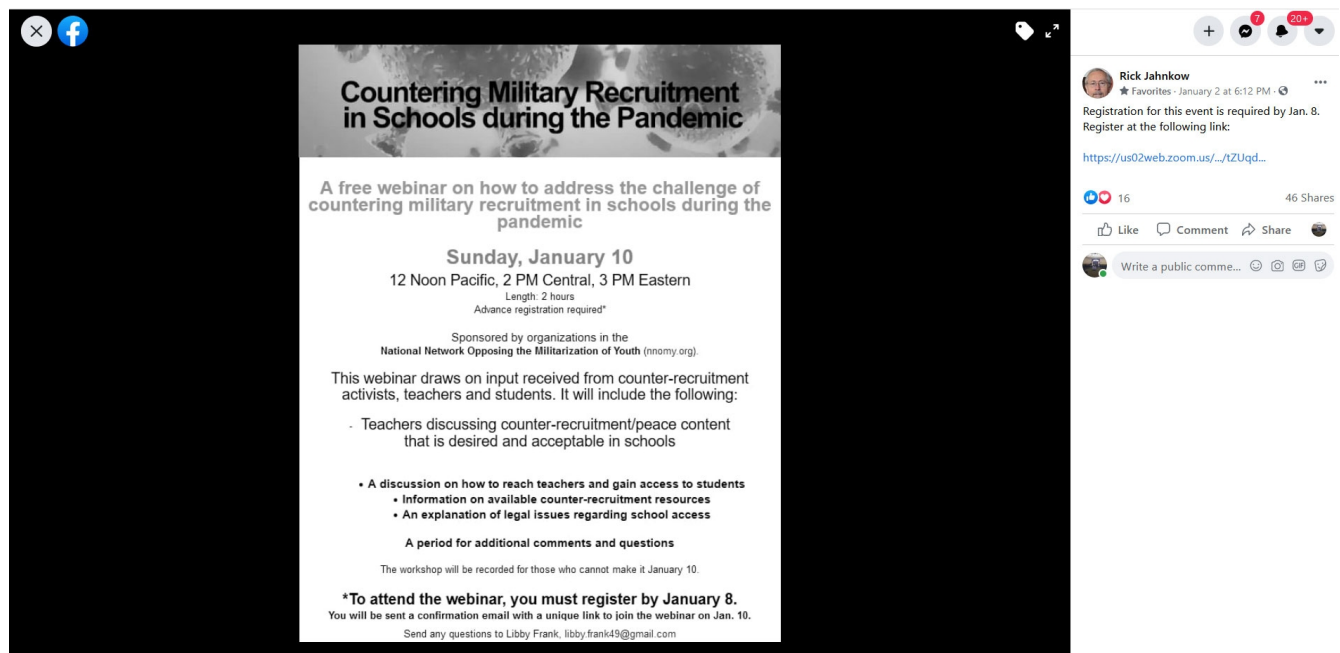*https://www.facebook.com/stopkidsgoingtowar*

Illustration 2: Project YANO uses their Facebook to promote CR
 activist webinars to help build participation.
https://www.facebook.com/projectyano

Illustration 3: The Ya-Ya Network in NYC uses their Facebook channel to promote their Zoom conferencing to drive greater interest in youth activism.
https://www.facebook.com/YaYaNetwork

Illustration 4: Whatcom Peace & Justice Center, Alternatives to Military Service program highlights their high school visits on their Facebook page.
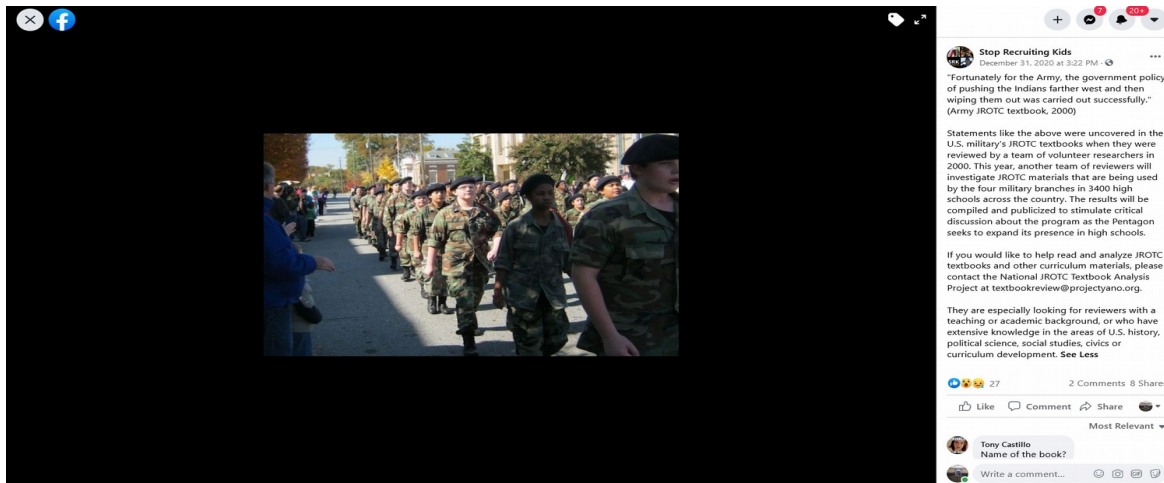*https://www.facebook.com/alternativestomilitaryservice*

Illustration 5: Stop Recruiting Kids, a project of On Earth Peace, uses their Facebook page to highlight a national review of JROTC textbooks to reveal the misinformation being taught to cadets inside many U.S. high school.
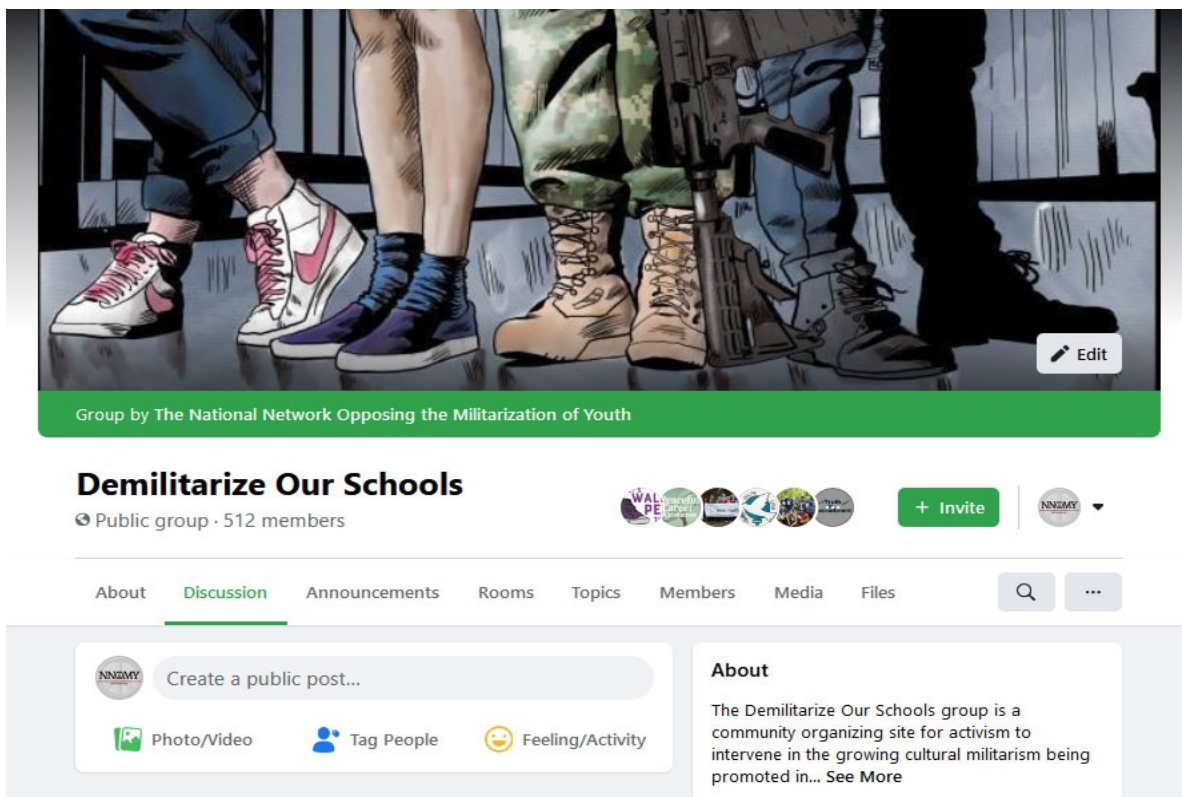*https://www.facebook.com/StopRecruitingKids*

Illustration 6: THe Demilitarize Our Schools Group is a Facebook Group that allows a common channel for multiple groups engaged in counter-recruitment activism to share information with one another.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/DemilitarizeOurSchools

Illustration 7: Code Pink maintains a Facebook Group for their Divest from the War Machine Campaign. Here they are issuing an alert to lobby the progressive caucus in congress to defund the Pentagon. https://www.facebook.com/groups/211878129400473

Illustration 8: Truth in Recruitment acknowledges the contributions of their activists to build and sustain their community and to celebrate its accomplishments on their Facebook page.
https://www.facebook.com/TruthinRecruitment

Instagram

Instagram is a photo sharing social media platform that allows you to share a wide range of content including photos, videos, stories, and live recordings. Similar to Facebook, Instagram can also be used to inject personality into your advocacy with a particular emphasis on visual content. Instagram can be an especially useful tool because of its popularity among youth. Instagram should be used when considering a campaign revolved around youth justice issues and focused on youth involvement. Instagram users tend to actively use the application, therefore, engaging with posts at a much higher rate than with other social platforms.

Best Uses:

• Sharing photos & videos of your work

•Giving followers a "Behind-The-Scenes" look of your advocacy work

• Providing updates on your organization culture•Displaying live coverage & recap of events

Pro Tips:

1.Prioritize Quality over Quantity

o   Instagram is primarily a photo-sharing application, so it's important that your content is engaging. Generic photos won't stand out on the timeline. Be sure to post and edit high-quality photos, and choose an appropriate filter. Take the time to create a cohesive visual narrative.

2.Make use of Instagram Stories

o   Instagram Stories is a feature that allows users to post photos and videos to their page that disappear after 24 hours. They are perfect for in-the-moment events that need to be documented as they happen. They also offer a space for experimentation, allowing you to share photos and videos that don't fit the visual theme of your overall Instagram account. You can use stories to capture day to day life or an entire event, while your time line posts capture major moments and highlights. Instagram Stories also offer the option to embed click able links, directing your followers to a website outside the platform.

Note: In order to do this, make sure your account is set up as a business profile.

3.Change the link in your Instagram bio strategically

o   Although Instagram doesn't permit you to post clickable links in your caption, you can place a link in your bio to direct followers to other relevant resources of information.

Sample Instagram Posts from the CR network:

Illustration 9: NNOMYpeace shares videos that can attract the attention of youth on Instagram that promotes questioning of U.S. Military recruiting strategies.
https://www.instagram.com/nnomypeace/

Illustration 10: Truth in Recruitment shares on their Instagram page some of the policy changes that their activism has enabled in their community school district: https://www.instagram.com/truthinrecruitment/

Twitter

Twitter is a social media platform used to share news, entertainment, sports, politics, and more. Perhaps more than anyother socialmedia platform, Twitter is about sparking and participating in a public conversation. Twitter places particular emphasis on real-time information and is an especially helpful resource to share thoughts on the latest news and social happenings related to youth justice. A unique characteristic of Twitter is that it only allows 280 characters in a tweet, so the importance of brevity can't be stressed enough when it comes to sharing on theapplication.

Best Uses:

•Live coverage of events•Sharing photos & videos of your work

•Keeping your followers informed with the latest news on relevant topics to your advocacy

Pro Tips:

1.Curate good content through retweets

o   Curating other's content posted on Twitter by retweeting is a good way to keep your followers engaged with your profile.

2.Thread tweets about the same subject matter

o   This can be used as a workaround for Twitter's character limit. Threaded tweets will appear in succession, one after another, enabling you to share more of your viewpoint about a topic in a cohesive manner.

3.Live-tweet events

o   Live tweeting is an in the moment reaction to an event as it is happening. Organizations commonly arrange live-tweeting sessions during their own events.

4.The best types of content are bite sized

o   Twitter is known for its brevity, and posts that include statistics, lists, how-to's and quotes lend themselves to be brief, digestible and attention-grabbing.

Sample Twitter Posts:

Illustration 11: NNOMYpeace shares an info-graphic on their Twitter feed about the statistics from PTSD in combat related injuries to soldiers.
https://twitter.com/nnomynetwork

Illustration 12: War Resisters' League shares an article about white supremacy from the Boston Review.
https://twitter.com/resistwar

Resources for Developing Social Media assets:

1.CANVA

o Canva is an online graphic design studio that allows users to constuct social media graphics already formated for the platforms discussed in this report. It is available for free in a scaled down version and for a yearly fee is available with more capacities including constructiong animated graphics aand info-graphics with much of the artwork already established for you to use. You Or you can import your own.

https://www.canva.com/

2.BUFFER

o Buffer is a social media distribution tool that allows you to schedule your social media across Facebook, Intagram, and Twitter weeks and months in advance and develop campaigns as well where you can track your visiter engagement as well. The free version limits the amount of social media channels you can pre-arrange to send to and the amount of postings that can be in the cue. The paid versions increase the amount of sites you can schedule and the amount of posts you can place.

https://buffer.com/

CREDITS

This guide was developed for the *Countering Military Recruitment During the Pandemic* webinar series by the National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth and can be shared throughout our network at:

National Directory of Youth Demilitarization Groups:
https://nnomy.org/en/groups-campaigns-activities/groups.html

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