**What is Adultism?**

**Adultism**: the oppression of young people by older people. It is based on the assumption that adults are more fully human than young people. The way that this assumption permeates individuals and institutions is adultism. Adultism occurs anytime children or youth are ignored, silenced, neglected or punished because they are not adults. Every young person is impacted by adultism from the day they are born until the day the world around them recognizes them as an adult, although youth may experience the oppression in different ways.

Some more details on this definition:
- Adultism is part of the structure of society and its institutions, including families, schools, and the government.
- Essentially all people suffer from this oppression.
- We internalize adultist oppression. This shapes how we feel about ourselves and how we treat younger people.
- Adultism is distinguished from ageism, which is prejudice on the grounds of age; not specifically against youth.
- The opposite of adultism is not treating youth as adults, but rather youth empowerment
- Adultism effects all youth, but because of intersecting oppressions not all youth experience adultism in the same way
- Adultism can condition youth to accept all other oppressions that exist in the society by teaching that inequality is the norm

Definition sources: JYCA staff and youth have edited this definition over the years using a mix of definitions from: John Bell, Paul Kivel & Re-evaluation Counseling

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