

My first period at school was Ap Human Geography, the first advanced placement class offered to the students of West High School in Iowa City. Incoming freshmen and returning sophomores take forty-five minutes a day for one hundred and eighty days to sit and learn about the practices, beliefs, and patterns that exist between each and everyone of us. The first thing that anyone would learn in this class is types of diffusion. There are so many types of diffusion. Expansion diffusion, stimulus diffusion, relocation diffusion. But the one that bewildered me the most was contagious diffusion. The meaning was in the name, ideas and knowledge that spread throughout person-to-person contact, just like a virus.

As technology got increasingly better in the 20th century, ideologies were as wild as ever. Social media popped out and people began influencing each other through screens, with a click of a video or scrolling through blog posts.

Throughout this past year I witnessed everything first hand and came to the conclusion that social media is now a big key to change society. The Covid-19 pandemic filled social media with opinions that were never seen before. The deadly virus led many people to repost posts about ways to keep ourselves safe whilst trying to persuade others who weren't so into the idea of getting vaccines. People who posted themselves getting the vaccines convinced their friends to get it too because suddenly, getting a vaccine was a trend. Amidst the midst of the chaos, Asian hate crimes started happening in large cities due to spread of misinformation on the internet about how Chinese people were to blame for the Coronavirus. Countless nights I would spend reading articles on asian grandmas and grandpas being beaten on the street and shootings that target asian women. A murder of a young blackman by two cops sparked the Black Lives Matter Movement. All around the world, people used social media to speak out on the injustice minorities face every single day. Everyone, including myself, was connected to each other and we used our voices to call out racism that is tied to the government and police system. As a first generation Chinese American that came from an immigrant family, I was scared of what my future would be like living in America, but having the power to protest and fight without the fear of being imprisoned, it gave everyone a chance to fight for what they believe in. Being protected by the first amendment, I have the freedom to speak my mind, but the majority of people all around the world are oppressed.

When my parents decided to raise me in America, they tried as hard as they could to hold the heritage of the land across the ocean with me as much as they could. It helps that I live in a community where there are many other Chinese

families that I can associate myself with. Thanks to this community, I never felt confused about my race and culture. But no matter how hard my parents tried to engage us and how good my community was, I was always curious about what living in China would be like if I didn't move back to America. The only source for me to find out what it was like was the internet. For some reason it wasn't surprising to me that although China does proclaim in the constitution that their citizens do have the freedom of speech, more than 10,000 people were arrested for protesting democracy in Hong Kong as of May 31st, according to Lea Mok of Hong Kong Free Press. And although China does proclaim free speech, Beijing arrested two business entrepreneurs for supporting rights activists and shut down social media accounts that were run by women's rights activists, according to the World Recap. And although China does proclaim free speech, "authorities harassed, detained, or prosecuted numerous people for their online posts and private chat messages critical of the government" and continues to suppress content on the internet that suggested unpatriotic values, from World Recap. China is only going to keep tightening restrictions, like LGBTQ rights and women's rights. There is no fair chance for these citizens that don't get to speak up for themselves.

The key takeaway is that contagious diffusion can only happen with free speech, and free speech is something we can never give up on.

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