山田麻心
ぐんま国際アカデミー高等部
高校２年

The Attention You Give

I did it again. The moment I woke up, I took my phone in my hands, staring at the screen scrolling through social media for at least half an hour. Going through random pictures and videos, of a group of girls on a vacation to Hawaii, or a young teenager holding a tiny cute Gucci bag. I see from the corner of my eyes, the New York Times app I downloaded a few months ago, subscribed to topics like "Climate Change", "Gender & Society", "Education", and "Health Care". It's sitting there waiting for me to tap on it, screaming, "Please activate me, I have serious news to tell you! Please, the world needs your attention!" It must have been an easy thing to do. An action that doesn't take more than 10 seconds, to just simply, click on the app that would let me take a glance on what was happening to the world. But at that moment, I shove it off the table as if it was a meal I refused to eat.

This was me an year ago. I used to do this every morning, not giving a single thought about how ignorant I was being. When nearly 6,300 people around the world were dying during the hour I spent on social media. It might have been a child with malnutrition, a woman working in a factory with black lungs, or a man who was shot in a nearby gasoline station. The list of possibility goes on, longer than my Christmas wish list. No matter the cause, it is an undeniable fact that at that moment, some people were facing the end of their lives.

When I was 15, I visited India. A developing country that is going through severe urbanization with an unstable economy and an insufficient platform for rapid growth. It was a surreal experience. There were beggars and homeless families everywhere. Some were standing outside of a restaurant searching for litters, nearly collapsing to the ground. Some had dead limbs so that they could gain sympathy from tourists along with money. The majority of passersby would give them a disgusted stare and a that's-none-of-my-business attitude. I knew I was helpless at that moment, but the pain I felt was unbearable and realized that I needed to face this reality seriously. From then on, I started sparing time that I used to be on Instagram, reading articles and daily newspapers. My knowledge on social issues grew day by day giving me a further insight on what was going on around me that I couldn't see with my bare eyes. I started raising awareness by attending workshops and seminars. By then, I had a completely different mindset on how I lived, what I lived for, and why. The act of paying attention to the world has addressed me, to cherish my life to live solemnly for the people who are suffering, to help with the development of their society in the potential future when I grow up. Looking back on the videos and photos I was so focused on, I ask myself; What did I learn from it? Shamelessly I realize, it was just me holding intense envy on a world I can not belong to, no matter how hard I try. Although that resentful experience, has given me the chance to understand the perks of being "non-wealthy".

Now, I won't tell you to change the world entirely. All I ask you is to give a little attention

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to the world, to parts you can't see. To people, who go to sleep every single night hoping that they wake up breathing the next morning. Sure, a phone can be extremely entertaining. However, we should all acknowledge that us, individuals, have a stronger ability to influence the society than that of a 16cm metal can do. An average teenager spends more than 3 hours on their phone every day. If every one of them could spare at least 30 minutes on 3 different articles, that would be 16% of the world population, taking notice to multiple issues of the world. This number nearly covers India's total population. The attentiveness we give towards a celebrity clickbait, can easily be devoted to reading a single article presenting reality.

So remember, the ignorance you give can destroy the world very easily. Yet, the attention you give can offer a future to the world, starting tomorrow.

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