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In *Thank You for Being Late*, Thomas Friedman discusses how our world today is in “cyberspace”. He goes on to describe this “cyberspace” as a world beyond ours where people are connected...yet disconnected. Although the internet is plentiful in information beyond our comprehension, humans still struggle to take that information and form connections and relationships with people outside of their own familiar groups. This lack of understanding is exactly why there is space for bigotry and hate in our world. In order to be a thoughtful community member, one must be able to look at issues surrounding their environment that may not affect them, yet, be able to recognize and acknowledge the issues at hand. A thoughtful community member does more than just act as a bystander. They act. As a young teenager living in the suburbs, I will continue to use my opportunities and resources to be that thoughtful member and speak for people that do not have a voice of their own.

We live in a world filled with bystanders. Whenever there is a brawl in the public, rather than breaking up the fight, people are quick to take out their phones. They do this to ensure that the rest of the world can also act as bystanders. The bystander effect has been the cause of centuries of devastating events throughout human history. The Holocaust is an example of a time where people refused to speak out and as a result, millions lost their lives. While some communities thrive from the bystander effect-such as the Nazis in the previous example-others are destroyed. Though times have changed since those dark ages, the bystander effect still thrives. However, a positive community and a thoughtful member of said community flourishes through action. While the action is important it must also be effective. Weak action, such as tweeting “Our thoughts and prayers...” rather than actually trying to make a difference isn’t strengthening any community at all. An individual must be driven to seek actual change be it

through gathering awareness or even marching at the capital. It is also important that a thoughtful community member responds to issues apart from ones that may directly affect that person.

While it may strengthen their own group to do so, it isn't beneficial to society and it isn't being thoughtful. Consider impoverished neighborhoods in America, we as a society have done a great job of neglecting that part of our country. We act as bystanders and watch *that* America turn into crime and drop-outs then blame them for their lifestyles. We reject *that* America, an America that is made up of mostly people of color and we blame them for how they've turned out. While I am privileged to live in the suburbs if I ignore *that* America, *that* community that is different from my own, it is allowing our country to suffer. Just as Friedman did with his Ethiopian friend, we must help those who are different from us in order to strengthen our understandings of each other and our communities.

In order to be a thoughtful community member, people ought to use their voices more often. I've been able to participate in my school speech team where I speak on issues that aren't as known to people as they should be. This year I spoke on mental illness within the African-American community and how it is essentially rejected. I walked into every tournament with the intent of informing and inspiring. I used my voice to give a voice to people who couldn't use their own. If everyone took the time to hear each other's stories and sit down and understand each other, just as Friedman did, then the world would genuinely be one big peaceful community. If everyone took the time to learn from each other rather than blame, it'd be easier to come up with solutions to many of our greatest societal issues. Maybe then people would understand that the poor in America stay poor because the broken education system ensures it. Maybe then people would understand that incarceration rates and the absurd number of colored men are literally because of their race. Maybe then people would understand that their perfect

world, their perfect “cyberspace” is intolerant and unaccepting of different people. And maybe then, we could build communities that are strong, meaningful, and thoughtful.

Works Cited

Friedman, Thomas L. *Thank You for Being Late: an Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017.

Bibliography

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