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Class of 2023

Dear America, Notes from an Undocumented Citizen Reflection

A community is a combination of people who coexist or share similar characteristics. Therefore, it is only fitting that the nature of community depends on the nature of its people. However, as human beings, our nature is easily motivated by society and its demands. In modern culture, technology has manifested itself within everyone’s lives. In *Dear America, Notes of an Undocumented Citizen*, Jose Antonio Vargas reveals how we are so easily impressed by the power society and technology holds over us, whether that power serves as the drive to bring us together or pull us apart.

We live in an era dependent on technological advancements. Today, technology is not only a platform for likes and comments, but a foundation for our beliefs – more specifically, our political ideologies. When talking about Social Security payments, payments normally funded by American citizens for American citizens, Vargas states, “The letter [from the Social Security Administration (SSA)] said that I’d paid \$28,838 to Social Security.” However, Vargas and “3.1 million [other workers in the U.S.] ...using fake or expired Social Security numbers,” unfortunately, “had no access to the funds” they were contributing. By exposing the faults in the Social Security system, Vargas confronts an unjust perception of illegal immigrants in America.

According to him, “Our country’s mainstream news organization[s]... failure to report these facts and provide context has perpetuated the myth of the “illegal” who is taxing social services and taking away from ‘real Americans.’ “This contrariety between what the public hears, which is what news outlets choose to divulge, versus the whole story behind undocumented citizens’ compensation to society, demonstrates how undoubtedly our perceptions can be skewed by anyone with a name for themselves and a loud voice. Unfortunately and oftentimes, once any peer or group is shed in a negative light, it becomes difficult for us to see him, her, or them differently.

The power of invalid news or half-truth propaganda, which has now evolved into “fake news,” has always held a strong presence in people’s lives. Around the time of the Spanish-American War, newspaper publishers such as William Randolph Hearst provoked controversy against Spain by falsely accusing the country of sinking the U.S.S. Maine in efforts to boost newspaper sales. Immediately, the public accepted what they thought was factual news and developed sore judgments, which were based on lies, toward the Spanish. Back then, news spread via paper and mouth. Now, because of technology, news, factual or not, is so promptly spread that confronting all rumors is almost impossible.

Although it seems media and politics should not mix, social media sites have created a gateway for people with similar ambitions to make a change. Back in 2010, when social media started trending, Vargas “started reading stories about young undocumented Americans, many ... in high school and college,” who we call DREAMers, fighting for their rights as citizens. He said,”...using new technologies...– Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube – they were chronicling their own stories, daring politicians and the public alike to look away.” Because of social media, numerous undocumented citizens united in order to change their difficult lifestyles. In a Q&A with Kara Swisher, Vargas declared DREAMers as “the first kind of social media-oriented young activists.” Because of technology a movement evolved, giving millions of people in the

United States who remained in hiding a voice. Vargas recalls the story of Marica Gabriela Pacheco, who emigrated from Ecuador. Vargas stated, “She had been organizing for immigrant rights ...[and] she was in the news, sharing her story publicly.” He found her inspiring, wondering, “How could she be so fearless? Why was I [Vargas] so scared?” She was the motivation that allowed Vargas to come out as an undocumented citizen publicly. She gave him a voice.

We have the power to shape the way our community advances. Technology has become an integral aspect of our lives, making technology an influential component in the nature of community. Alliances fusing together and misleading characterizations imposed on groups are inevitable side effects of social media. However, it comes down to the people and how they allow technology to control them.

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