

“A Small Inch Of Hope”

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My heart pounded as I boarded a public bus without a mask. My face burnt red and I lost my train of thought as I tried to come up with a solution. I had ideas trapped in my head with no feasible way to bring them to life. Strangely, in a time when people are weary of their stocks of surgical masks, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, a kind hearted man pulled out a mask from his reserves and gave it to me without a word, resuming his bus activity of playing Candy Crush.

To be frank, when the thousands of pixels come to life as I switch on my phone---the very thing that I use as an inch for entertainment and a filter for a short bliss of relief called social media---when those pixels portray the pandemic in screams and terror, I ponder: How can we be hopeful during this unprecedented time? Instead of seeing a jungle of monkeys and pythons and parrots in my monthly subscription to National Geographic, I see an ecosystem that bursts with dominating masks hoarders, barbaric tissue consumers, and egregiously irritable quarantined patients. They wrestle warlike, greedily attempting to grab the last bottle of Dettol hand sanitizer or box of instant noodles. Quarantined patients, at the expense of the safety of others, swiftly step out of society's haven and through their doors because of 'boredom'. If accurate to a degree, I was starting to slowly realise that this is not entirely true. As a teenager sifting through a filter called society, I learnt, despite all of the evidence against the contrary, there are still, if not more, big-hearted people in Hong Kong which the media does not highlight.

I hopped off the bus and continued to walk on the uneven paved roads of Central feeling the spring breeze through my light cardigan. My nose, as well, felt a tingling sensation. My heart quickened slightly as I knew what was about to come, trying my best to hold it in---I sneezed. Expecting the glares and sudden distance from passers-by in return, I found myself instead facing a lady. Not quick to dismiss me as a potential carrier of the coronavirus, she offered a pack of tissues. These short yet impactful interactions with mere strangers revealed what hope means to me. Hope is present in the efforts of our community to not let the roadblock stand in our path, to not sit on the sidelines or shirk from a fight. Hope is very much alive in the people of Hong Kong who are not content to settle for the world as it is but have the courage to remake the world as it should be. Hope is not blind optimism; it is, what reassures many like myself, light during this very dark period of time.

With the number of deaths rising globally due to the coronavirus, the epidemic has taught me another valuable lesson: to take advantage of every second, in every moment, because we need every inch in life, and the margin for error is simply too small. This propelled me, from the small desk in my room, to create a website that contains all of the available and live organisations that provide support, funding, and relief to countries, as an approach to fight against the coronavirus, all helping the underrepresented and vulnerable people in the four corners of the world. The site also includes information and interactive media to educate readers, to inform them about the current situation and, hopefully, inspire them to be more aware and curious with the issues that we face internationally: ultimately, to create internationally diverse and platform where solutions and sentiments can be shared.

How can we possibly hope to change the world if we do not have the right platform and confidence to share our ideas? I refuse to remain to be a bystander. Every individual has a valuable opinion but it takes drive and confidence to express it. I learned both through a short interaction, a small leap of faith, an inch that has made all the difference.