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**“My generation, the Generation Z as we’re called, has worked tirelessly to promote attention to these issues through whatever we can do online, whether it be organizing petitions or constantly creating educational resources. In the past few weeks, I have seen the most raw, undiluted examples of humanity in my few years of recent memory.”**

The year I was born, there was the SARS epidemic. My mother, who had a complicated pregnancy at the time, drove to a hospital an hour away while in labour to give birth to me. I came into the world in a time when we lived in a small townhouse, in a complex filled with the faces of fellow Chinese immigrants in the process of putting down roots. I think back then, my parents would never have imagined what would come from our homeland, the same way it would bring another wave of racism, death, and hatred.

I have never seen death. In my quiet Canadian suburban neighbourhood, we seem to be far removed from the frontlines of Toronto, cluttered with hospital patients and racked with fear. I simply consider how lucky I am to live in this part of the world—shielded from the front lines, where graves are not being dug, where trucks full of bodies are not being driven through the streets as they are in New York. I can see the sunset from my window, obstructed only by other houses on the skyline and not the haze of death. I can only imagine what it’s like; to see the life fade out of someone’s eyes, to see them shakily take their last breath as their lungs fail to rise again.

But I am so tired. I belong to a generation of people who are attached to their phones, now a weapon to combat loneliness as much as a method of passing time. Social media, which became the only method of communication with friends amidst the boredom and uncertainty of isolation, has become a beacon of stability as much as it has been about sociability. Yet on social media, death is as omnipresent as the news. It

allows us to see death up close, whether it be through the eyes of a camera or through the eyes of someone more experienced with its ubiquitous presence. Throughout this year in particular, all we see seems to be death, in its different forms: overflowing morgues, crowded hospitals or numbers broadcasted repeatedly every night. We have become desensitized to disease; we have become numb to suffering and devoid of any reaction as the pandemic persists. It has blended into one continuous, never-ending loop of tragedy.

As the situation fails to show significant signs of change despite months of quarantine, we somehow reached the state of no longer expecting improvement. After months of continued catastrophes in one way or another, we lost the ability to feel shock. Such was the new status quo when a new tragedy was announced, we no longer were surprised—perhaps, even expecting it. When new developments in the pandemic are announced, we are hardened from difficult truths and no longer recoil at death.

The pandemic has compelled me to reflect on my humanity as much as my health. In the SARS crisis, no one expected the crisis to go on; no average civilian became so accustomed to death that it was to be expected. We are all living in war zones, whether it be on the front lines or on the screens of our phones, wondering if our loved ones will return whole when they venture out to buy groceries. In the overwhelming deluge of death, we are no longer affected or surprised by the suffering of other people. When death does not mean anything to us, where has our compassion gone?

But in recent times, a new kind of death has emerged: not from the virus, but from the somehow pervasive, undestroyable presence of police brutality. It seems the pandemic has stopped everything but racism and police brutality. It has been a month since a white police officer knelt on a black man's neck in an unmistakable act of cruelty. With the death of said black man, 46-year-old George Floyd, a movement has sparked a wave of

shock and anger across the world with a furiousness not seen since the beginning of the pandemic.

That case was life-changing. The shock of that video caused us to spread outrage across social media until inequalities among people seemed to overtake the universal threat to humankind. If the world came together in small bursts of hope to stitch masks for hospitals and provide support for frontline workers, it came together twice as strong in a blazing movement of pulling down statues, protesting unjust discriminations, and shaking the foundations of institutions in a tidal wave of protest against systemic racism. Like many others, the events of late are afire in my mind. While COVID-19 may have forced us to stay down, another issue, suffocating in an entirely different manner, has forced us to stand up.

On social media it has been a completely different battle. In a world under siege by a pandemic, social media has become the definitive mouthpiece towards an entirely different kind of siege. Never in my life have I witnessed my social media feed so consistently filled with resources, petitions, and links to donate. Never in my life as a social media native have I witnessed so many celebrities posting about police brutality without prompt, witnessed so many mainstream magazines unashamedly calling for police reform, or witnessed people in my own quiet community being so explosively angry over such injustice. And never have I witnessed people wearing N-95 masks in the streets, holding signs in protest united in more ways than one.

Yet the fallout doesn't stop there. In the fallout of a movement spurring racial justice, I have seen magazine editors fired within hours, brands boycotted and vandalized, and even my LinkedIn feed is filled with people quitting their jobs due to lack of action from their employers (in times of economic uncertainty, no less). My generation, the Generation Z as we're called, has worked tirelessly to promote attention to these issues through whatever we can do online, whether it be organizing petitions or constantly

creating educational resources. In the past few weeks, I have seen the most raw, undiluted examples of humanity in my few years of recent memory.

The numbness to catastrophe brought on by the pandemic is by no means a permanent state. It gives me great comfort to know that while the pandemic has undoubtedly driven us into a state of uncertainty, our sense of justice has not shriveled, even in the face of a universal threat. In situations of death, there are undoubtedly powerful instances of humanity.

As a Chinese teenager living in the suburbs of Canada, which has not been left untouched both by the virus and by the mass outcry against racial injustice, I feel my hope restored by both my generation and the next. Witnessing the intense wave of racism the Asian community has endured, I feel both gratitude and relief that racism is something the majority (or enough) believe in speaking up against. We still care. We feel powerfully and we possess great compassion for one another.

In the light of the isolation and the numbness caused by the pandemic, it is glaring obvious that despite our temporary separation, we still retain our principles. The one thing the pandemic has failed to infiltrate is our sense of humanity: of equality, justice, and compassion for our fellow human beings. In witnessing the suffering of another, we are able to be shocked by pain, surprised by atrocity, and find the will to speak up even behind the veil of a medical mask. George Floyd may have died a month ago as the pandemic continues, but there are still unmistakable instances of hope. As long as we have the capacity to feel and stand up for each other in the international turmoil, we must retain some intrinsic aspects of our humanity.