

## Shout to Be Heard

I live in small-town Ohio. The old joke about our middle school is that “It’s *literally* in the middle of a corn field!”

I’m currently in my junior year. Just starting to look at colleges, the military, or entering the workforce. My school district consists mainly of one college town, Oxford, and the surrounding rural farmland. We have a “bring your tractor to school day”.

And Ohio is a somewhat swing state. Despite Obama winning Ohio in both 2008 and 2012, Trump took it with a wide margin in 2016. The midterms proved similar, with republicans holding strong for the statewide elections.

This means that both democrats and republicans feel that their voices are not being heard, that they are the minority. You’ll see students walking around with Trump T-shirts, or backpacks that read “Trump that B\*tch”. You’ll also see students with pride-flag buttons, or sweatshirts saying “Bernie 2020”.

No matter what side you're on, we as young Americans are heading into the future. The U.S Census Bureau estimates that in 10 years, Gen Z will make up 30% of the labour force. We are heading into a community where large, corporate farms are slowly killing off small, family-run ones -- according to the Washington Post, “small” farms make up 82% of farms, and 56% of them make less than 10,000 a year. We are heading into a future where a college degree costs more and more, but will end up meaning less and less. We are heading into a future where economists have suggested not even half of us will be able to afford to own a house.

Young people have passion. We have been on the frontlines of all major social change in the United States, including desegregation or women’s right to vote. We are on the frontlines of wars; when my grandfather was less than a year older than I am now, he was drafted to fight in WW2 straight out of high school.

About a fourth of all high schoolers are 18, and able to vote.

Yet, as we walk into the future, we are rarely heard. Young people have to shout, and shout loud, to be heard -- and our concerns about the future, and people diving into the same society that everyone else is facing, are rarely heard.

Even less in a place such as Ohio, where opinion is divided. In small, rural communities, there are many people whose opinions are in the minority. Those voices, of these young people living in communities with ideals different from theirs, are drowning. Their words almost never break to the surface.

Maybe that’s where some of the noise comes from. People who feel isolated, so they take to social media to shout until someone listens. But by giving them a platform to speak their mind in a clear and concise way, the noise becomes a stream. Where people are heard, but voices are equal; where opinions can be kinder and wiser.