FYP First Anniversary Reflection

Yesterday there was a significant student employee labor strike at University of Washington organized by our union. As I walked past the picket lines and demonstrations, seeing young people holding their heads and signs high under the bright blue sky of Seattle, I felt so inspired. This scene exactly embodies the spirit we hoped to ignite when we started ForYouPage (FYP). “If we can elevate our agency and get young people across the country to go out to act for what we each believe in, we can end systemic injustices and structural oppression across gender, race, wealth, sexuality, beliefs, and everything” I texted my friends.

Coincidentally, today marks the one year anniversary of FYP’s formation. It all started with a rainy afternoon in the deep Appalachians of Virginia (US) while my college friends and I were getting dinner and boba and joking about how no one uses our school’s counseling services. At one point, staring at a friend who stealthily couch-potatoed into tiktoking, I jokingly said: “mental health is so bad that all we do now is TikTok, get high, and get through the week.” One of my bestie responded “well good for you cuz I’m just trying to get through the day.” My other best friend, sitting on the end of our rusty dog-and-cat-hair-covered $30 couch that my sister and I picked up from Goodwill, holding her Valdomore-colored Baja Blast, immediately started laughing.

She didn’t laugh because it was funny; she laughed because it was so true. And that’s the moment I decided to do something, now. Naturally I dragged my friends with me. Three hours later, the first version of ForYouPage white paper was drafted and our website launched. Within a week, our initial team was formed and our ultimate goal set: to get youth to take risks and exercise agency through advocacy—the key to our flourishing.

What followed was nothing short of exhilarating miracles and heartmelting comradeship. In two weeks we met our dear friends from Japan and Colorado (US)—youth who we had never met before clicked instantly and started working together. In three weeks we launched FYP Wiki, an free open alternative to Wikipedia. While Wikipedia provides a place for shared human knowledge, FYP Wiki provides a medium of shared human passion-a place where community advocates can put together local resources, knowledge, perhaps most importantly, community action to-dos. FYP wiki is a fight with the machines and fundemental techno-solutionism—use information to bring out our humanness instead of scrumbling our humanness to information. Wikipedia facilitates information; we foster connection—by providing a reason for increasingly lonely and seemingly purposeless youth everywhere to gather & work together.

In two months we met our phenomenal mentor at Mental Health America. With their marvelous support, Two months later, at Bohemian National Hall in New York City, we made UN Conference happened with 60 representatives from more than 15 major mental health groups in the US and youth leaders from all over the country—Michigan, Colorado, Missouri, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, California, DC…A collective of ten youth leaders showcased to the world our efforts to address the mental health crisis. On that day Sept 15th 2023, we proudly proclaimed to the world and to ourselves what youth are and always capable of.

Today, FYP has gathered more than 500 youth dreams & projects across 90 countries and 2000 active advocates in our communities and networks. Our young associates, friends, and partners are working as globally as persuading and advising Prime Ministers of powerful countries and leaders of United Nations, and advocating as locally as building community gardens, fighting regional troubled teen facilities, and helping friends disconnect from social media. All of these accomplishments are driven by a broke but faithful youth team running almost exclusively on volunteers. Our faith is the kindness of the people. One of our earliest team members, who once battles with mental health, started a communal food truck with nothing but one like-minded coworker and are now serving 150 meals to the low income communities of New River Valley every Tuesday without a fail.

Tomorrow, FYP will venturing out further, organizing the next fully youth-led gathering at UNGA79, expanding our Wiki & community infrastructure with more resources to help youth connect and serve, and, thanks to our committed friends & passionate partners in California, taking charge in becoming part of a larger effort in shaping youth-centric workforce development, higher edu reform, and social entrepreneurship advancement in the era of AI future. All these achievements are thanks to the loving individuals and stakeholders who staunchly want to do something for us. ForYouPage started with youth and by youth but has never been just about the youth. FYP would never have been possible without the sounding support of our parents, mentors, and those who have dedicated their lives and time to our happiness and the happiness of future generations. We may not say it often enough, but we love you all so very much.

What is FYP? It is a network hub where youth leaders, youth centric nonprofits, and stakeholders intersect with everyday youth who long to step out and step up. It is a youth group made of a bunch of 20-year-olds, some of whom took 4 hours just to book ‘scary’ airline tickets. It is a free version Slack, a half abandoned Discord, an expansive [rly overpriced] wix site, and an open source wiki tool running on crappy personal server and gpt-generated css codes. You may notice there are no mention of any individual’s name in this writing. That is because, as much as I strongly wish to give shoutouts to our fantastic friends and mentors who made it all possible, FYP, at its core, is just an idea—the idea that we youth have agency to ourselves and can act for something good for others, for you; the idea that though we could drifted to the depths of low zone of anxiety depression to the extent of global mental health crisis, we could also dance up to the top of high zone challenging international landscape changing national policies disrupting the status quo and annoying the crap out of power-holders. These are all part of us and , no matter which parts you are in right now, it will all be okay. FYP is an idea of agency and compassion, owned by no one, and by everyone.

We have a simple vision for FYP—we envision a world where one day all the tiktok Instagram YouTube short social media content with #fyp can be just a bit different—not just content of entertainment and unrealistic influencers and fifity shades of negativity but content of genuine advocating youth, artfacts and evidence of hope, agency and compassion.

I want to personally say thank you to all the youth leaders, mentors, friends. I’m proud and honored to meet and work alongside with each one of you. ForYouPage is not a miracle. You are. Thank you for all you do.

Marx
05/15/2024, Seattle, with mint tea

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