

Recognize. Prepare. Act

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I walk into my first day of high school and I'm determined. I'm determined to be a cool kid, to have friends, to be popular. It's the start of high school and it's the perfect time where great things happen and people can change. I can be more than the kid who sits alone and does his homework. I have a plan and it's a simple one at that. All I need to do is to become great friends with the coolest kids in the school.

Little did I know, there was nothing easy about this plan. Hazing has always been a problem of varying degrees but conceptually consistent: humiliating and strenuous tasks forced upon another through imbalances in social power. People hear the term hazing and shrug it off. "Hazing is just some conflict between the dumb and dumber, frat kids. Right?" Wrong. Hazing is a problem that extends to every stretch of society. From China to Japan to the United Kingdom to the United States, hazing finds itself harassing individuals of seemingly completely different cultures. This isn't just some problem that comes with human nature of social expectations. This is a problem that can and must be solved. And just as most social issues are, the solution starts with you. The solution starts with people who take action to stop hazing and prevent it. The solution starts with people who are prepared and people who act.

It takes courage to stand up for what's right. It takes strength to oppose a norm. It takes guts to solve a problem. But the truth is, individuals don't cause change alone; they cause change together. Because with people backing you, you have courage; with people helping you, you have strength; and with more bodies behind you, you have more guts.

So, the next time you see a difference in power and the abuse of that power, take a stand, make a change, and act. I walked up to the top of the food chain at school: the popular kids. I gave them my coolest "hey" and introduction "I'm Eric Jiang, and I'm new here." Of course, they took the opportunity to be entertained. They kept me around only to have me do stupid things, humiliate myself, and make them laugh. I didn't even know what hazing was at the time, but regardless, I experienced it.

Acting doesn't mean you have to be a vigilante or some righteous force of pure good. It just means that you should take action. Going to an authority figure, asking hazers to stop, or even just reaching out to victims of hazing are all actions that can be taken. There is always something to do. So the only wrong thing would be to do nothing. For the sake of a better world and more inclusive and kind society, I ask you to be prepared to act and stop Hazing.