

Social Media Will Continue To Change

The important part for us is that online friendships are only a small part of a bigger ecosystem of connection that surrounds us. We try to share content that we find personally enriching. We try to amplify diverse voices sharing good information. We pause before wading into trending topics. We think carefully about using hashtags in order to avoid opportunism or disrespect. We don't repost anything for the purpose of telling people how bad/wrong/ignorant it is. There are definitely days when we think we might be better off deleting our accounts. We're doing our best to assess how social media can connect us to people and information in a healthy way. There's nothing easy or static about this exercise. Social media will continue to change. Until it is materially different, we're going to continue to do our best to navigate it with open hearts and critical eyes. Where do you find the most context online? Where are you spending time without context? Do you see more benefits or burdens from the time spent in those spaces? The first time Sarah invited me to a Korean Spa, I told her she had lost her whole entire mind. Her description of getting naked from head to toe upon entrance and staying that way while every millimeter of your bare self is exfoliated aggressively by another human being did not sound like my idea of a relaxing afternoon. But some part of me knew I'd end up there. Sarah Stewart Holland does not accept polite regrets. On our next trip to Dallas, I dutifully accompanied her to a spa and sauna and ditched my clothes and dry skin. I felt extraordinarily vulnerable and completely ordinary all at once. Here I was, both naked and anonymous. An outsider at home among bodies of all ages, shapes, colors, and sizes. We don't know enough of South Korea to speak to its authenticity. But we do know that we have enormous respect and appreciation for the Korean people who care for us in such an impersonally personal way when we're there. Our brains take in an enormous amount of information, and the ability to categorize that information is literally essential to our survival. We are highly evolved to label friends and threats. And yet, Earth offers beauty and wisdom in every people, group, and terrain. We can love and continue to build our distinct cultures while recognizing their limitations and appreciating all that other cultures have to offer. We can observe that our brains desire to sort all that bounty as good or bad and then encourage it to settle all the way down. We're Kentuckians, and we would be pleased to share our best biscuits, horse races, and bourbon with you. We also don't want to live in a world without paneer makhani, The Great British Baking Show, and Korean spas. That's as true at the global level as it is within our families. We cannot thrive inside walls. The interconnectedness of living things on Earth is so rich and complex that we better understand the moon and Mars than Earth's deep oceans.¹ We do know that oceans contain 99 percent of living space on Earth. Mother Nature simply does not recognize boundaries. We believe we should follow her lead. Human life is no different and never has been. Our earliest ancestors migrated from Africa to Eurasia, then Australia, then the Americas. We have pursued safety, resources, adventure, and riches. We have brought with us food, knowledge, mythology, customs, art, disease, and brutality. We are still doing so. In America, discussions about global problems devolve into some version of a good guy/bad guy debate. Why should we fund programs abroad when there are people at home who have unmet needs? Our thinking is stuck in the boundaries of modern maps, even as those maps have changed more than most Americans realize. For all of us who want to be better citizens of the globe, our working theory is that

humanity is better understood by time than by location. We need to understand our past, deal as honestly as possible in our present, and look toward our future. Maps attest to how artificial and fluid boundaries are. Take a look at some old maps of your country. How long have the current boundaries been in place? How much change do you see happening over time? What factors do you think have informed that change? One of my greatest regrets in life is not taking more history classes in college. I can't tell you exactly when my perspective began to shift. I read Howard Zinn's A People's History of the United States and watched all eleven hours of Ken Burns's Civil War documentary. I also began to explore my own family's history. I began the research desperate to discover my European ancestry but ended up feeling more distinctly American after tracing eight generations in Kentucky alone. Feeling connected to people who had lived through historical events, like the American Revolution and the Great Depression, helped me to see those moments as alive and relevant in a way I hadn't before. The more I read and learned about our country's history, the more I saw relevance far beyond the fact that someone I was related to had been there. Anthony and the way difficult conflicts over identity and strategy split them apart can feel relevant to issues of intersectionality present in our activism today. The robber barons and rampant income inequality of the Gilded Age can leave even the most skeptical among us thinking of Zuckerberg and Bezos and Dorsey. Even in the face of existential threats, like climate change, that seem like nothing the human race has faced before, I find it oddly comforting to remind myself that simply isn't true. My ancestors facing the bubonic plague certainly did not believe thousands of tomorrows were assured to them or their offspring. Europe is dealing with tides of nationalism as the United Kingdom faces the fallout from Brexit. China is definitely dominating.