

# Social Justice Watch 0812

[图集精选](#)

[消息精选](#)

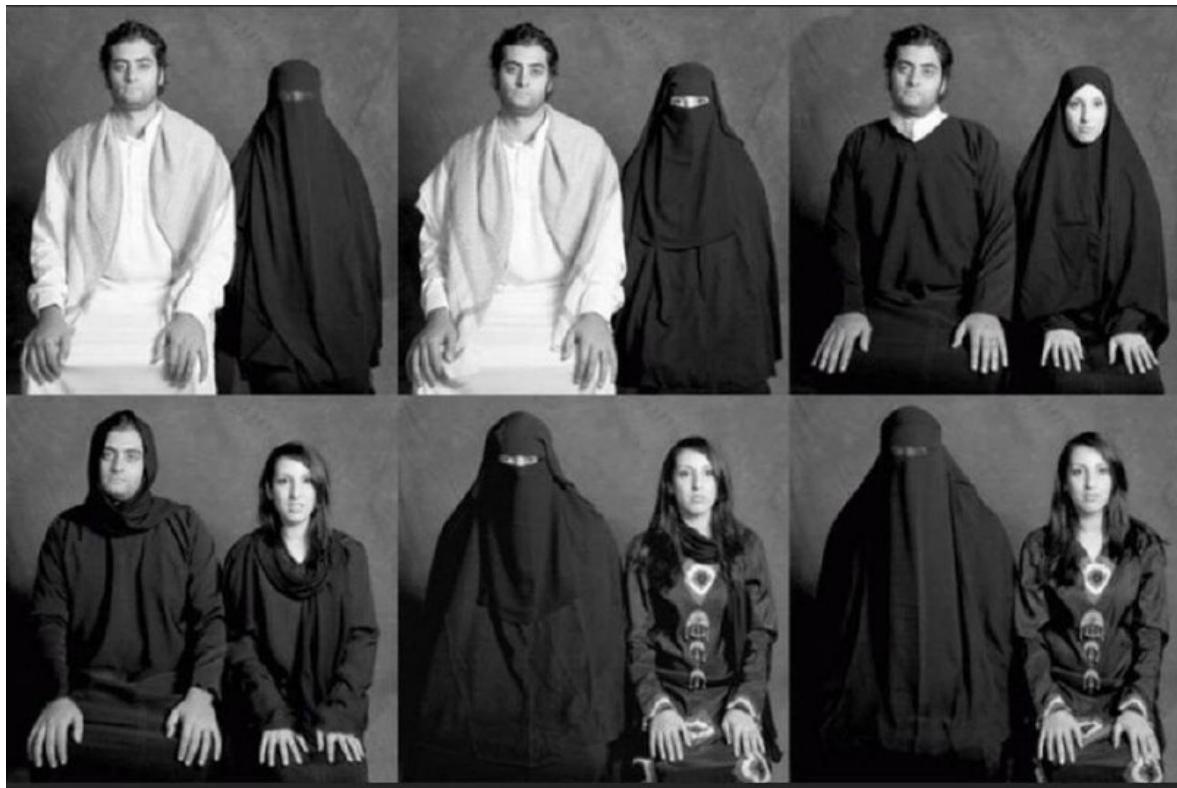
[The “Post-Truth” Publication Where Chinese Students in America Get Their News](#)

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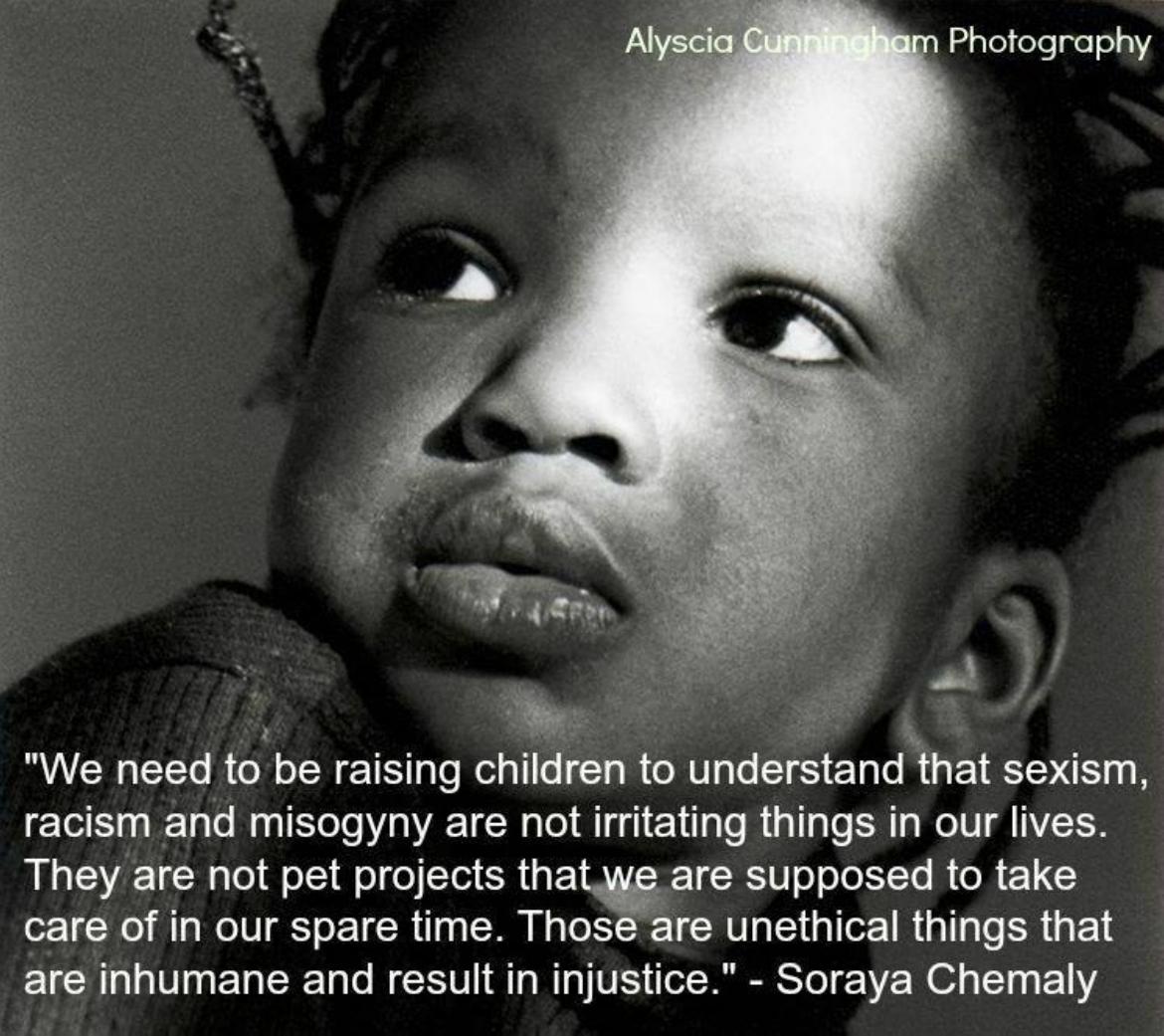
# 图集精选

[返回目录](#)



Yemeni artist - Boushra Almutawakel 2008  
'What if?'

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Alyscia Cunningham Photography

"We need to be raising children to understand that sexism, racism and misogyny are not irritating things in our lives. They are not pet projects that we are supposed to take care of in our spare time. Those are unethical things that are inhumane and result in injustice." - Soraya Chemaly

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One Hot Mess AK

@libbybakalar

I realize this is a controversial take but maybe being one blown tire, one broken bone, or one paycheck away from homelessness & financial ruin at all times isn't actually "freedom" the way we were raised to believe it is.



**Shannon Hale**   
@haleshannon

When a guy says, "You're not like other girls," he's admitting that he has a generally low regard for your entire gender but is willing to make an exception for you. This is not a compliment. Girl, run.

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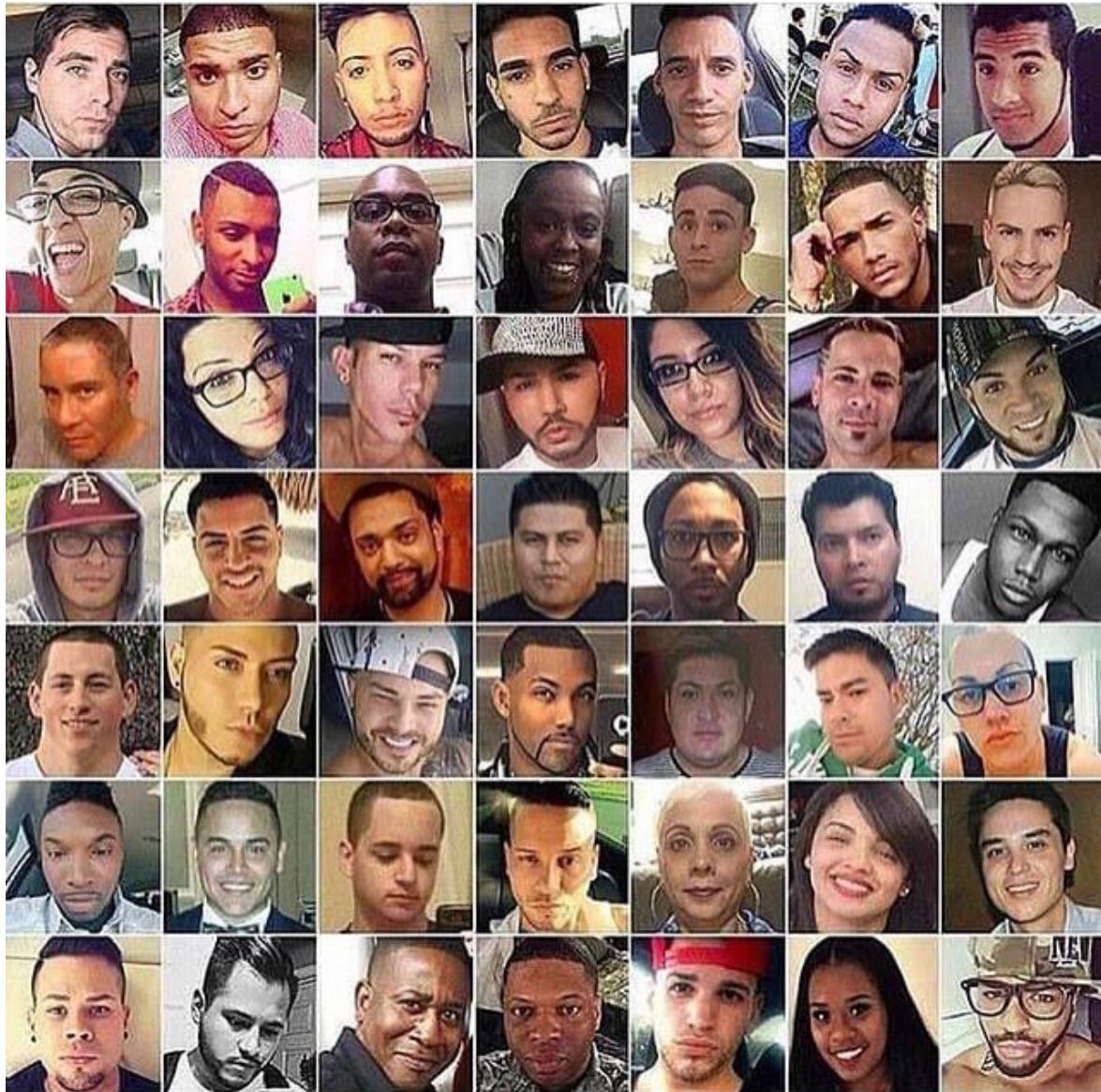
When a guy says, "You're not like other girls," he's admitting that he has a generally low regard for your entire gender but is willing to make an exception for you. This is not a compliment. Girl, run. [source](#)

**In loving memory of the  
victims of the Pulse nightclub  
shooting on June 12, 2016.**



Stanley Almodovar III  
Amanda Alvear  
Oscar A Aracena-Montero  
Rodolfo Ayala-Ayala  
Antonio Davon Brown  
Darryl Roman Burt II  
Angel L. Candelario-Padro  
Juan Chavez-Martinez  
Luis Daniel Conde  
Cory James Connell  
Tevin Eugene Crosby  
Deonka Deidra Drayton  
Simon Adrian Carrillo Fernandez  
Leroy Valentin Fernandez  
Mercedez Marisol Flores  
Peter O. Gonzalez-Cruz  
Juan Ramon Guerrero  
Paul Terrell Henry  
Frank Hernandez  
Miguel Angel Honorato  
Javier Jorge-Reyes  
Jason Benjamin Josaphat  
Eddie Jamoldroy Justice  
Anthony Luis Laureanodisla  
Christopher Andrew Leinonen  
Alejandro Barrios Martinez  
Brenda Lee Marquez McCool  
Gilberto Ramon Silva Menendez  
Kimberly Morris  
Akyra Monet Murray  
Luis Omar Ocasio-Capo  
Geraldo A. Ortiz-Jimenez  
Eric Ivan Ortiz-Rivera  
Joel Rayon Paniagua  
Jean Carlos Mendez Perez  
Enrique L. Rios, Jr.  
Jean C. Nieves Rodriguez  
Xavier Emmanuel Serrano Rosado  
Christopher Joseph Sanfeliz  
Yilmary Rodriguez Solivan  
Edward Sotomayor Jr.  
Shane Evan Tomlinson  
Martin Benitez Torres  
Jonathan Antonio Camuy Vega  
Juan P. Rivera Velazquez  
Luis S. Vielma  
Franky Jimmy Dejesus Velazquez  
Luis Daniel Wilson-Leon  
Jerald Arthur Wright





4 years ago, 49 people were shot & killed inside the [#PulseNightclub](#)

Never stop fighting for your LGBT+ friends, families, siblings, & strangers for their every right to love who they want, freely be who they are, have the safety they need, & the opportunities & life they deserve [source](#)

[返回目录](#)

# 消息精选

[返回目录](#)

<https://shityoushouldcareabout.com/home/2020/7/23/the-1992-la-riots>

shit you should care about

The 1992 LA Riots — shit you should care about

We live in a world that zooms in. The media coverage of protests, shows protesters stealing from stores, berating police officers that seem to be doing nothing to provoke them, spray painting, and being loud. At best, it's an annoyance. At worst, it's a...

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<https://shityoushouldcareabout.com/home/2020/7/23/seachange>

shit you should care about

Save our oceans — shit you should care about

Trending hashtags promoting the ban of single-use plastics, while well-intentioned, will not address the harmful impact of the millions of tons of plastic we've already created. Even if consumption and recycling rates dramatically improve tomorrow, we would...

---

46 years ago, Richard Nixon resigned. In 1974, Democrats and Republicans united behind impeachment not out of mutual contempt for Nixon, but mutual respect for the rule of law.

Congress failed to do the same for Donald Trump. But on November 3, we can act—by voting him out. [source](#)

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Jesus fuck. Portland protesters managed to hold off the cop's attacks for several hours with a shieldwall. When the cops broke the wall, they did this. [link source](#)

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<https://shityoushouldcareabout.com/home/2020/7/23/anti-semitism-in-high-school>

shit you should care about

Anti-Semitism in High school — shit you should care about

Growing up as a white, Jewish teenager in a wealthy suburban area and attending an elite private school does not seem like a blueprint to discrimination. One would be shocked to hear about the religious and racial divides buried within a place that prides...

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<https://shityoushouldcareabout.com/home/2020/7/22/who-was-to-blame>

shit you should care about

Who was to blame? — shit you should care about

For a few years now, I've been blaming myself for how it happened. Running through every scenario trying to figure out how I got to that certain point of time. Was it my low self-esteem? Or how I went with the flow of things to be accepted?

I have finally...

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<https://shityoushouldcareabout.com/home/2020/7/10/my-journey-to-self-acceptance>

shit you should care about

My journey to self acceptance — shit you should care about

Trigger Warning : This piece discusses sexual assault. If you do not have the mental capacity to read this right now, please don't, or if you think this may trigger you, be mindful while you're reading and stop when necessary. If you or someone you...

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Birtherism was supposed to be some dumb shit that only the dumb fringe believed in, and next thing you know, 50% of the Republicans believed Obama

was not born in the US. [link source telegra.ph/QAnon-groups-have-millions-of-members-on-Facebook-documents-show-08-10](#)

Twitter

Brandy Zadrozny

EXCLUSIVE: Documents from an internal Facebook investigation into Qanon show, for the first time, the massive scale of the conspiracy theory's community on the platform. We're talking thousands of groups, millions of members. From me and @ArijitDSen http...

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[telegra.ph/The-Post-Truth-Publication-Where-Chinese-Students-in-America-Get-Their-News-08-10-2](#)

Telegraph

The “Post-Truth” Publication Where Chinese Students in America Get Their News

On a Monday morning in February, members of the staff of College Daily, an online Chinese-language publication for Chinese students living in North America, gathered in their office, in Times Square, for an editorial meeting. Guan Tong, the editorial director...

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How did New Zealand go 100 days without any new cases of COVID-19?

- 1) They put a woman in charge of their country.
  - 2) She followed the science. [source](#)
- 

No paywalls, superb quality, and put together by some of the most innovative thinkers in China studies. Can't stress enough what a brilliant resource this is:

<https://madeinchinajournal.com/made-in-china-syllabi/> [link source](#)

Made in China Journal

Made in China Syllabi

Made in China Syllabi In the five years that have passed since we first established the Made in China Journal, we have published over three hundred essays on different facets of Chinese politics and society. This represents the

collective expertise of hundreds...

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“Nobody could have ever predicted a pandemic of this proportion.” [source](#)

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[www.the-american-interest.com/2020/08/06/getting-from-november-to-january/](http://www.the-american-interest.com/2020/08/06/getting-from-november-to-january/)

The American Interest

Getting from November to January - The American Interest

Wargaming shows that, short of a landslide victory for Joe Biden in the upcoming elections, we may be headed for a severe constitutional crisis. Here are six strategies for averting the worst outcomes.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUbsFtLkGN8>

YouTube

Road signs suck. What if we got rid of them all?

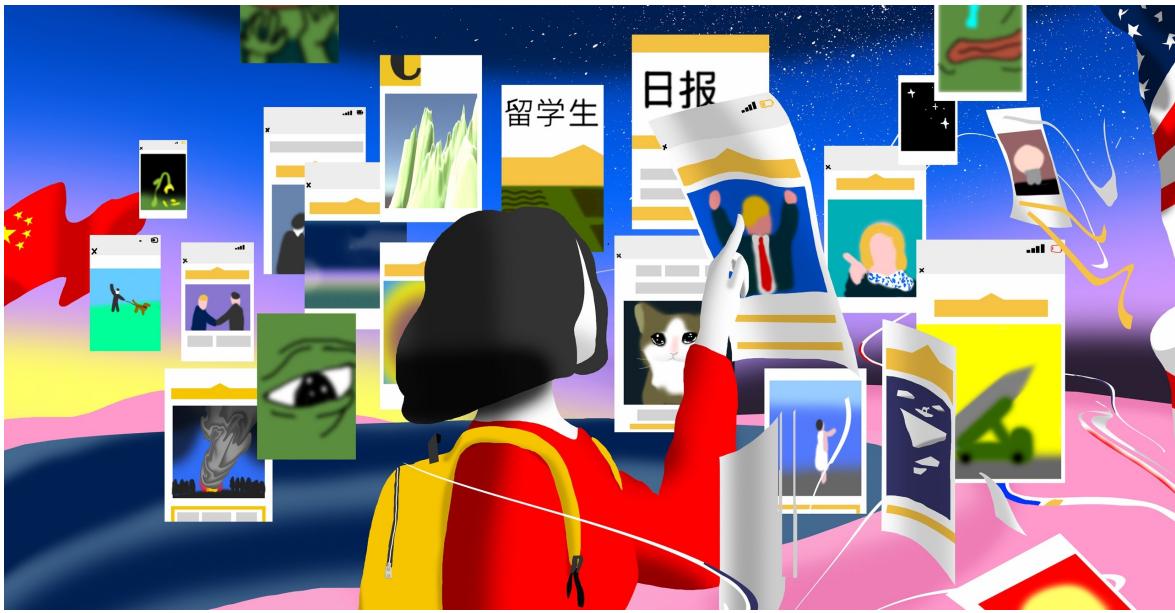
Shared space designs, explained with 99% Invisible. Check them out here:

<https://99percentinvisible.org/> Subscribe to our channel! <http://goo.gl/0bsAjO>  
Some ...

[返回目录](#)

# **The “Post-Truth” Publication Where Chinese Students in America Get Their News**

[返回目录](#)



The online publication College Daily brings Chinese students living in the U.S. news with nationalistic undertones, delivered in a stream of memes and Internet-speak. Illustration by Jon Han

On a Monday morning in February, members of the staff of College Daily, an online Chinese-language publication for Chinese students living in North America, gathered in their office, in Times Square, for an editorial meeting. Guan Tong, the editorial director of the New York bureau, reviewed traffic numbers from the previous week. Staring at her MacBook, she seemed satisfied with what she saw. A piece by College Daily’s founder, Lin Guoyu, about the blockbuster Chinese movie “The Wandering Earth,” had garnered more than a million page views; its headline was “Of Course, Only Chinese People Can Save Planet Earth.” The healthy numbers came as a surprise: it was Lunar New Year, which tends to be a slow week for College Daily. “No need to worry about low traffic during Lunar New Year anymore,” Guan said cheerily.

A writer—who, like the other staff members, appeared to be in her twenties—pitched another post on “The Wandering Earth,” which had topped the global box office the previous weekend. (College Daily had already published a dozen posts on the film.) “The Wandering Earth” was proof, the writer said, that “we Chinese don’t emphasize individual heroism—we concentrate our energy to tackle major tasks. . . . Unlike American individualism, collectivism is a Chinese sentiment.” Guan approved the idea.

Guan shifted her focus to a staff writer named Deng He, who was known for

authoring *baokuan*, or “explosive-style” posts—articles that get hundreds of thousands of clicks and shares. College Daily’s office was adorned with photos of Deng, who is twenty-six and nicknamed He-he: He-he flipping his hair and gazing into the camera like a pop star; He-he in a swivel chair, holding a giant container of popcorn. On the same office wall was a list of banned words and phrases (“Falun Gong,” “Dalai Lama,” “Panama Papers”), guidelines for image selection (“Please do not use photos of national leaders. If you have to, please discuss with the person in charge of the article”), and a list of cash awards that writers could earn for writing pieces that brought in clicks; an article that got a million page views could win its author more than a thousand dollars.

“Everyone has been studying He-he’s style,” Guan told the group. “They ask themselves, What would He-he do with this topic? Why are He-he’s articles all big hits?” She turned to address Deng directly. “Tell us how you write,” she said. “Let everyone learn from you.”

Deng, wearing a black hoodie and staring at the table, deflected the question. His latest piece, headlined “I Showed My Syrian Friend a Video of Fireworks from Lunar New Year’s Eve. He Broke Into Tears,” was the second most popular post of the week, with more than seven hundred thousand page views in five days. It was written under the byline He, in the first person. In the post, Deng and his friend, Yousef, bond over being the only international students at an American high school. When Deng shows Yousef a video of fireworks at a Lunar New Year celebration—which Deng portrays as a happy occasion in peaceful, abundant China—Yousef breaks down crying. The explosions, it seems, remind him of the war back home, which killed multiple members of his family, including his younger brother, Aziz, who, Deng writes, was “bombed into two halves.”

“We need to combine facts and feelings,” Guan told the group, citing the post as an exemplar. “In our posts, there should be things from reality, but also things from one’s mind. Otherwise, the emotional appeal will be lacking.”

College Daily, which now has more than thirty staffers in Beijing and fifteen in New York, launched at the beginning of 2014, as a one-man operation in Lin Guoyu’s apartment, in Beijing. In its early days, it was a bare-bones survival guide for American campus life, with vaporous posts about boosting your G.P.A. and planning for finals week. Over time, and especially after the 2016 U.S. election, it transitioned to the kinds of stories it features today: Chinese news

delivered with nationalistic overtones; tabloid tales of Chinese students living overseas (sex, drugs, murders, and missing women appear frequently); and news from the U.S. and the celebrity world.

A headline posted during the 2016 U.S. Presidential campaign read “Using a Double? Changing Leaders? Might Not Have Long to Live? Hillary’s Campaign May End Early.” More recently, a headline proclaimed, “Trump Dodged a Bullet! ‘Russian Collusion’ Investigation Over, and He’s Safe. . . .” Others have ranged from “Farewell, isis! The Last isis Group Will Be Exterminated, and They Beg the World to Forgive” to “Hollywood Sexy Asian Goddess, First Love Was Daniel Wu, Bewitched Hot Men All Over the World” (about the actress Maggie Q). When College Daily, after weeks of silence, finally weighed in on the protests in Hong Kong, in August, it toed the government line, uncritically publishing a headline that used the phrase “I Support the Hong Kong Police”—a saying that has been popularized by the *People’s Daily*, an official organ of the Chinese Communist Party.

With about 1.6 million followers on the social-media platform WeChat and more than a million active readers a day, College Daily is one of an increasing number of Chinese “self-media” outlets, sometimes called “new media,” which have no official government affiliation and reach their subscribers exclusively via social media, mostly WeChat. Today, it would be hard to find a Chinese student in America who doesn’t regularly encounter College Daily content, intentionally or not. Even if you don’t subscribe, chances are that your friends on WeChat are sharing its stories to private or group chats or to their time lines. Chinese state media outlets often repost or aggregate College Daily content, too, which helps it reach a wider audience.

College Daily’s potential readership—Chinese students who are studying abroad and those who aspire to do so—is growing rapidly. In 2018 alone, there were more than three hundred and sixty thousand Chinese students enrolled in higher-education programs in the U.S., a fourfold rise from a decade ago. Students from mainland China make up one-third of all international students in the U.S. and outnumber those from the second and third most represented countries (India and South Korea) combined. For the most part, these students don’t watch U.S. election returns on CNN or get word of the latest viral moment via Twitter. They get such news on their phones, often from College Daily, in a stream of memes and Internet-speak. A College Daily article titled “It’s true! 1% of Rich Americans Own 40% of the Wealth—The Gap Is Worse Than a Hundred Years

Ago” is essentially an aggregation of a Washington Post article on Elizabeth Warren’s plan for a wealth tax, but dotted with images and gifs, including three cats, two ducks, and one Teletubby.

College Daily sometimes casts its heat and light on unsuspecting private citizens. In 2017, after a Chinese student named Yang Shuping delivered a commencement speech at the University of Maryland, in which she praised “the fresh air of free speech” that she had found in America, College Daily published an article called “Maryland University Chinese Student Suspected of Shaming China in Her Graduation Speech,” which was widely aggregated by Chinese media. Yang became the target of Internet bullying and deleted her personal Web site and social-media accounts. (“Shaming China” is something of a buzz phrase at College Daily: as of February, it had appeared on the site more than a hundred and forty-five times.)

“Yup, there is air pollution in China,” the College Daily riposte to Yang’s speech said. “But is air in America really so good? Are you compelled to take a deep breath of the piss-infused air in New York City every day?” (The post was issued from the New York bureau.) Another post from 2017, “Girls Studying Abroad—Please Stay Away from These Foreign Man-Dregs,” was illustrated with several photographs of a white man in a Maoist Red Guard uniform. The photographs were of a British man living in China, who had nothing to do with the story. The man, shocked to see his image go viral, asked, “What have I done?,” on his WeChat time line, adding a crying emoji.

College Daily’s success can be partly attributed to its lack of direct competitors. Mainstream Chinese media tend to see Chinese students abroad as an élite class of spoiled children, and sometimes question their allegiances; Chinese-language papers based in America, such as *China Press* or *Epoch Times* (which has links to the Falun Gong and is vocally opposed to the Chinese Communist Party), traditionally serve an older, less affluent generation of immigrants. Chinese students will find little that resonates with their daily lives or sensibilities in these publications, and the vast majority of them likely find English-language news inaccessible.

In April, 2012, Qu Ming and Wu Ying, both twenty-three-year-old graduate students in engineering at the University of Southern California, were shot to death while sitting in Qu’s car, which was parked not far from the school’s campus. In coverage of the double murder, Chinese-language outlets often led

with the same detail: the car they died in was a BMW, a signifier of wealth and class, carrying a hint, somehow, of a luxurious life caught up in crime. An *Epoch Times* headline read “Calamity by BMW—Two Chinese Students Murdered in L.A.” English-language outlets, such as the *Daily Mail*, picked up this thread: “‘They were showing off their wealth’: Unsympathetic Chinese media says two USC students murdered in luxury BMW were killed because of their car.” The coverage eventually sparked a backlash. CCTV, the primary state broadcaster in China, interviewed Qu’s roommate, who pointed out that the car was secondhand and, through a Webcam, showed the audience around the apartment where he and Qu had lived, where they shared a single desk and slept on bare mattresses on the floor.

Lin Guoyu has since said that the murders of Qu and Wu defined his mission when he started College Daily. Chinese students needed media that better reflected their interests and showed them warmth and sympathy, he said. “We are devoted to providing overseas students and the community around them with valuable reporting and compassionate stories,” he said, in a 2015 interview.

Lin, who holds the title of C.E.O., founder, and editor-in-chief of College Daily, is thirty years old, and he joked that he has reached “old age” for the industry. “This is a world for those born after 1990, or 1995, really,” he told me. I’ve only ever talked to Lin on the phone, but his Internet presence is a crossover of Wall Street bro and central-casting Chinese C.E.O.: black-framed glasses, dress shirts, ramrod posture, intense gaze. He doesn’t talk about himself much, and his biography is patchy. He was born and raised in the northeastern Chinese city of Dalian, in Liaoning province, which borders North Korea. He studied accounting at Miami University, in Ohio, he told me, where he pledged a fraternity, though he stressed that he joined for the networking opportunities, not for the “mindless drinking.” “The occasions that were purely for play were not so attractive to Chinese students or Chinese-Americans,” he said.

After graduating, in 2012, he worked in Silicon Valley as an auditor at PricewaterhouseCoopers, but he wanted to return to China. “I had a strong sense of missing out, and I wondered if I was just wasting time,” he said. China in the early twenty-tens was a sea of startups. Meituan, which is similar to Groupon, started in 2010. So did Xiaomi, which has become a main competitor of Huawei and iPhone in China. The car-hailing service Didi launched in 2012; it has since bought Uber China and is now targeting Uber’s South American market. The video platform Kuaishou, launched in 2011, has hundreds of millions of monthly

active users. And there was WeChat, a chat app that didn't seem so different from its predecessors when it launched, in 2011, but soon became central to Chinese social life, with a billion daily active users. (Facebook has 1.6 billion globally.)

In 2015, Lin received an investment of a million yuan, or roughly a hundred and fifty thousand U.S. dollars, from Xu Xiaoping. Xu is a founder of New Oriental, the largest language-school chain in China, which, since 1993, has prepared students to take the ielts and toefl tests in English proficiency—the first step toward studying abroad. By late 2017, College Daily had finished an investment round that brought in just less than three million dollars. One of the major investors was Tencent, the parent company of WeChat.

"Investors see new media as low-maintenance and high-return," Lin said. "The key is being able to monetize data, and advertising on WeChat became more and more important." College Daily's current advertisers include New Oriental and other language-education services; banking services, such as UnionPay; China Telecom; and the e-commerce giant tmall.com.

The advertising bounty is proof of "Chinese netizens' extreme reliance on WeChat," Xiao Qiang, who teaches at the U.C. Berkeley School of Information and runs a bilingual Web site called China Digital Times, said. Google, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are all blocked in China, so students in America largely rely on WeChat to stay in touch with family and friends back home and keep up with the news in China. "If they used to spend five, six hours a day on WeChat back home," Xiao said, "they are still spending five, six hours a day here. There isn't any big difference before and after their move to America."

Xiao said that online censorship in China plays a large role in determining College Daily's coverage areas and editorial standards. Like all Internet-based businesses in China, College Daily must take extreme care to avoid certain words and politically sensitive topics. "It leaves room only for entertainment and pro-government coverage," he said. The mix of tabloid headlines and soft propaganda, Xiao told me, appeals to a broad readership, investors, and the government all at the same time. Searches of the name of China's President, Xi Jinping, and of "President Xi" yield no results in College Daily's WeChat interface, but "Trump" appears in headlines almost four hundred times. One reason for College Daily's heavy coverage of U.S. politics is that Chinese

politics is much trickier to cover.

College Daily sometimes aggregates content sourced from Infowars and RT, the Russian government-backed news outlet. One article reproduced on College Daily, sourced from the Russian propaganda outlet Sputnik News, concluded that the White Helmets, a group of volunteer rescue workers in Syria, were “more evil than isis.” Shortly after the U.S. election, College Daily published a piece headlined “American Media: During the Election We Were No Longer Journalists. We Became Hillary’s Cheerleaders.” One of the sources cited in the post was a letter from Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., then the publisher of the *Times*, to his newsroom, written immediately following the 2016 election; but there was nothing in his letter that resembled College Daily’s characterization of it.

Lin said that College Daily’s stories accurately reflect its readership’s disillusionment with America, particularly when they compare the U.S. with China. “Especially after the 2016 election, our readers see how divided a society America is,” he said. “They see the chaos that’s brought about by its freedom. At the same time, China appears to be orderly, positive, and continuously advancing. This changes how an overseas Chinese student feels. It means that if we write things that are critical of China, or if we’re singing the praises of America, we will be less popular with our readers.” Following the mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, in August, College Daily ran an explainer on why many Americans own semi-automatic guns, which said, “The reason is that in America, the police do not have the duty to protect you when your life is in danger.”

After the staff meeting, I caught up with Deng He on his lunch break. (Deng recently left College Daily and now works at an advertising agency in China.) He was somewhat less reserved outside the office, and appeared energized by talking about his work. He’s a graduate of the University of Texas at Dallas, with a master’s degree in marketing, and he previously interned at P.R. companies in China. He landed at College Daily last year. “Our account carries the voice of our boss, Lin Guoyu—we go with his style,” he said. “Since I started, I’ve always followed the lead of the boss and write whatever he likes and asks me to write. Mostly, we follow whatever is trending.”

On a day off, he got a call from Lin, who described an idea he’d had while browsing viral videos online. Lin asked Deng to write about a Syrian friend who thought of the war in his country after seeing fireworks in China. Deng came up

with the details: their high-school bond, the Syrian man’s dead brother. (Lin at first declined to comment on the genesis of Deng’s piece; reached a second time, he denied that it had been entirely made up, claiming that it was based on events from his own life. Susanna Niu, whose title is partner and general manager at College Daily, said that the story was real in all its particulars.)

I asked Deng why he thought the piece had resonated with such a large audience. “It’s purely made up, to be honest with you,” Deng replied. “It’s all made up. I’m not sure if I did the right thing. My boss asked me to write it. I think, if a new-media outlet wants to move people, you have to make them feel that it’s real.” He rattled off the official government outlets that reposted the piece: *People’s Daily*; *Global Times*, the tabloid affiliate of *People’s Daily*; the state-run news agency Xinhua; the Chinese Communist Youth League. “I got them all!” he said, with a laugh.

“No matter what you write, there are people who are going to curse at you,” Deng said. “You are nonetheless making money off them. It’s like charging them an intelligence tax.”

I spoke with a former employee of College Daily who was taken aback that the publication would make up a story wholesale. But she acknowledged that it wasn’t entirely surprising in the landscape of Chinese new media, which she described as low-stakes and transitory. “They are all just telling stories,” she said. “Most people just read to kill time. Who is going to investigate? No one will. It only passes your eyes—there’s no need to pin down if it’s real or fake.”

One of the difficulties in fully understanding College Daily is that, as former employees told me, it lacks a clear editorial mission or a coherent set of editorial standards. (A couple of former employees told me that standards vary widely from editor to editor.) Niu said that College Daily is a news agency. Deng calls College Daily “new media,” a format in which young writers like him can “make things happen”—create a trend, go viral, conjure a story that readers think is real. When I asked Lin if it was more accurate to call College Daily’s posts “journalism” or “content,” he replied, annoyed, “What’s the difference?”

Pressed to articulate the identity of his publication, Lin used the phrase “post-truth,” which he attributed to the *New York Times*, to express his belief that the true essence of things is fundamentally unknowable and that the meaning of the news of the day depends on the spin one chooses to put on it. To illustrate his

point, he offered a hypothetical about a graduate student who moonlights as a prostitute.

“How do you cover this?” he asked me. “The headline could be ‘Shocking! Morally Bankrupt! Graduate Student at Élite School Goes for Prostitution!’ Or it could be positive, like, ‘Inspiring! Call Girl Got Into Top School!’ ”

“Correctness doesn’t exist, because it’s always relative,” Lin said. “When we refer to ‘the correct values,’ what that really means is ‘the values that are exactly like one’s own.’ ”

Fang Kecheng, a communications professor at Chinese University of Hong Kong, runs a WeChat account called News Lab, which is focussed on media literacy. (As a counter to College Daily, he translated the Sulzberger letter in its entirety and published it on his account.) Fang was a reporter at a major Chinese paper, *Southern Weekly*, and covered politics before he transitioned to academia, in 2013. He was inspired to become a journalist as a high-school student, in the early two-thousands, which was a time when government control on journalism was relatively relaxed. In 2003, news reports forced the government to acknowledge a sars outbreak. That same year, China abolished its internal custody and repatriation system after intensive news coverage of a migrant worker in Guangzhou who was detained for not carrying his I.D. and subsequently beaten to death in custody.

Journalism in China is different now, Fang said, with a sigh. Low pay and heavy-handed censorship have been driving reporters out of the business. Fang invoked the relatively relaxed “Hu-Wen Era,” referring to Xi’s predecessors, President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. Since taking power, in 2013, Xi has tightened central control with aggressive propaganda campaigns. (The media “must bear the surname of the Party,” he declared, during a visit to the CCTV newsroom, in 2016.) “Politics in China is largely behind the scenes,” Fang said. “When there is low transparency, people tend to believe in conspiracy theories and fake news.”

In a recent post, Fang wrote, “The weirder the conspiracy theory, the more widely it circulates. Many WeChat public accounts are becoming mills for conspiracy theories. It is not necessarily that they hate American politicians so much; it’s just that such articles are likely to reach the threshold of a hundred thousand clicks.”

Lin, for his part, has been open about his contempt for traditional journalism. He once wrote on his WeChat account that “the worst mistake I ever made was to pin hopes on people who hold onto journalism ideals.” In 2016, he said in an interview, “This gang of people only have their ideals, and produce no news.” He said, “Journalism majors tend to spend lots of time on one piece, but in the age of new media, we want reporting and editing to work seamlessly and emphasize our appeal to our readers—we can’t just wait for news to happen to do stories.”

When I asked Lin about these past comments, he became agitated. He said that reporting that aims “to change the world” results in sloppy journalism. When I replied that sloppy journalism is the opposite of “holding onto journalism ideals,” his irritation turned into anger; he told me that it was inappropriate to quote someone back to them in an interview. “Can’t I just tell you that I was being a fucking idiot?” he asked, eager to end the discussion.

It appears that Lin doesn’t think of published words as a matter of public record. In the course of reporting this piece, I tried to look up all the College Daily pieces with the word “Trump” in the headline that the site had posted between the beginning of 2016 and Election Day, and discovered that, of sixty-three articles, only fourteen remained on their WeChat account. I asked Lin if College Daily deletes stories. He replied, “It almost never happens.” When I mentioned the many election-related articles that appeared to have been deleted, he said, without missing a beat, “We voluntarily deleted all the articles from 2015 and 2016.”

Lin said that his critics, including Fang and News Lab, were upset that Hillary Clinton had lost the election, and they were taking it out on him because he had predicted that Trump would win. “A certain circle of people, namely American-trained journalism majors, have this resentment that they are not the people who get to deliver information to overseas Chinese students,” Lin said. “They are not the mainstream. The gap of traffic and audience between mine and theirs is so big, but the masses’ eyes are clear and bright. What I hate is a group of arrogant people saying that the readers are all deplorables. It’s anti-democracy and anti-freedom.” (At other times during our conversations, he compared himself to Theresa May and Martin Luther King, Jr.)

I’ve spoken with a number of people who are critical of College Daily, and I’ve never heard anyone call its readership deplorable. In fact, they all show great

sympathy toward current Chinese students. What they find disturbing is that many Chinese people are conditioned to see speaking the truth as trouble-making, and to see journalism as synonymous with government propaganda. The result is a kind of dissociation from truth. A saying popular among young people online goes, “I’m just one of the melon-eating masses.” It means that a person is only a passive onlooker, with neither the means nor the interest to know what’s truly going on.

Huang Yijie is a twenty-year-old rising sophomore at N.Y.U. and a regular reader of College Daily. Sporting a crew cut and wearing black-and-blue-framed glasses, which matched the blue jersey pullover he was wearing when we met, he was polite and hopeful. He has close to three thousand friends on WeChat, more than seven hundred of whom are College Daily subscribers. The son of a well-to-do family in a small coastal town in China, Huang arrived in America at the age of fifteen to attend a high school in Maryland. “Back home, I was a middling student, very quiet,” he said. “After coming to America, there are so many opportunities to join various activities, such as school elections—things I wouldn’t have imagined before.” In high school, he started going by the name Frank and became class president.

We sat and chatted in a basement common room in his dorm, and he scrolled through the chat history on his iPhone XR and explained the purpose of various WeChat groups: secondhand selling, dinner gatherings, a writing class, house hunting for people who wanted to move out of N.Y.U. dorms next semester. One group offered newcomers advice on getting vaccinations, buying health insurance, and acquiring a driver’s license. It was six months before the first day of the coming school year, but a group for incoming N.Y.U. students, from the class of 2023, had more than five hundred members.

Huang has an active social life, but he noted that the city could be a lonely place. “One feature of New York City is that everyone on the street is wearing headphones. Walking or eating alone can be lonely.” He fills stretches of solitude with podcasts and online reading. He reads College Daily about twice a day, and he told me that he admires it particularly for the attention that it brings to prejudice against Chinese students on American campuses, such as high-profile incidents of faculty forcing students to speak English in common areas. “I like finding out about things happening all over the world,” he said.

I asked him about posts that seem to be poorly sourced, like the one about the

Syrian friend. His response reminded me of Schrödinger's cat. "In my heart," Huang said, "they are simply not real and not fake."

When I asked Huang if he considered journalism important, he paused. Then he noted that, last summer, he travelled to North Korea, where he didn't consume news at all. "I really like reading news," he said. "But I suppose nothing will happen if I don't."

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