

Generation Z or "Gen Z" has gained extreme popularity in the news in the past year from **breaking young voter turnout records in 2020** and fighting for social equality to being at the spearhead of the social media age. But what does being a part of Generation Z mean to college aged students who are considered to be at the older front of the generation.

Generation Z is also known for the progressive views and demanding change from political leaders, influencers and the general public. Esmeralda Samano, a student at the college, enjoys being a part of Generation Z because of the progressiveness, but she believes that people of other generations don't see Gen Z in the same light that she does.

"I feel like I know there are some other generations that believe children should be seen and not heard and we definitely go against that," Samano said. "I think any time change happens people feel very uncomfortable, especially if they are not ready for change...our generation is so open minded and go with the flow, so I think it just kind of worries some of the older generations and it is just so different, and I don't think that they're ready to accept that difference yet."

One way Gen Z is able to spread progressive values and help get the word out about issues is through social media. Isabella Duckworth, a student at the college, enjoys using social media, specifically Tik Tok, to learn about new issues and listen to activists. The Tik Tok app allows creators to make one-minute clips of all sorts of things whether that be using it for activism, comedy or dancing to popular music, which Duckworth says has changed the industry.

"I think Tik Tok is such a cool thing because you can show activism that way and get an issue out but also it has changed the music industry because of one-minute videos that have a song behind it and it's the number one song and it makes people have their own power about things and it keeps us interested," Duckworth said.

Social media has completely changed the way people live their lives. Prior to the rise of social media people could only get in touch with those who they met in person. With the introduction of the internet that was quickly changed. As the first generation of people to grow up having access to the internet and social media, Gen Z has been able to communicate ideas and

share their thoughts with the world.

Student, Aurora Ivester, finds that growing up in an age with technology has its pros and cons.

"I do think that having so much access to technology at such a young age [has] impacted me," Ivester said. "I didn't really start getting social into social media until middle school, but I think that the prevalence of social media has made it a lot harder [for people] to accommodate in the real world. I feel like no matter what you're doing, if your first interactions happen over a text message or on social media, it's going to be different than [meeting someone face-to-face]."

Throughout recent years the impact of social media has become more visible. Some studies have shown that there has been an **increase in teen depression and anxiety** because of social media. There are those that argue that social media has only been a detriment to humans because of the unrealistic expectations it sets for younger audiences. However, there are people who see the benefits of social media and how it's positively impacted their lives.

Student, Mimu Mbogori, utilizes social media to connect with family and friends around the world.

"Being able to connect with literally anyone at anytime, anywhere on the globe is amazing," Mbogori said. "Coming from someone who has family [in other countries] having that technology has been very beneficial. It's the same way with friends who live in different countries. Because of technology, I think it just made us very connected with the world, which I think is very a very positive thing."

Gen Z has been very crucial to the formation of social media. They decide what trend will be popular next or what social issues need to be pushed to the forefront. Many people attribute Gen Z's inclination toward political activism to social media and the ability to communicate thoughts and ideas with like-minded people.

In addition to breaking records for voter turnout, the 2020 election was the first election for many first-time voters, a majority of them being a part of Gen Z people.

"When the 2020 election rolled around, I was old enough to vote, so I went with my dad who is 41 and voted for the first-time last year," Ivester said. "I thought a lot about it when it was happening, and I just didn't understand why [anyone] wouldn't want a part in what's going on in the world. I don't know if it's because we have so much access to technology and breaking news, but I definitely think it's a good thing."

In recent years, some of the most powerful movements have been started by Gen Z. This sudden increase in political and social awareness have earned the generation the title of being one of the most progressive generations ever.

"I think it's wrong to say all of Gen Z is [progressive] because there are people, I've met in my personal life who have more conservative views, or just don't believe in the same progressive agenda that, a majority of Gen Z does." Mbogori said. "There's always going to be outliers or people who just don't believe in that same kind of stuff. We are very inclusive and definitely are the most progressive, inclusive generation of the ones that there are right now."

Like any generation there are stereotypes and misconceptions that older members in society may hold toward Gen Z. While they are still considered to be the youngest generation, they don't want to be treated differently because of their age.

"The biggest misconception people have about my generation is that people think everyone wants to stand out and be individual, but I think that that's the complete opposite of what most people our age want is," Ivester said. "We want to be able to find a place where we can exist with other people like us."

"I think it's very common [for people to] think that we're obsessed with our phones or not having any other interests rather than social media," Mbogori said. "I have friends who I actually don't think they would live if they didn't have their phone for an hour, but that's very big trope."

Currently generation Z has been **the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in the United States**, and with the population of Gen Z still on the rise, there's no telling what things this generation will go on to change and accomplish.

