

GEN Z

defines the decade

When many people think of Generation Z, images of entitled teenagers glued to cell phones and muttering “ok boomer” come to mind. However, Generation Z, more commonly known as Gen Z, has endured a decade of not only coming of age but also unprecedented change within

the fabric of American society. Among many diverse events, the growing up period of Gen Z has been defined by the first black president, LG-BTQ+ and feminist movements, and revolutionary advancements in technology. The rise of social media has not only served as a platform for Internet “influencers” and

activists but has also given Gen Z a way to feel united amidst the changes that have shaped the decade. The events that transpired between 2010 and 2020 will set the course for what is to come in the next decade.

Americans under 25 are the most diverse generation ever. Almost half are non-white, compared to 39% of millennials and 18% of boomers (ft.com). This increase in diversity has led to wider acceptance of social movements. More than half of those under age 25 say #BlackLivesMatter has had a major impact on their perceptions and 41% say the same about #MeToo.

Teens have increasingly taken matters into their own hands to fight for causes that they are passionate about. This generation has shown that it will respond to traumatic events with anything but complacency. For example, after the horrific Parkland shooting, instead of teens accepting the

situation, they used it to create a platform and movement that would affect change in schools across the nation. Climate change is another issue that has forced our generation to fight for a solution. Greta Thunberg is a notable teen who has become the face of a climate awareness movement that has created a sense of urgency amongst teens and adults alike. This decade has seen a lot of societal strides and setbacks; one of those being the opioid/drug crisis that has affected individuals and families. The government has just now begun to place restrictions on access to pain killers and other illicit drugs, but there still remains implications with no foreseeable remedy.

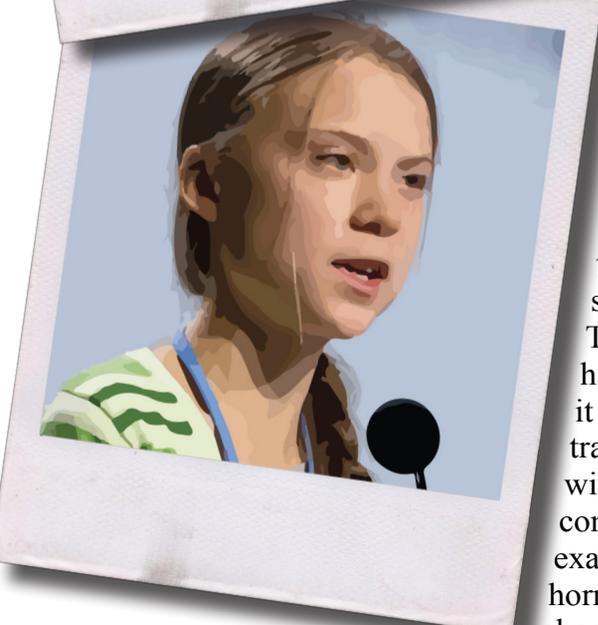
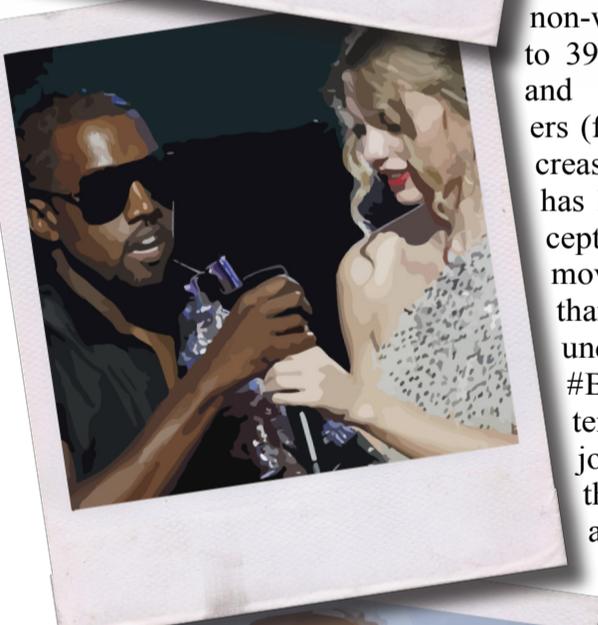
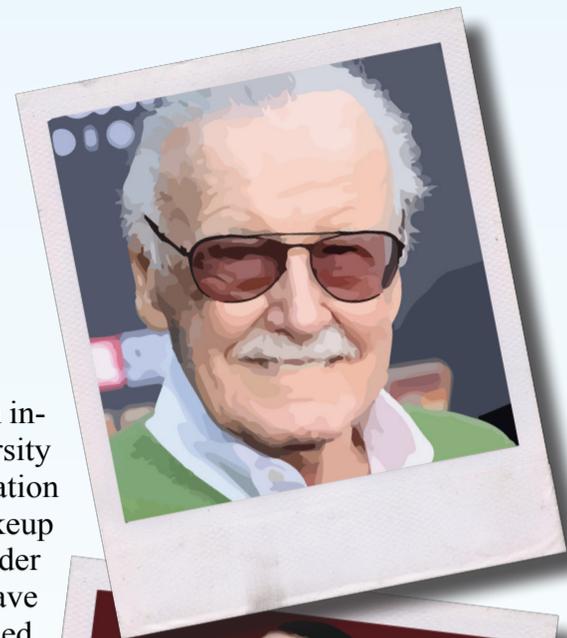
Social media has also lent itself to the rise of pop culture phenomena from #RIPHarambe to the Kylie Jenner Lip Challenge. We have seen the rise of the Instagram model and the fall of the classic Disney Channel star era. Games like Pokemon Go and Fortnite have taken off in Gen Z's hands. On the other hand, while social media has given a voice to the voiceless, it has taken away the common courtesies of face to face interactions. Now, with a shield to hide behind, people feel entitled to take sides in public feuds that in decades past they would not have been involved in. For example, what started as a simple misunderstanding turned into a decade long feud between Kanye West and Taylor Swift, complete with diss tracks, snakes, and two clashing sides of a confusing narrative.

Along with other social media sites, YouTube gave a way for video creators to build a platform from scratch. Within the YouTube community, there has been a surge in what is known as “beauty gurus.” Boys and girls within Gen Z have been able to watch and learn skills from their peers. This past decade

has also seen an increase in diversity and representation within the makeup community. Wider shade ranges have been introduced through brands like Fenty Beauty by Rihanna, and there has been more inclusion beyond just females.

This decade has seen many trends come and go. Among the few to have remained is dieting. Keto, paleo, vegan, vegetarian--whatever it was, you probably know someone who has tried it. Avocado toast is one of the most iconic foods of the decade. It's healthy yet delicious; a delicacy on a restaurant's menu but simple and cheap to replicate at home. Among other healthy foods, green smoothies and salads became popular as well. Health food restaurants like Freshii, Kale Me Crazy, and Mama Nature's Juice Bar are local favorites where these current trends can be found. Along with other social media expansions, being a “foodie” and running a “foodstagram” can now be a full time job. 126,000 photos can be found on Instagram with the hashtag #PhoneEatsFirst. Restaurants are no longer just known for tasty cuisine, but they are being popularized by Gen Z's based on their “instagrammable” and “trendy” atmospheres as well.

This decade brought many ups and downs, but



we will never forget those who we lost. In our memories are music legends such as Mac Miller, David Bowie, Prince, XXXTentacion, Aretha Franklin, Lil Peep, Juice Wrld, Whitney Houston, and Tom Petty, as well as those in cinema, including Robin Williams, Stan Lee, Cameron Boyce, Luke Perry, Carrie Fisher, and more.

The 2010's meant many different things to many different people. However, for Gen Z, this was a decade of growing up. Gen Z has experienced moments of love, heartbreak, and change in this decade, but has been brought closer because of these defining moments.