

Colette Blake



Breaking The News

When I was a teenager, I decided I wanted to get into politics. I wanted to know all there is to know about world news. And for whatever the reason, I most definitely did not want to get caught not knowing.

Ever since high school, I'd wake up, tiredly shuffle to the coffee pot, and take my daily dose of global media. Geopolitics became a quasi hobby of mine and this daily ritual did not change when I moved to London. In fact, my fascination with the global stage played a major role in my decision to come to CASS. And so, I packed my bags and the journey began.

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September 17, 2018: Induction Day.

Morning headline: "Trump's Big Day at the UN. Agenda: America First."

"A diverse group we have here, over 35 countries represented!" As the host began to rattle off far away places, students were prompted to raise their hands when their country was called. "China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, India, Germany..." The list went on, and the hands went up.

One moment I will never forget, is when he called out the United States. My hand slowly speared the air. And then I was paralyzed with the thought, 'Oh God, I know what they are thinking: Donald Trump!' The headline 'UN Agenda: America first' echoed in my mind. 'They are going to hate me.' I honestly don't know what they were thinking but I will admit, as the representative hands went up, my mind was inundated with inflammatory headlines about their countries. Nevertheless, the semester went on.

October 18, 2018.

Morning headline: "China Uighurs: Xinjiang legalises 're-education' camps" - Uighur Muslims forced into camps that would rid them of their religious beliefs.

It was pouring rain and myself and Shumin Zhang, who came to study at CASS from China, huddled under an umbrella on our way down to Tesco's. We split a cheap snack and spoke about boys while avoiding puddles. She was kind, with an open heart. She through her head back when she laughed and wore slip ons with furry flames on the top. We were group mates but then, suddenly, we were friends.

February 24, 2019

Morning headline: "Venezuela crisis: Deadly border clashes as Maduro blocks aid" The lecture had just come to an end when a classmate of mine noticed a small green bottle cap, peaking from my backpack.

"Is that a bottle of Sriracha?"

(Guilty). Shaira was from Venezuela. She seemed to be one of the smartest in the class and, little did I know, we shared a love for hot sauce and an aggressive ambivalence towards English food.

March 1, 2019

Morning headline: "Kenyans Are Tired of Uhuru's Empty Threats Against Corruption" - time to declare corruption a national disaster in Kenya.

Chandhi is from Kenya - more specifically, a Kenyan Indian. And on this day we decided to go to the pub. We drank beer. We spoke about our families and our different experiences going abroad. How sometimes we felt alone. We spoke about the uncertainty at this stage in life. And then we had more beer and laughed a lot. She's one of my closest friends at Uni.

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These uncanny juxtapositions between the countries breaking the news and my classmates who called those countries home happened constantly throughout my time at CASS. There seemed to be such a gap from what I was experiencing and what I was reading in the mornings. I realized that I have spent so much of my time trying to educate myself about the world through the scope of its problems, disasters, and corruption; and despite my countless mornings of reading the news, it was through the smallest and most mundane experiences with my friends at CASS, that I was truly exposed to the world.

So how have I changed? Well, I still read the news with my coffee, but I no longer consume world news as a direct representation of its people. Rather, I see it as a representation of a political age and its leaders. So while the media writes of all the great divide: Democrats vs. Republicans, Immigrants vs. Citizens, Leave vs. Remain, and sings of the escalating threat of corruption, I'll happily take my front row seat to the real world stage on BunHill Row. I need only to open my eyes and ears to those around me. Nothing edited, curated, or published. Just a classroom full of the world, full of friends, and most certainly, full of news.