

(**Actually Knock**) “Mamá, there’s somebody at the door.” (**Knock**), “Mama!” No answer. Hmm, I guess, I’ll get it. I was probably 7 or 8, an age when kids shouldn’t be opening doors. As I opened it, before me stood a petite middle-aged Asian lady dressed in a black pant-suit holding a bible and pamphlets in her hands. She wanted to speak to my mom about her faith. She was a Jehovah’s Witness. And I had never met one before.

My mom entertained her for a while before telling her she had to go run some errands (though it really wasn’t true). And as soon as she closed the door shut, I began drilling my mom with questions. “What did she want?” “What’s a Jehovah’s Witness?” But most of all, I wanted to know why she went door to door, especially in Laredo, Texas, the least diverse metropolitan area in the country where more than 95% of the population is Latino, predominantly Catholic, and about 98 degrees Fahrenheit on a good day. Mind you, she was dressed in all black. All in an attempt to engage people in conversation, hoping one leads to a conversion. I didn’t know what to make of it until years later.

Now, fast forward to Harvard. I didn’t join the Dems or the Republicans on campus. I didn’t comp the *Crimson*. I didn’t want to take a side. And I especially didn’t want to join anything that would put my views in full display...where I’d be vulnerable, subject to the judgment of others. So by default, I subscribed to the ‘keep your beliefs to yourself mentality.’ Though it seemed safe, I couldn’t help but feel an internal tension.

I wondered ... “Is a belief still a belief if you don’t act on it?”

It wasn’t until someone ‘didn’t keep his beliefs to himself’ that it really hit me. My freshman year, I saw an undercover slaughterhouse video on my facebook newsfeed. I watched it, and without reservation immediately shared it on my wall. My friend from home was the first to comment, wanting to understand my choices and in that process made me realize that what I preached and what I practiced were at *complete* odds with each other.

You see, I love animals. I interned for the US Department Agriculture. I watched the videos, signed online petitions... All while simultaneously sitting in this Dhall scarfing down meat three times a day? I was a hypocrite. Through my lifestyle, I was complicit.

For me, what stood in the way was convenience. It was convenient being an activist online without really having to change my lifestyle. It was also apathy. Though I loved animals, as long as my dogs at home weren’t the ones condemned to a life of misery, I was apathetic to the plight of others. It was also a lack of urgency. I told myself, I didn’t have to change right now. Maybe once I started working and bought my own food, then I could do it.

Because though I admired the vegans, I would say “that’s great, but I could never give up my steak or cheese.” But, I am learning that it’s not enough to admire from a distance; I have to STAND with them despite the resistance.

So one New Year’s Eve, I did it. I stopped eating meat. I finally decided to practice what I preached.

I’ve come to think that apathy and convenience may be the greatest evils of our time. When we have so much information bombarding us, it’s easy to become desensitized. We need a way to cut through the noise. I am learning to be okay with discomfort even if it means making others uncomfortable. Because movements that changed the world weren’t accomplished within the comforts of our homes, but in the discomfort of the streets.

That's why I admire the man that stands by the COOP passing out pamphlets urging for our conversion to avoid hell. And those Tibetan protestors chanting by the T yearning for justice. And those teens outside Starbucks collecting signatures on behalf of Children International. I admire ALL of them because they're STANDING.

The world needs us to stand. To be that Witness for Jehovah, for Tibet, for the malnourished children. For what you believe deserves a voice. For what you deem is worth cutting through the noise. And so I ask you, what are you willing to go door to door for?